

Festival to showcase artistic talents of refugees

Laura Reid
ASSISTANT EDITOR, FEATURES

IT is the world's largest arts and culture festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.

And when Refugee Week returns for its 25th anniversary year between June 19 and 25, Yorkshire will be one of many places across the globe where events will be taking place.

In Hull, crocheted and knitted items handmade by refugees will go on display at Welcome House.

"What they've made is absolutely super," says Kathy Vickers, who runs a knitting and sewing project as a volunteer with Hull Help for Refugees.

"One of my ladies, for example, has crocheted a scarf that is absolutely beautiful. It is so amazing it wouldn't disgrace a top London fashion house. The items will be on display with the view to showing the general public that refugees are talented and gifted people, who are often highly educated."

Kathy has been volunteering with Hull Help for Refugees since returning from a period of time at the Calais Jungle refugee camp in 2016. "I wanted to do something useful, so I went over to Calais, took a load of donations and I was absolutely shocked at how dire the conditions for the refugees were," she says.

"I thought there must be something else I can do apart from volunteering in Calais for a fortnight and I found out about Hull Help for Refugees, which was in its infancy at the time. And I've been with them ever since."

In Keighley, people will be able to sample Syrian food at a gathering aimed at bringing together communities. The Peace Meal will take place at Keighley College as part of Refugee Week.

The college is collaborating with arts charity Keighley Creative to stage the event, following a successful pilot held at Keighley Parish Church in October last year during the organisation's Keighley Arts and Film

Festival.

Cathryn Murray, Keighley Creative's festival and events producer, said: "The event aims to build bridges between people who might not have an opportunity to meet, and to replace the fear of the unknown with increased familiarity and the sense of richness that diversity can bring."

A Place of Sanctuary: a Peace Meal for Refugee Week will take place on Thursday June 22 and will feature a performance of multilingual poetry by Bradford-based poet Nabeela Ahmed. Food will be provided by Bab Tooma, an authentic Syrian restaurant established in Bradford in 2016.

Visitors will also be able to hear about Keighley College's work as a designated College of Sanctuary as well as viewing a video and quilt created by its English for Speakers of Other Languages students.

Jo Rusden, deputy head of technology at the college, said: "We pride ourselves on our inclusivity, warmth and kindness, so we're delighted to be hosting this event, which will bring people together to celebrate the diversity of our community."

For more events, visit refugeeweek.org.uk



BUILDING BRIDGES: Keighley Creative will hold another Peace Meal on June 25.