



Chopsticks: Marianne Lotman of the Multicultural Council in Oakville shares a culinary experience with the Mac family from Saigon, Viet Nam. They are,

clockwise from front left: Viet Mac, 21, Trucson, 17, Minh, 28, Hien, 26, Nam, 23, Tiendung, 18, father Giang, and Marianne Lotman.

Council gives newcomers hope

By John Robinson

The Macs — a family of boat people — survived five attacks by pirates in the South China Sea as they fled Viet Nam in an overcrowded boat.

When the family faced a different kind of struggle for survival after they arrived in this country three years ago, the strange words Oakville Multicultural Council meant nothing to them. Today those words signify friendship, hope and help.

"People are scared of government in Viet Nam," says Nam Mac, 23. "When we came here we were afraid. We didn't know what is allowed. The multicultural council helped us find out what we can do."

The council helped organize and

spent \$1,000 on a Vietnamese club where the Macs could meet the other 27 families of boat people living in Oakville. The council also assisted with a drop-in centre where the Macs could socialize with other refugees.

A Vietnamese soccer team was formed with the council's help. Brochures in the Vietnamese language could be found in the council's library and resource centre. Interpreters were made available. Help was provided in filling out tax forms.

Formed in 1978, the council is the only multicultural service in Halton. Information services in Burlington direct new immigrants to the Oakville group. It also receives calls from Mississauga.

The council consists of full-time coordinator Marianne Lotman, 22, a half-time secretary and a nine-member volunteer executive. The council's \$32,000 budget is funded by Ottawa, the province and the town. It is housed in a rented office at 110 Chisholm St. in Oakville.

"We help newcomers adapt to life in Canada," Lotman says. "And we help promote and maintain heritage and folklore."

The council gives advice and guidance on how to get grants, start heritage groups or dance festivals. It helps organize Canada Day celebrations in Oakville at which folklore groups and craft shows were featured.

Recently the council brought together about 100 churchmen, club presidents and social planning council representatives from across Halton in a multicultural conference in Oakville.

In a recent citizenship program 23 immigrants representing seven nationalities were aided by the council in their efforts to become Canadian citizens. The immigrants were helped on a one-to-one basis by two classes of students at White Oaks Secondary School in Oakville.

1982- The Council organize a Vietnamese Club in addition to a drop-in centre for refugees.

30th
Anniversary

Halton
Multicultural Council