

Cranbrook Daily Townsman

Cranbrook/Kimberley refugee organization marks successful year

Published: **December 03, 2012 8:00 AM**

Updated: **December 03, 2012 8:52 AM**

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It has been the best of years in many ways for the Friends of Burma, even while changes in Canada's refugee policy cause worries.

The group, which sponsors refugees from Burma (Myanmar) and the refugee camps along the Thailand Burma border to Canada, had the joy of seeing a family reunited this year.

In July, Thaw Thi, who settled in Kimberley with wife August Paw and daughter Hser Dri Htoo five years ago, saw his extended family arrive in Kimberley.

Thaw Thi was able to reunite with his parents, brothers and their spouses and children. It was a joyful moment for the family and for the many volunteers who give their time to help the new arrivals settle in and introduce them to Canada.

Shauna Jimenez of Friends of Burma says that without all the hours given by volunteers, the refugees integration into Canadian life would not be so successful.

"This is a huge thank you to all the wonderful East Kootenay people who volunteer their time and money to resettle refugees into our small towns. We honour and celebrate the thousands of volunteer hours contributed to settling our 10 newest residents who arrived in July of this year from refugee camps on the Thai/Burma border, where they had been waiting for over 10 years. Thanks to all of you who have voluntarily contributed hours of support in so many different ways. Everyone is now settled in to their new homes and feeling well supported by their new volunteer friends.

"Thanks again to all of you who helped them find and furnish their homes, register them for public school, accompany them to appointments, and visit them in their homes while assisting in learning English!" "We know it has been an exhausting year for volunteers and once again, want to honour those in our small towns who give so much to ensure our new friends feel welcome and supported."

Friends of Burma welcomes new volunteers who would like to help out with daily visits, help with English, help with homework for school children and community outings.

If you can give some time, contact Barb at eatburns@yahoo.com or Shauna at shaunajimenez@hotmail.com