relationships with their new friends and many have requested second and third families.

FRIENDSHIP FAMILIES IN TORONTO
by Roni Chaleff, Operation Lifeline

Finding housing, employment and language classes, let alone friends, is not easy for newcomers no matter where they are. When mass transit enters the picture; when one needs to be able to read the newspaper to locate jobs and housing, call quickly, and get there before someone else gets there first; when there is no community centre and sometimes not even an easily-defined community; the situation grows impossible. In a sprawling urban environment, it is crucial to know there is someone you can turn to when you need help and the Manpower office is closed. It is crucial to know there is someone who cares.

Any person, family or group who is interested in becoming a Friendship Family to provide this orientation assistance and social contact to a government-sponsored refugee on an ongoing basis, first attends one of our monthly orientation meetings. Then he submits an informational sheet about himself, and the process begins of matching him with one refugee or refugee family newly arrived in the city, either from overseas or often from elsewhere in the country.

NDS, FRIENDS . . .

In such a large city we find it necessary to screen volunteers before actually introducing them to the refugees. A volunteer social worker does this by phone.

The Friendship Family and the refugees are first introduced by an interpreter. Later, since the Friendship Families come from all walks of life and from all parts of the city and would never have a chance to meet, organized meetings offer them an important opportunity to share their stories, their experiences in coping with difficulties, their discoveries of fun and cheap activities. Meetings for the newcomers in their own languages help clear up any concerns they have about their Friendship Families or any questions about employment, language classes, getting their families out of the refugee camps, etc. Finally, parties and cultural events contribute to a sense of community spirit on both sides, which is usually so difficult to create in a large city.

The Friendship Families themselves do much of the administration of the programme, including general office work, organizing social activities, speaking to their church groups to recruit more volunteers, and giving interviews to the media to publicize the programme. But one full-time coordinator is also necessary, as well as contract workers who speak Vietnamese, Chinese, Lao and Khmer.

WINNIPEG'S ESCORT SERVICE
by Marjery Soloman, Manitoba Joint Refugee Coordinating Committee

The “Be A Friend” programme of the Manitoba Joint Refugee Coordinating Committee was initiated in response to concerns expressed by the community for the government-sponsored Southeast Asian refugees arriving in Winnipeg.

We asked volunteers to work for one half day a week escorting people to medical appointments, helping to enroll children in school, explaining public transit or helping a family with their shopping. Soon many of the volunteers were recruiting their spouses, teen-age children and friends to help, and increasing their own volunteer time.

A former home economics teacher spends three afternoons a week explaining the complexities of shopping in a North American supermarket and showing families where they can find the oriental groceries necessary for their cooking. A retired businessman spends many hours preparing resumes and helping to find employment. New mothers are visited in hospital by a volunteer who not only makes sure that they will be able to manage on their own when they go home but supplies them with whatever baby clothes and equipment they may need from a seemingly endless supply she gathers from friends and acquaintances. Expectant mothers want to be assured that "Mrs. Mary" will come to see them after their babies are born.

Volunteers help people through the maze of government and agency offices - they act as advocates - they help to locate more suitable housing - they drive people to the hospital regardless of the hour - they take families on friendly outings - they seldom say "no."

We are pleased that our seventy plus Canadian volunteers are now being joined by many volunteers from the refugee community. These people are now ready to "be a friend" and help someone else start a new life in Canada.
NGO/UNHCR Consultation

Nine Canadian delegates attended an NGO/UNHCR consultation in Geneva, from 20 to 22 May 1981. The consultation stressed the need to achieve a balance between coordination of refugee relief activities on the one hand and the advantages of the diversity and independence of NGOs on the other. For instance, NGOs have the flexibility to assist people in refugee-like situations who do not qualify for formal refugee status; to act quickly and pragmatically, since they often already have connections within the relevant country, and to deal with refugees in an informal, person-to-person manner. At the same time, UNHCR can often act where difficulties arise between governments and foreign or local NGOs, and can facilitate cooperation and coordination in planning and implementation.

The UNHCR's principal interest in the consultation, evidenced by the lack of representation of NGOs from first-asylum countries, seems to have been extending its cooperation with NGOs to include Public Relations/Fundraising campaigns in donor countries. This proposition received a mixed reaction from the NGOs. Many of the NGOs, who had paid their own way to the conference, felt that little was produced relative to the amount spent.

International Roundtable

On the occasion of the official visit to Canada of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Poul Hartling, the Canadian Foundation for Refugees and the UNHCR hosted an international round table discussion on the subject of integration of refugees. Ten delegates from across Canada and delegates representing Denmark, France, Greece, Hong Kong, Norway, Spain, Sudan, the U.K., and the U.S. shared their experiences regarding initial reception, language acquisition, and cultural and emotional problems of refugees.

The European and North American countries all shared several of the same concerns:

- selection priorities that ensure less fortunate and less resourceful refugees access to resettlement
- settlement of refugees in sufficiently large communities of their own ethnic groups that they can retain their cultures and be involved in refugee policy and decision-making
- an international clearing house for information
- language training and orientation programmes for refugees in countries of first asylum in preparation for resettlement
- family reunification, family stress, and lack of guidance for young people separated from their families.

These concerns were, however, in sharp contrast to those of Sudan and Hong Kong, which in addition to being countries of resettlement are also countries of first asylum. The delegate from Sudan, where refugees walk across the border and go to friends or relations, did not think of integration in terms of permanent settlement, but of long-term but temporary asylum. The delegate from Hong Kong, which with its 5% million people had given 14,300 Southeast Asian refugees permanent resettlement and still harbours 15,000 awaiting durable solutions, emphasized that problems of integration were not urgent compared to the need to find places for resettlement.