

Syrian Student to Share His Story During Stockton Refugee Crisis Awareness Day

Interpretive Art Displays and Food and Clothing Drive Part of April 21 Event

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Galloway, NJ – Emad Khateeb, a junior Computer Science major at Stockton University, is one of the estimated nine million Syrians who have fled their homes since the outbreak of civil war in March 2011. He will share his personal journey from Syria to New Jersey during Refugee Crisis Awareness Day at Stockton University on **Thursday, April 21**.

After studying architecture for one year in Syria, Khateeb's university was shut down, which led him to leave the country to continue his education in the United States in 2013. He now lives in Atlantic City and during the summer, he travels to visit his family members who still live in Syria.

Khateeb said that he is thankful for support from his family and a scholarship that have helped him start a new life, but not everyone is as fortunate. "This whole refugee process is different from one person to another. Each person has their own story," he explained.

A number of Khateeb's friends also left and are in nearby countries, in Europe or the United States. "In the beginning, we all had a plan to leave for a year or two and then come back when the war is over," he said.

Khateeb realized that the crisis was not getting better. Five years have passed since the outbreak of the deadly civil war. About 470,000 people have been killed, and more than one in 10 Syrians have been wounded or killed since 2011. "Whether it's people who are still living there, who adapted to how things are and continued on with their life, or people who left to finish their education or to protect themselves, in the end, we are all looking for settlement," he said.

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At 6 p.m. in room B-126, Stockton President Harvey Kesselman will introduce Khateeb and other Syrian refugees who will share their stories and ways to help alleviate this humanitarian crisis.

Earlier in the day, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., an advocacy art installation of wooden diorama boxes will be displayed in the hallway of Upper F-Wing depicting artist interpretations of the refugee experience. Student Heather Gale of Dorchester in Cumberland County, worked with Melaku Lakew, professor of Economics, to develop themes, which include the experiences of the most vulnerable, the trauma of war and displacement, what it feels like to be a stranger in a foreign place and leaving everything behind, taking only memories.

“We hope that the dioramas will help viewers to empathize with the plight of refugees,” said Gale.

Donations will be collected on April 21 in Upper F-Wing from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and B-126 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. for the Narenj Tree Foundation and will be shipped to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Donations can also be dropped off at St. Maximillian Kolbe Parish in Marmora at 200 W. Tuckahoe Road on weekdays. Items needed include non-perishable food items, painkillers, first aid items, bandages, vitamins, toiletries, warm clothing, wheelchairs, crutches, buckets, rope, flashlights, tents and tarps.

The event is sponsored by Students of Global Challenges and Solutions, Amnesty International and the Global Studies Minor.

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