

CANADIAN FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN (CFUW) ORILLIA

CFUW Orillia members will hear the fascinating story of how Stephen Watt and Wasim Meslmani met and how they are helping refugees get settled in Canada through the Hand-to-Hand Facebook page. They will both be guest speakers at the CFUW meeting on Tuesday, February 26 at Orillia Museum of Art and History, 30 Peter St. South, Orillia, at 7 p.m.

Like many other Canadians, Stephen Watt was shaken by the images of Alan Kurdi, a 3-year-old Kurdish Syrian who drowned on a Mediterranean coast in September 2015. Stephen took action by responding to a request from Community Matters Toronto, a neighbourhood organization, for volunteers to help with its Syria project. He created a Facebook page called Syrian Sanctuary. Since then Stephen has become a volunteer and humanitarian who has helped fundraise for and privately sponsor over 20 individuals and six families to come to Canada – with more to come.

It was through the Syrian Sanctuary Facebook page that Wasim Meslmani found Stephen. Wasim was a Syrian refugee and is now a Toronto-based newcomer who is devoted to helping other newcomers succeed. Since October 2017, Wasim has run the Hand-to-Hand Facebook page to provide work, school, housing and psychosocial support for newcomers to Canada and their sponsors. He founded the page – which gained 2,000 followers in its first year – while still a refugee in Amman, Jordan. He has also helped hundreds of newcomers and sponsors find leads on a wide variety of workshops, events, educational and employment opportunities.

Membership is offered to all women, regardless of educational background, who believe in our goals and value lifelong learning. For more information please visit www.cfuworillia.org.