

LOCA

FRIENDS OF BURMA

Local refugee group recognized nationally

CAROLYN GRANT

Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi spoke to Canadians for the first time last week through an Internet link between her home in Burma, also known as Myanmar and Carleton University. She has spent most of the last two decades under house arrest. She says tough Canadian sanctions are helping Burma on its hard road to democracy.

Shauna Jimenez of East Kootenay Friends of Burma was in Ottawa and was able to witness the video talks.

While in Ottawa, Jimenez saw East Kootenay Friends of Burma receive an award from the Canadian Friends of Burma for years of dedication in helping Burmese refugees and social justice awareness about the situation in Burma.

"Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism) and Olivia Chow (MP Trinity Spadina) were in attendance in the audience,

so once again East Kootenay compassion towards refugees was nationally recognized," Jimenez said.

"What I am most proud of, is that we in the Kootenays refuse for a second to swallow any of the fear-mongering about refugees that is so pathetic and so profuse these days."

Shauna Jimenez

"Congratulations to everyone in the Kootenays who reaches out to support and welcome refugees. We are a model community for refugee resettlement and everyone should be very proud of the role you play in helping refugees resettle in the East Kootenay."

Jimenez says EKFOB is recognized nationally for compassion to refugees.

"Our community

residents in Kimberley and Cranbrook and rural areas deserve that recognition for being supportive and welcoming to refugees. It's a wonderful reputation built on 30 years of East Kootenay hospitality and compassion.

"What I am most proud of, is that we in the Kootenays refuse for a second to swallow any of the fear-mongering about refugees that is so pathetic and so profuse these days. Unfortunately, many less wise and experienced folks sometimes believe that they should be fearful of refugees, but we will keep teaching people, by example, that for refugees, compassion and inclusion is what is needed, not fear-mongering and exclusion."

Jimenez says EK Friends of Burma is currently fundraising for a family of three Karen refugees, relatives of the family already settled in Kimberley. She hopes they will arrive this summer.