

Community and Welfare **MY CAREER**

A city celebrates its refugee culture

MORE than 14,000 people from Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Liberia and Burma arrived in Australia as refugees between 2005 and 2006. Tomorrow marks the start of Refugee Week — a series of events and activities that celebrate the contribution refugees make to our community.

Settling into a new country is never easy, and for many of our new arrivals war and persecution in their homeland have meant the death of family members, separation from loved ones and disrupted educations. Many arrive in Australia with limited or no English after years spent in refugee camps.

Refugee Week aims to educate Australians about who refugees are; why they come here; the challenges they face and how the wider community can welcome them. This year the theme is the "voices of young refugees".

Youth worker Abderahim Gime arrived alone in Australia as a teenager in 1993 after fleeing Eritrea. He now works for Melbourne's Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, a community-based organisation, where he is an advocate for young migrants.

Mr Gime spent eight years in Sudan before being accepted by Australia as a refugee. Reunited with his brother and sister in Perth, he completed an arts degree before he

agencies. Transition is not easy for them — everything is new and unfamiliar.

Mr Gime says those in his line of work need to be patient, committed and dedicated.

"You have to believe in the work and have a good dose of humanitarian sympathy and understanding, otherwise it's hard," he says.

"Young people need support at a certain stage of their life. I understand because I have had the same experiences.

"The best thing is you are helping someone who is in need. And that for sure will enable them in the long run to find their feet because they are still young. They can catch up, they can have a better future than they would have otherwise."

Mr Gime says Refugee Week will help the public to understand what it means to be a refugee.

"While people are crowded in their own times and busy with their everyday life, to have an event like this will make them pause and see that there are refugees in the world. Probably people then try to know what being a refugee means."

Refugee Week starts in Fitzroy tomorrow with the Emerge Festival. **DEBI TAYLOR**

LINK

www.refugeecouncil.org.au
Phone 9348 2245



Abderahim Gime from the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues. PICTURE: RODGER CUMMINS

and his siblings moved to Melbourne. After completing honours in sociology at La Trobe University, Mr Gime drove a taxi and worked in hospitality before being offered a youth-worker's position at CMYI.

Mr Gime helps newly arrived refugees, young people and their families with the daunting task of fitting in to a new country. "As part

of my program I support young people with education and work, training, housing and counselling," explains Mr Gime, who is based in St Albans.

"They come from many different backgrounds — some don't read and write in English, so I can fill in forms for them or speak on their behalf with Centrelink and other



ON THE NOSE

Red Nose Day, raising money for AIDS and Kids (formerly SIDS-Australia), is on June 29. Money raised from the sale of each red nose goes to help the organisation with outreach and bereavement support following the sudden, unexpected death of an infant or young child. education campaigns and research. rednoseday.com.au

LINK TO WORK

The Linking Young People to Employment and Training project is looking to match 15 to 24-year-olds from Darebin and Whittlesea with volunteer mentors. Young people not in employment, education or training will receive support and guidance and can become involved in a peer recreation program aimed at building self-esteem, confidence and life skills. Contact Joanna or Sophia at RMIT Youth and Community Partnerships on 9925 7231 or joanna.mason@rmit.edu.au