

### ***Impacting the community***

**April 23-29 is Admin Professionals Week AND National Volunteer Week**, making it a perfect time to profile the efforts of Tina Johnson and her family!

Tina, the receptionist at Division Office, and her husband Jeff, a Sciences teacher at Spruce View School, have volunteered with the Central Alberta Refugee Effort since 2015. Along with their two kids, both students at Spruce View School, they have been matched with a family of six from Syria who made an arduous journey from their wartorn homeland to establish their new home in Red Deer. They spent five years in a refugee camp in Turkey after fleeing Syria on foot, and this is where the youngest of their four children was born. Tina's family helped find them a home and adjust to Canadian culture, but most importantly they opened their hearts to friendship.

"Our kids have all become friends and we share birthday parties and family dinners, but we also do everyday things like riding bikes or showing them how to play baseball. We just include them in our lives now," said Tina. "We've had a lot of laughs over 'lost in translation moments', but the agency we work with is incredibly supportive in making everything work for all of us. They hold events that bring other Syrian refugees together, so the families have the opportunity to form friendships and build a sense of community. It's very difficult, because their families are still in Syria where they face life and death everyday. This whole experience has made us so thankful and, as a family, our kids have learned many important things. It has opened our eyes to a new culture and we are so impressed with their resilience. They persevered through huge hardships to protect their kids. They arrived so afraid, but they're always such a happy family! They are hardworking and so thankful for Canada. They are definitely our heroes."



**Laughter is universal!** The Johnsons visit with their new friends from Syria often these days, and every week Tina tutors the family in English as a Second Language. The families have grown to be good friends, and they have learned a great deal from one another. For the Johnsons, the biggest lesson has been one of gratitude.

"Any efforts we are making are such small gestures compared to what they have faced," said Tina, whose family will be profiled by the Central Alberta Refugee Effort in celebration of volunteerism and of Canada's 150th anniversary.

***Thank you to all our volunteers, and all our admin support professionals, for what you add to our school communities!***



**Important message** - Students on Cremona School's leadership team spruce up the girl's washroom.



**Hands on learning** - Science 9 students share a hair raising experience at Olds High School!