

A dream come true!

While I was training at theological college, I did a placement at the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre in Coventry. It had a real impact on me as I met refugees from around the world and heard their stories of how they had escaped the most horrific circumstances in their homeland through wars, terrorism and oppression. They had lost their homes, their livelihoods and family members. And they were so grateful when they arrived in the relative safety of the UK, perhaps having spent several years in transit in tents in refugee camps.

From that experience, I had a dream to offer some of refugees living in Coventry a day out in the country. In September, that dream became a reality as we welcomed a group of Syrian families who arrived by coach at Holt Farm in Napton. The aim was to offer them hospitality and a day of fun, giving our local families an opportunity to welcome them and perhaps break down some of the cultural barriers between us.

It was the most amazing day. We had bouncy castles, face and nail painting, a climbing wall, crafts, football, knitting, a magician and much, much more - thanks to the overwhelming generosity of so many people. Something very special happened as we played together, laughed together, ate together and shared conversations together. The whole day was filled with joy and fun and singing.

During the day, two comments in particular made a big impression on me. One was from a ten-year old: "Why do we have to call them refugees? Why can't we just call them people?" And after a very long and intense game of football between all ages and all abilities, I asked: "Who won?" The answer: "We all did".

At the end of the day, I recall the verse of Scripture that initially motivated me to make my dream a reality: "Continue to love each other with true Christian love. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realising it!" [Hebrews 13:1-2]. I think that happened in Napton that day. And I don't think it will be the last venture of its kind. What a blessing.

God bless,
Gillian