

Somali Radio a voice from home;

Comforting link: Weekly show from Scottdale station caters to recent immigrants and refugees.

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution

August 26, 1999, Thursday,, Home Edition

Copyright 1999 The Atlanta Constitution

Section: DeKalb Extra; Pg. 3JA

Length: 459 words

Byline: Erik Rodriguez, Staff

Body

For two hours every week, Hussien Mohamed reaches out to an isolated community, providing critical information and **comfort** for the homesick.

From the offices of WATB-AM 1420 on North Decatur Road in **Scottdale**, Mohamed broadcasts the Sagal **Somali Radio** Service.

The **radio show caters** to **recent immigrants** and **refugees** from **Somali**- speaking countries.
AJC

He created the **show**, which airs 2-4 p.m. Saturdays, last summer after participating in an **immigrant** outreach program with the DeKalb County Board of Health.

"I got the whole idea after I found out that the **immigrant** population has very little communication," he said.

Mohamed said the biggest problem facing **Somali**-speaking **immigrants**, who come to the United States from Somalia, Ethiopia or Kenya, is a language barrier.

"If you don't speak English, then you're not aware of what's going on in your area," he said.

The Sagal **Somali Radio** Service went on the air in July 1998 and included local announcements, international news from the BBC and entertainment --- all in **Somali**.

Mohamed, who is Ethiopian, said the initial response was enormous.

"A mother and father started crying because they had forgotten the **radio station** back home," Mohamed said.
"They forgot the music and things they used to hear."

Sue Chovanec, program coordinator of World Relief, which provides financial support for the program, said for some **Somali refugees** and **immigrants** the program may be their only reliable source of information.

"There are a lot of people in his community who don't read or write, so of course hearing information is very important, rather than just hearing rumors, " Chovanec said.

For some listeners, the service provides a **comforting link** to the homeland.

"I think it's doing a good job," said Adan Hussein, manager of Amal Grocery on Memorial Drive. "If you look at it, they are the only source of news **from home** back in Somalia and other parts of the world."

Somali Radio a voice from home; Comforting link: Weekly show from Scottdale station caters to recent immigrants and refugees.

The **show**'s audience, which Mohamed estimates is about 5,000, grows every day with the area's **Somali**-speaking population.

Although the DeKalb County Board of Health provides most of the **show**'s funding, other support comes from World Relief, Newcomers Network and the International Arts and Cultural Center of Clarkston. Mohamed also relies on donations to keep the Sagal **Somali Radio** Service going strong.

Other plans include adding sponsors, extending the length of the program and producing segments of the **show** in Arabic and Bosnian.

"I'm hoping this will survive," Mohamed said. "If the community supports this, everything will move. I think we'll continue to exist --- we already made it past the first year."

For more information about the Sagal **Somali Radio** Service, call 404-296- 3496.

Graphic

Photo

News and entertainment: Hussien H. Mohamed, program coordinator for Sagal **Somali Radio** Service, talks on the phone as disc jockeys Noor Omar Aashito (center) and Ibrahim Hassan Jama take their turns at the microphone at the North Decatur Road offices of WATB-AM (1420). / CHARLOTTE B. TEAGLE / Staff

Photo

Ibrahim Hassan Jama broadcasts live on WATB. / CHARLOTTE B. TEAGLE / Staff (Teaser)

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: IMMIGRATION (91%); **REFUGEES** (90%); COUNTY GOVERNMENT (89%); LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES (77%); PRESS RELEASES (76%); MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS (72%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (70%)

Company: SA GUYOMARC'H ALIMENTAIRE (SAGAL) (58%); SA GUYOMARC'H ALIMENTAIRE (SAGAL) (58%)

Industry: **RADIO** BROADCAST INDUSTRY (90%); SPONSORSHIP (77%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (70%)

Geographic: SOMALIA (95%); ETHIOPIA (92%); UNITED STATES (79%); KENYA (77%)

Load-Date: August 26, 1999