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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
December 31, 2015

**Gov. Shumlin & Vt. Businesses Step Up for Vermont High School Students Working to Help Syrian Refugees**

**MONTPELIER** – Two South Burlington high school students got a boost today in their efforts to help Syrian refugees from Gov. Peter Shumlin and a number of Vermont ski areas and local businesses.

The South Burlington students, Lena Ginawi and Kiran Waqar, were featured on [Vermont Public Radio](#) for their efforts to collect fleece blankets and warm clothing for those affected by the violence in Syria. Both are first generation immigrants to Vermont.

“When I heard about Lena and Kiran, I could not have been more proud,” Gov. Shumlin said. “At a time when the conversation about refugees often focuses on the worst of human emotions, Lena and Kiran are showing that the most powerful way to combat hatred and bigotry is with compassion. Both are truly admirable young people and we are so lucky to call them Vermonters.”

Ginawi and Waqar are reaching out to individuals and Vermont businesses for donations. After hearing the story, the Governor’s Office reached out to a number of Vermont businesses and business groups for help. Many stepped forward with pledges of donations in just 24 hours.

Vermont’s ski areas were quick to step up to the plate. Several resorts who have not already donated to other warm clothing charities have pledged donations to this effort, including Killington/Pico, Sugarbush, Jay Peak, Smugglers’ Notch, and Burke.

A number of other Vermont businesses also pledged support, including Select Design, Vermont Country Store, and Skida.

“I’m really encouraged and thankful to live in a state with local businesses that care so much about community and giving back,” Gov. Shumlin said. “Vermont has a wonderful business community that keeps our state strong.”

“The welcome return of winter weather to Vermont certainly reminds us that there are always those in need of warm clothing,” said Ski Vermont President Parker Riehle. “In this giving season of the year, this initiative is the perfect way for our ski areas to lend a hand and help out those in need.”

“Unless your ancestors were here before Columbus, we are all immigrants and the experiences of our ancestors should all be front of mind as we see new waves of immigrants looking for a better life on our shores,” said Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Tom Torti.

Other Vermont companies looking to help should contact the Governor’s Office at 802-828-3333.

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