

CCVT WINTER NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER
2021



CCVT aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the center supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society works for their protection and integrity and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families.

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Disclaimer: The CCVT Connections, is fueled by the following goals: to engage volunteers in important events, news, and meetings. In doing so, it acknowledges the vital role they play in fulfilling CCVT's mandate. It is published quarterly. The information provided in this publication is not controlled by the CCVT, and therefore, may not reflect the Centre's views, staff and team.



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Global News

- **Federal and provincial governments preparing for Omicron variant spread**
- **Calls grow from Liberal, Tory MPs for federal intervention in Quebec's Bill 21**
- **Ukraine urges Russia sanctions before, not after, a possible invasion**
- **As Afghanistan continues to fall, "Taliban were invited into Kabul" says former Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai**
- **Africa might hit 70% COVID-19 vaccination goal in late 2024, WHO warns**
- **The state doesn't exist: Gang violence in Haiti keeps aid at bay**
- **Global food prices climb in November to stay at a 10-year high**



INTRODUCING NEW CCVT STAFF



Kiana Sarmadi
Admin and Outreach Assistant

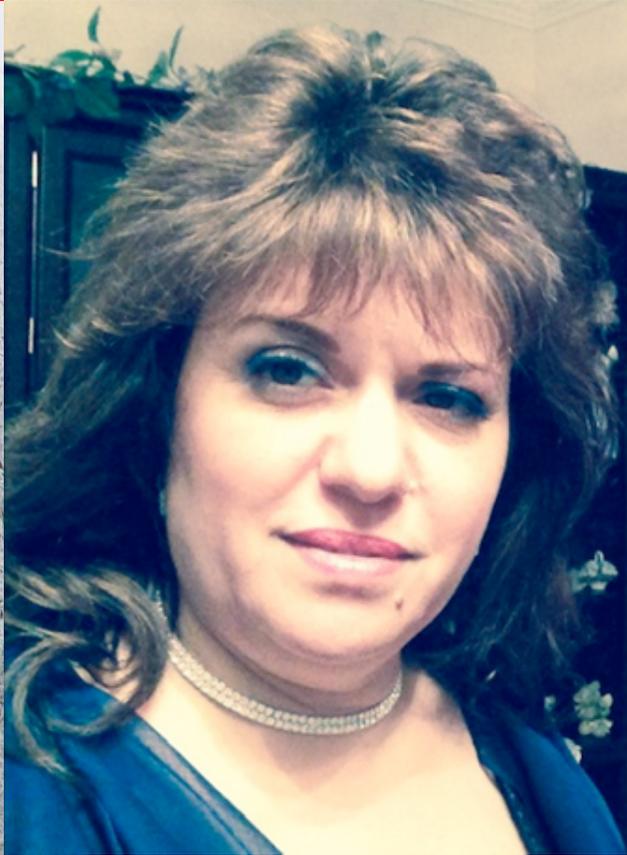
Originally from Iran, I moved here four years ago to study English literature. I have recently graduated from McMaster University and have been writing stories and novels in my free time so I can publish them someday. I have been working in various jobs while studying and learning new languages.



Likes: Reading, writing, hiking, music, and history

Dislikes: Hot long summer days and metropolitan cities

Interview with Mona Kalil CCVT Mental Health/Settlement Counselor

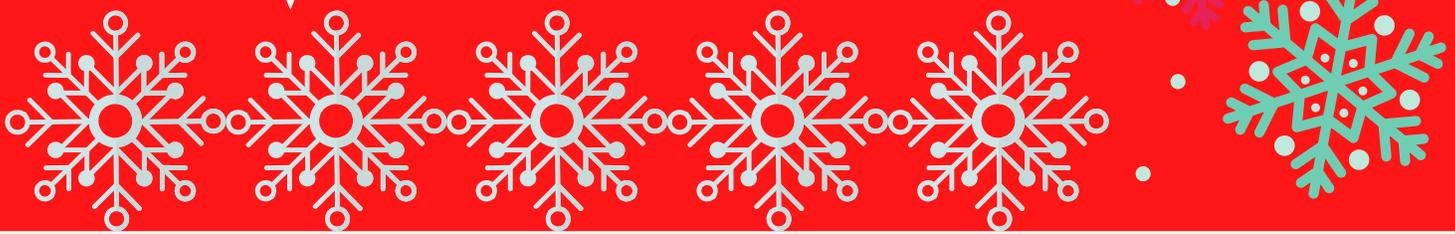


My name is Mona Kalil and I am from Egypt. I came to Canada in 1993 as an immigrant. I have a degree in Social Work and I'm a Registered Social Worker. I joined the CCVT team in November 2018 as a Settlement and Trauma Counselor - Arabic Speaking. Currently, I'm a Mental Health/Settlement Counselor.

Since I was young, I always felt fulfilled when I was able to help others. ... This personal experience and my compassionate nature certainly inspired me to choose a career in social work.

I worked with people from various ethnic and racial backgrounds for long periods. I have several years of working experience with direct service with immigrants, refugees, and racialized populations addressing their mental health problems.

- I like and enjoy listening to music (old or new), dancing, traveling, shopping, watching movies and T.V. series, spending time with my family, exercising, and most of all home interior design (decoration).
- I dislike being home for long periods, especially when I see someone whom I believe can benefit from my help and I'm not able to provide the aid I love to assist with.
- I also dislike winter and extreme cold.



How have you been managing yourself during Covid time and how have you been staying proactive? During Covid, I was feeling stressed out by this change as everyone did, and as a result, my routine was upended. This pandemic has forced me and many other people to find a new norm and adopt a new routine. That often includes working with the rest of my family. That means giving myself time to relax or find an activity I can enjoy and keeping everything in perspective. I was telling myself things may have to change, and that's simply okay. I was taking it every day, one day at a time to help prevent feeling overwhelmed.

How are you attaining work-life balance and productivity as you work from home?

•I tried to maintain a positive attitude and stick to a routine such as; wake up early and dressing up for work, eating regular healthy meals, exercising, planning my day, establishing a home office and quiet area where I can “go to work,” as if I’m heading to the office. Throughout this process, I was focusing as best as I could on the positives each day.

•Right now, it can be difficult to differentiate between work and personal time. I find myself waiting a little too long to start some assignments. Or on the other hand, I continue to work on a project long past the point where I should have taken a break or eaten a meal.

I’m currently trying to Balance Work and Life by setting a schedule and trying to stick to it. And once I have created my schedule, I stick to it as much as possible. I also try to prioritize my tasks to accomplish all the tasks on my to-do list in a timely fashion. I get ready for work the same way I do when I’m going to the office (dress up, makeup...etc.). I started to make plans for my after-work hours.

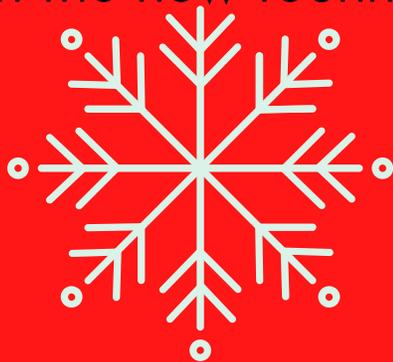


How is communication experience with colleagues remotely?

- I communicate with my colleagues by phone or zoom all the time when needed. It is very helpful, and I was grateful to talk to my coworkers and share with them some of my issues with a few of my cases.

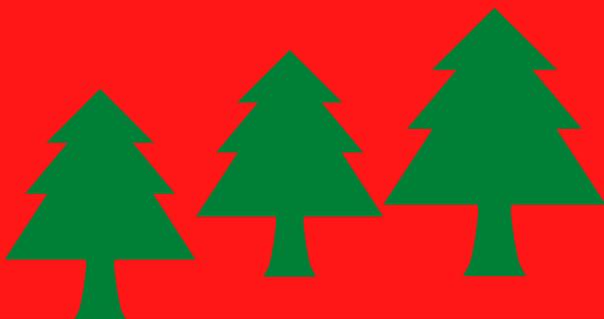
How is CCVT supporting you during this time?

- CCVT supported us during the pandemic by:
 - Conducting a weekly debriefing meeting to share our feelings and to discuss any issues with our colleagues and managers.
 - CCVT ordered laptops for us, and they installed Bell Total Connect.
 - Monthly meetings with our direct manager for follow-up and advice where needed.
 - Several training sessions and webinars to help us with the new technology.



How do you keep in touch with your clients working virtually? What issues are your clients facing?

- I'm trying my best to keep in touch with all my clients by emailing them flyers for information sessions and support groups, in addition to inviting them to join our activities and celebrations.
- The clients are always looking for counseling sessions to help them with their mental illnesses and stress. I always share certain activities and techniques to help them reduce their depression, anxiety, and stress. Building a good and trustworthy relationship with clients is the first key to helping clients to cope, and ultimately overcome the lasting effects of their trauma, and successfully integrate them into Canadian Society.
- They also ask for support letters, doctor's referrals, information about housing, ODSP, connecting with caseworker...etc. They had some issues with technology, but they are getting better.



Volunteer Spotlight



ASOKAN SADASIVAN

CCVT TAX CLINIC VOLUNTEER



Gifts for Friends and Family

WRITTEN BY ASOKAN SADASIVAN

The Christmas Gift Wrapping events that are organized by CCVT brought a group of volunteers from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) to the Jarvis Street location of CCVT in 2015 and I was one among these volunteers. We had a great time at the event wrapping quite a lot of gifts. During the event, I came to know about the tax return preparation services that were provided by CCVT.

I had been a volunteer with the Canada Revenue Agency's 'Community Volunteer Income Tax Program (CVITP)' since the time I landed in Canada in 2001 and I jumped at this opportunity to join hands with CCVT in assisting their clients.

Since 2016 I have been fortunate in assisting CCVT with these free tax returns preparation services. I am also thankful that my Ministry has wholeheartedly supported me in this endeavor by allowing me to avail of two hours of my time every week, during the tax season, to provide this service. With my long years of experience in the CVITP program, I have also mentored quite a few new volunteers to prepare tax returns for clients at CCVT.



Asokan Sadasivan

CONTINUED

A Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (FCMA), UK, I am currently employed as Controller of the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation, and Trade. I have lived in different countries around the world; born in Malaysia, studied in India, worked in the United Arab Emirates, and settled in Canada! I am an avid badminton player and am a Canadian National Umpire and travels around Canada officiating at badminton tournaments. This is also a voluntary service.

I also volunteer as the CVITP Coordinator of my Temple, Treasurer of my community organization, and internal auditor of my badminton club. I have been awarded the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, an official Canadian honor that recognizes exceptional volunteer achievements from across Canada, in 2018. I enjoy volunteering and giving back to my community and greatly admire the work that CCVT does!



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ENGLISH CONVERSATION VOLUNTEER

Maia Norman has been a CCVT volunteer since 2021. She lives in Toronto, Ontario. She completed her Bachelor of Science in Health in 2021 and is currently working in clinical genetics research. When she's not working or volunteering, she is taking care of her many plants and her cat Boba, biking, reading, and cooking or baking.



Why I chose to volunteer for CCVT: I wanted to volunteer with CCVT because I have spent quite a lot of time in the last couple of years thinking about how COVID-19 has separated all of us and made people, especially newcomers to Canada and those with lower financial resources, much more isolated and anxious. I thought that getting to talk with newcomers to Canada via volunteering with CCVT could help me play my part in helping to build their comfort and acclimatization here, as well as keep me grounded and knowledgeable in other walks of life than my own.

About the sessions: I chose to facilitate English conversation circles because I recognize how extremely difficult of a language English is and that with COVID-19 still around, newcomers get even fewer opportunities to learn and practice speaking it. These sessions involve conversations between me and CCVT clients which are usually quite casual and may involve simpler topics such as their experiences in Canada so far, their favorite foods, and their families. I feel lucky and accomplished after leading these sessions since I'm able to reach people I never would have spoken to without volunteering at CCVT, and provided them with an experience they may not get every day. I also love hearing about participants' life journeys and the experiences that got them to where they are today, whenever they are shared.



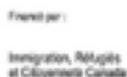
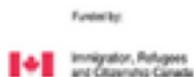


G1 DRIVERS CLASS VOLUNTEER

I am **Brent Vickar**, grandson of immigrants from the shtetls (Jewish villages) of Eastern Europe. I am grateful that Canada allowed my impoverished grandparents to flee persecution and settle here in 1905. I was born in A SMALL TOWN in Saskatchewan and raised in Winnipeg.

Why I chose to volunteer for CCVT: In my thirty-five year career as a lawyer in Toronto I was fortunate to have clients from many Asian, African, and South American communities. This background informs my view that I have an obligation  to welcome and nurture newcomers.

About the sessions: It has been  a privilege and a joy to volunteer with CCVT since 2018, supporting ESL, tutoring, and general education programs. I look forward to meeting more CCVT clients in person as we emerge from the pandemic.



Youth Ambassador Program

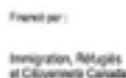
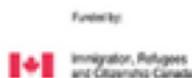
**Written By: Leah MacDonald / Youth Mental Health
Counsellor**

The Youth Ambassador program is well underway at CCVT downtown! 10 CCVT youth had applied to be CCVT Youth Ambassador and will have an opportunity to build their leadership skills, workshop development skills, and confidence and presentation skills. The program is peer-led and youth-driven. The main goals of the Youth Ambassador Program are to combat social isolation, provide leadership training, and provide a platform for newcomer youth to strengthen their advocacy skills so they can better champion for themselves and other youth who may be facing challenges! Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, we have moved the program to a virtual format for the 2021-2022 year. The Youth Ambassadors have described the program as a place for them to come together and support each other through the pandemic and a safe place where they feel comfortable to motivate and encourage each other to build their confidence. Overall, the Youth Ambassador Program has been a great success and we are looking forward to the last half of the program. Keep an eye out for our Youth Ambassadors as they are our leaders of tomorrow!

The Youth Ambassador Program is supported by Penny Appeal Canada.

pennyappeal **canada**

MERRY
CHRISTMAS





**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING AN
ARTICLE TO *CONNECTIONS*, PLEASE EMAIL THE
FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:**

Mahnoush Kohpaei: mkohpaei@ccvt.org

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS**

**If you would like to be part of a Tax Clinic, please reach
out to**

Farah Noori: fnoori@ccvt.org