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# Friendship Program

Information Pack

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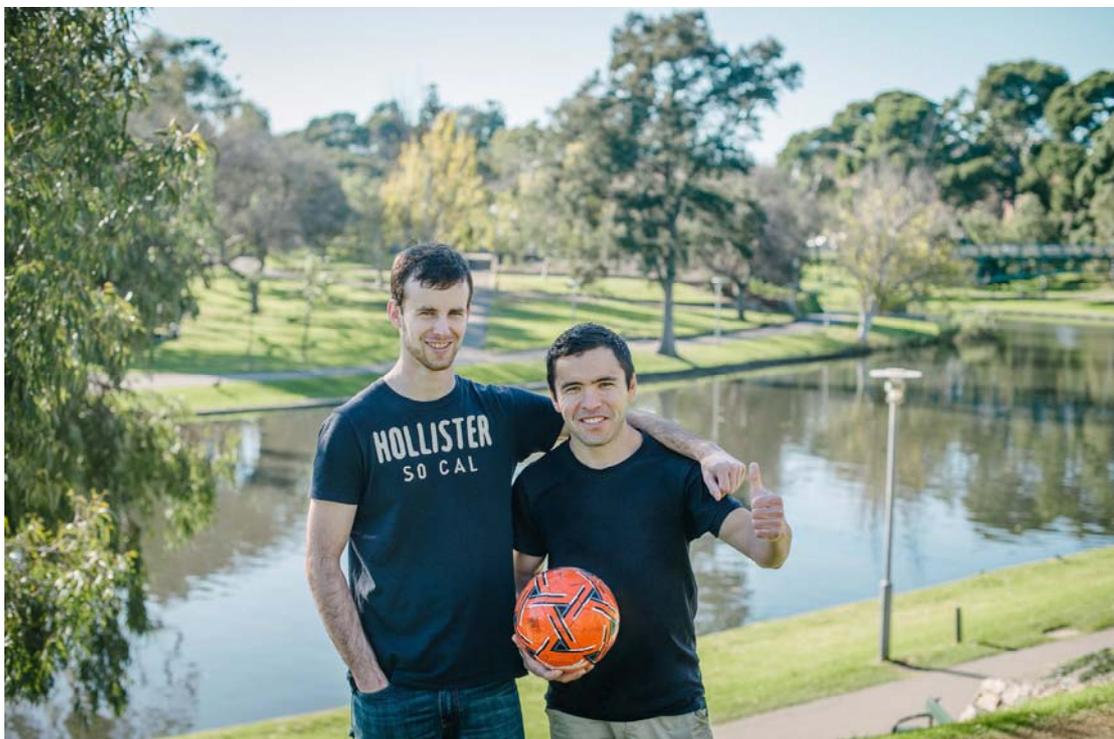
# Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Baptist Care Friendship Program.

Our response to refugees and asylum seekers is one of the key social justice issues of contemporary society. The Friendship program provides a framework for wonderful relationships to be formed between volunteer mentors and new arrivals from many different countries. It provides a means to be a welcoming neighbour, to show compassion, to learn from others and to help them settle into Adelaide.

Can you imagine arriving in a new city, somewhere completely different to where you've lived before? There's so much to learn: a new language, how to get about, how to operate in this new place you find yourself in. You might be missing your homeland, feeling a bit lonely and isolated.

Then think of what a difference it would be to have a friend who has lived in the area for a while who can show you around, help you get to know some new places and people, help you feel more settled and welcome. **Perhaps that person can be you!**



# What is the Baptist Care Friendship Program?

The goal of the program is to provide opportunities for volunteer mentors to build friendships with people from refugee backgrounds who are settling in Adelaide. The Friendship Program is a mentoring program that matches volunteer mentors with people who:

have a refugee background (including asylum seekers, those of bridging visas and those with official refugee status), are over 18 years old, live in Adelaide and are able to speak and understand some English.

The people requesting mentors/Australian friend come from a variety of countries including Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, and Sri Lanka. They all have different and amazing stories. Some speak English quite well, and others are just learning the basics (but they may speak several languages other than English!)



# Who can be a Friendship Program Mentor?

You are eligible to apply to be a mentor if you:

- are able to volunteer for 6 hours per month for a minimum of 6 months

- are over 22 years of age

- are an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia who has lived at least 2 years in Australia

- attend 2 mentor training sessions (and Child Safe Environments Training if have not done a similar course in the past 2 years)

After completing the application process, (including satisfactory police and reference checks) and participating in 3 training sessions, we will seek to match you with a person from a refugee background, (we call them a Mentee).

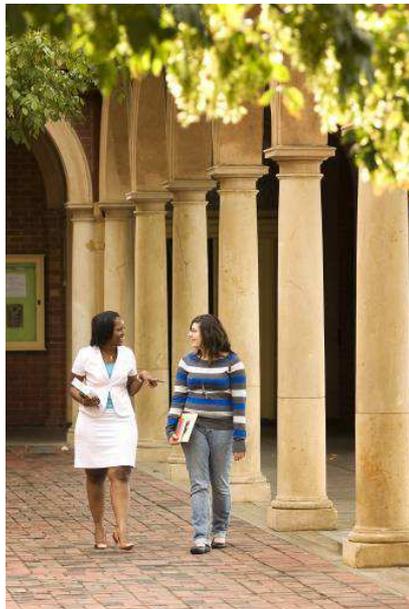
All applicants should be aware that there is no guarantee of being matched with a mentee. This is largely due to our inability to control the nature and location of referrals we receive.



# What does a Mentor do?

If you have ever moved to a new area, you know that it takes more than a house, job or study to make you feel at home. You need new friends who will welcome you into the local community. It is hard enough when you speak English and have grown up in this country, but the challenge becomes enormous if you are from countries like Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan or Bhutan and are trying to settle in Australia.

As a Mentor you can help someone from a refugee background achieve their goals in their community, family, study and work life. You can assist them overcome the obstacles of settling in a new country and play an important role in strengthening our community.



Mentors and Mentees can participate in a variety of activities depending on their interests, such as sharing a meal, practicing English, shopping, walking in the park, going to the beach or playing sport and chatting or giving advice by sharing their local knowledge, networks and experience. You meet up at a time and a place that suits you both. Costs associated with these activities are the responsibility of the mentor and mentees, and therefore need to be agreed in advance. Baptist Care is unable to reimburse expenses incurred.

Mentors also provide general advice about Australian culture, customs and laws. They can also assist their mentee to be aware of and effectively connect to relevant services. Some mentors assist their mentees to find a house in the private rental market, help them to apply for jobs or link them to courses or other educational opportunities

# What are desirable qualities in a mentor?

- patience and flexibility
- being reliable and dependable
- a sense of humour
- ability to build friendships with people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds who may speak limited English
- willingness and ability to respond to emails from the Volunteer Coordinator in a timely manner

## A Mentor should:

- Build rapport and establish trust
- Foster a caring and supportive mentoring environment
- Encourage their Mentee to achieve their fullest potential
- Be reliable
- Be a good communicator, both with their mentee and staff
- Inform their mentee and the Volunteer Coordinator if their circumstances change and they are no longer able to continue in their role as a mentor.

## A Mentor should not:

- Try to be a social worker or a lawyer
- Take on the responsibilities of the Mentee's parents
- Provide child minding
- Make promises that cannot be kept
- Take Mentees to venues or activities that are illegal or that could put the physical safety of the Mentee at risk.
- Give driving lessons or provide supervised driving hours
- Break confidentiality
- Attempt to influence the religious, cultural or political beliefs of the Mentees.



## How are mentors matched up?

Mentors are matched with an individual rather than a family. That is, you may meet all of the members of the family, but you focus your support and attention on a particular person in that family (for example, the mother or father in a family). In some cases there may be more than one mentor assisting different family members. Male mentors are usually matched up with male mentees, and female mentors are usually matched up with female mentees or couples. The age, family type, interests and location of both the mentor and the mentee is taken into account in the process of matching.

## What support is available to mentors?

Mentoring is not always a smooth and simple task and you should be prepared for some disappointments. However, the act of mentoring provides opportunity for interpersonal and leadership skills development, and can be very rewarding. Many mentors say that their lives have been enriched through linking with someone from another culture and background.



The Mentoring Coordinator is available to support you in your role as mentor by:

- Conducting Mentor training
- Providing advice and information about relevant organisations
- Talking with you about your mentoring experiences
- Hosting a follow up training session 3 months after your initial training sessions for mutual support and on-going learning
- Hosting occasional events for mentors or for mentors and mentees.
- Inviting you to join the Facebook Group for Mentors.

## Further Information

More information about the Baptist Care Friendship Program will be provided during the Mentor Training Sessions.

Please contact our Volunteer Program Coordinator if you have any questions.

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