

Dorrigo welcomes second Sudanese family



Dorrigo's second Sudanese family have been made welcome by the townspeople.

Eighteen months after the Malou family arrived in Dorrigo as refugees, another Sudanese family, this time coming from a refugee camp in Uganda, have been warmly welcomed by local residents and the eight members of the Malou family.

Yar, her 8 year old daughter Rebeka and 19 year old cousin Robert, arrived in Dorrigo last week after a 72 hour journey from the heart of Africa having spent over a year in the Rhino Refugee Camp on the Uganda border with Sudan.

It was there that they applied to Australian authorities to come to this country to start a new life and after a year of waiting and hoping, they were told two months ago that their visas had been approved and a group from Dorrigo was waiting to receive and welcome them into their community.

The Sanctuary Refugee Foundation in Coffs Harbour, the body that has sponsored over 1200 refugees from many countries over the past 13 years, began the arduous bureaucratic process of filling in paperwork and documents, along with booking and paying the airfares for the family, before things could be finally processed in Uganda.

In Dorrigo the support group for the refugee families busied themselves to find a house to rent and then waited for the furniture and household goods to arrive which the government gives to help new refugee families.

Church group and friends from Dorrigo and Hernani offered money to put in the necessary food and cleaning requirements for the new family. Others cooked meals and brought food and flowers to the home in Myrtle Street that will now transform this little family's life from hell to heaven.

Rebecca will join the other Sudanese children at Dorrigo Primary School and Robert will join

Martin at Dorrigo High School. Yar will join Martha at the English language classes provided by the government in Coffs Harbour every week. Dorrigo friends will be involved in helping with their English conversation.

Helen Proud and Susan Allom who originally had the idea of bringing refugees to Dorrigo are gratified to see how well the resettlement programme has worked in Dorrigo. They said they were overjoyed to welcome Yar, Rebeka and Robert especially as they are from the same ethnic group as the Malou family.

They are all Dinkas from southern Sudan, and the new family will join the Malous at the Anglican Church which they have attended and become a vital part of for the past 18 months.

Helen Proud said: "This community has been open-hearted and enriched by having the Malous here in our midst and in our lives. We have found that while we are not a wealthy community, we have been able to extend our compassion and love to embrace these people who have come from violent and tragic circumstances in their own country and who faced life without a home and without hope. Australia and Dorrigo has given these families a right of passage that all humans deserve."

After all the preliminary government requirements were completed last week, the family was taken to have their first icecream and then to wade in the outgoing tide at the Jetty Beach, the first time they had seen an ocean. It was only then they realised the oceans of the world contained salt!

Robert who has excellent English from his schooling in Sudan said: "I didn't believe what a wonderful country Australia would be. I love the trees and the green fields. I am so happy to become an Australian one day".