

JAXTHRIVE

2021/222

JaxTHRIVE, a local student-led nonprofit, welcomes refugee children to America through tutoring and mentoring. Founded in 2017 as a one-on-one Saturday educational program, the organization transitioned to virtual tutoring via ZOOM in 2020 with the emergence of Covid. Although anxious to get back to in-person tutoring, JaxTHRIVE found that by offering an on-line program it could engage volunteers and refugee students from all over the world.

Believing in the power of collaboration and collective voice, this nonprofit partners with Lutheran Social Services, Kim's Open Door, and other organizations in the refugee resettlement arena to make a difference. Most recently, it announced a new partnership in Miami with the Refugee Assistance Alliance. JaxTHRIVE boasts a current virtual enrollment of 25 students but expects that number to increase as more refugees from Afghanistan are allowed into the country.

200+ Refugee Students impacted since 2017



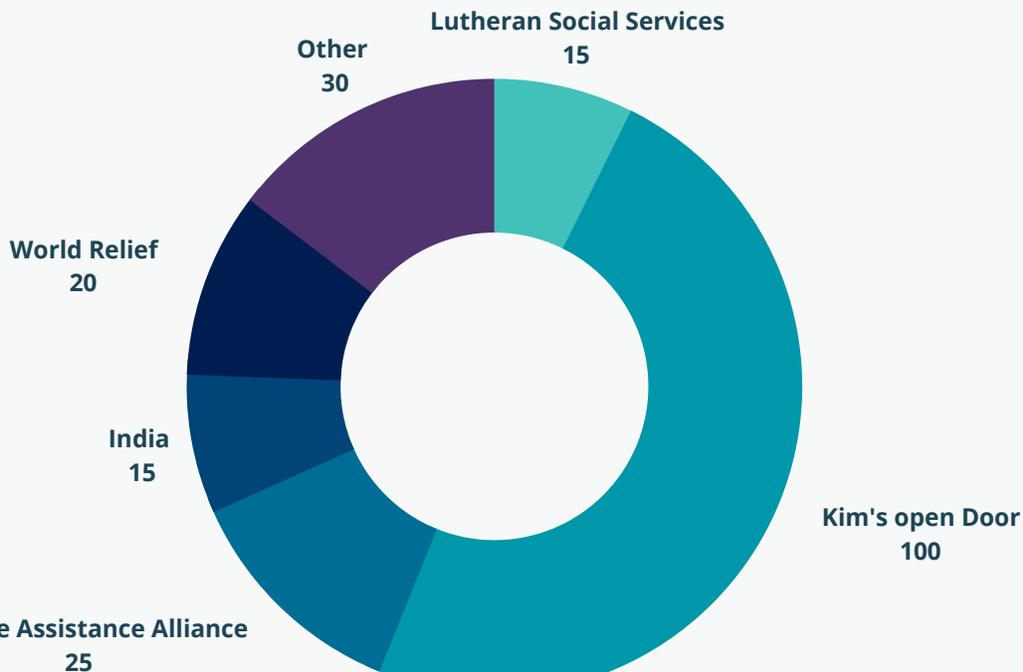
YEAR IN REVIEW



300+ Volunteers Since Inception

Founded as a youth-led movement, its Leadership Council is led by co-presidents Hope Freedman and Alexis Magnano, who work to bring together a group of talented and diverse individuals who engage their community, show leadership, and work together to spread our mission. JaxTHRIVE is unique in its approach as it offers comprehensive services including SAT/ACT test preparation, financial literacy boot camps and college admission strategies in addition to academic tutoring. Its goal is to help students advance in the classroom and flourish in the community.

[Email jaxthrive@gmail.com to get involved.](mailto:jaxthrive@gmail.com)





JAXTHRIVE GALA

AN OUTDOOR EVENING TO REMEMBER!

After two years without a major fundraiser, we were thrilled to host an incredible event "outside" at the beautiful Pablo Creek Reserve. We are incredibly grateful to our many friends, local businesses and sponsors who made this event a huge success! Musical entertainment was provided by the fantastic "To The Bird" playing along with Leila Warren on the violin. It was wonderful to finally be back in person and we raised over \$23,000! Thank you so much for your support!!!

"HOLIDAY IN A BUCKET"

Over the past 2 years, during the COVID-19 restrictive periods, JaxTHRIVE launched a variety of special service projects such as our "Holiday in a Bucket" to offer our volunteers additional ways to contribute. Volunteers were matched with newly arrived families from Afghanistan or with foster children from Jewish Family Services. Volunteers decorated and filled beautiful holiday-themed buckets with gift items, cards and homemade treats for the families to enjoy together. While many people aided in this effort, we made special mention of Chloe, and her husband's USS Detroit Blue Crew who donated 20 overflowing holiday buckets! Knowing that many of the families from Afghanistan who were resettled here in Jacksonville were given priority status because they risked their lives to help our U.S. soldiers, made this project even more meaningful!



CONNECTING VIRTUALLY HAS ACCELERATED OUR ABILITY TO EXPORT JAXTHRIVE TO MULTIPLE CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD. READ SOME OF OUR VOLUNTEERS AMAZING STORIES BELOW...

This year has been my 4th year working for JaxTHRIVE and each year gave me a chance to meet with students from different cities and countries in the world mostly who speak another language at home other than English. This past year I had the privilege of meeting and working with Sindos in one-on-one sessions multiple times in a week depending on what was needed for her via Zoom. As I am a volunteer for JaxTHRIVE, I thought I would be supporting her with schoolwork especially the help with academic language, but it turned out that I was the one who learned so much from her. Sindos is a very bright, kind, resilient, and one of the most hardworking people I have ever met. She asked me questions until she fully understood and always tried her best in schoolwork. As her mentor, I really felt rewarding and proud to see Sindos' progress. What really opened my eyes was, Sindos would step up and reach out to me to help her family's needs in language support as well. She was willing to be the language connector between her family and I for the family language needs. I really enjoyed getting to know, meeting Sindos, and sharing our love for learning together. -Sarah Park, 10th grade from Bolles High School

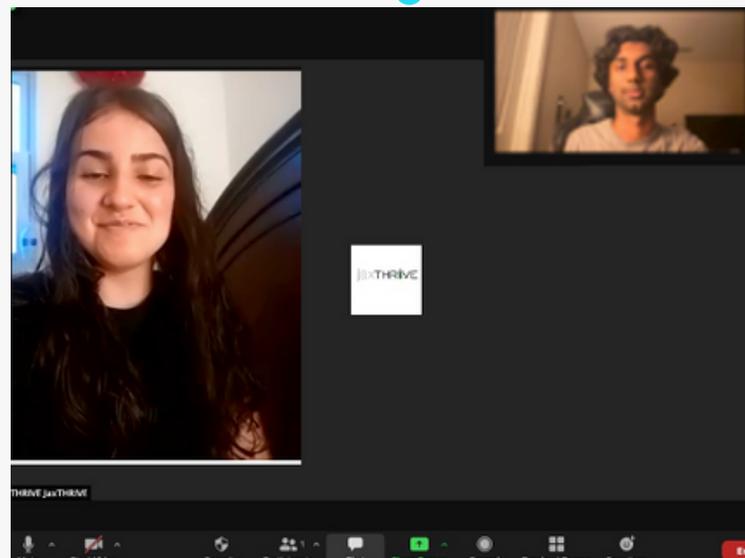


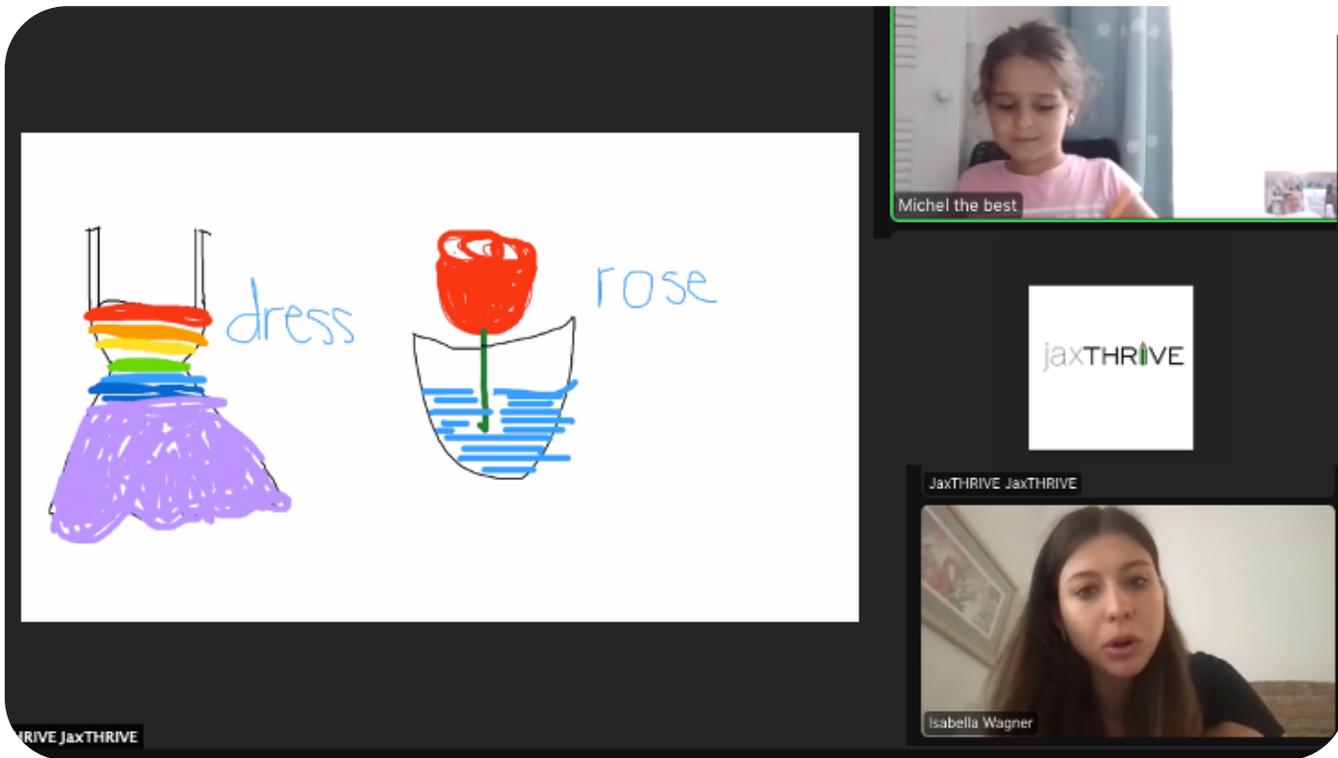
JaxTHRIVE
volunteers have
logged more than
10,000+ Service
hours since 2017!



Volunteering with JaxTHRIVE to tutor my student, Hala, has been an extremely enjoyable and fulfilling experience. Every week, I am able to work with Hala to help her advance in the classroom. One specific session, when I was helping Hala learn how to decipher slopes from a graph, Hala remarked, "I understand now!" This type of realization occurs almost every session. Ultimately, helping Hala increase her confidence in her work and her understanding of difficult topics has been extremely rewarding.

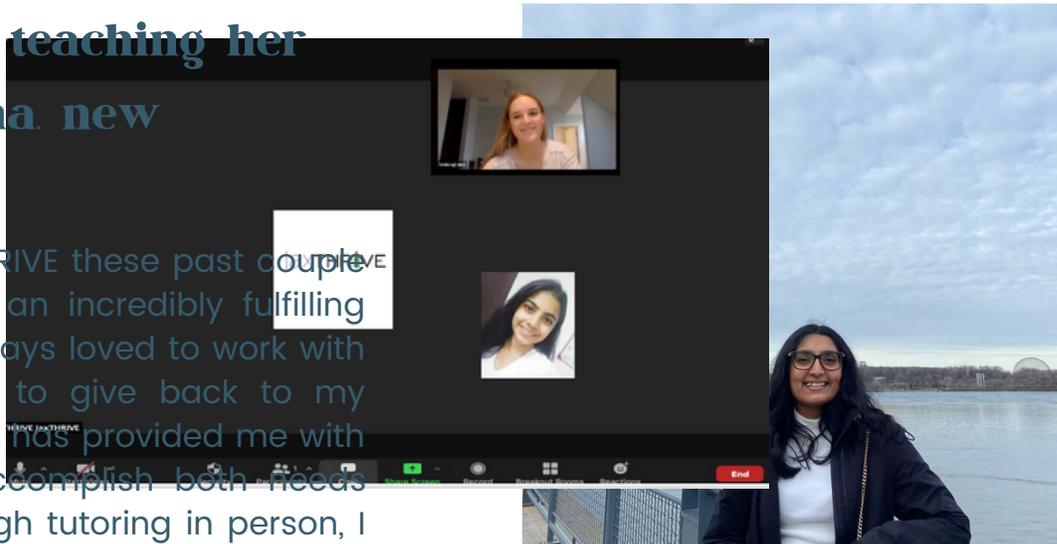
-Sidarth Senthil-12th grade, Columbus High School in Georgia





Isabella enjoys teaching her student Angelina new vocabulary!

Volunteering at JaxTHRIVE these past couple of months has been an incredibly fulfilling experience. I have always loved to work with children and desired to give back to my community. JaxTHRIVE has provided me with the opportunity to accomplish both needs simultaneously. Through tutoring in person, I have enjoyed spending time with Jacksonville's refugee youth and educating them about American culture, while learning about their own traditions. Being an online tutor has afforded me the opportunity to help multiple students from outside of Jacksonville. In particular, I have been teaching one student the alphabet weekly, and during our most recent session, she was able to read three-letter words for the first time. This was not only amazing to witness but allowed me to see the direct impact I was making. I appreciate all that JaxTHRIVE has done for the refugee community, and I am looking forward to continue to volunteer here. -Isabella, College Student Jacksonville



Kajal tutors from her home in St. Pete Florida

My experience volunteering with JaxTHRIVE has been filled with great memories and lessons that have influenced my outlook on life. Regardless of how chaotic my day has been going, I always look forward to the tutoring sessions because the students I get to work with have an infectious energy that brightens up my day. Their enthusiasm for learning is genuinely heartwarming and their dedication to overcoming any obstacles to do their best work is commendable. Not only do I get to help students with their work, but I also get to learn about a cool science experiment they did in school or some facts about the pets they have.

**IN JANUARY 2022, WE *FINALLY* RESUMED OUR
IN PERSON TUTORING WITH OUR PARTNER,
KIM'S OPEN DOOR. BEING WITH THE KIDS
IN PERSON IS REALLY SPECIAL!**



"Over the past year, I have looked forward to meeting my good friend Nasiblah at our JaxTHRIVE Super Saturdays. I always look for him as the student bus pulls in to drop off our students. Nasiblah is always smiling and excited to see me. I enjoy helping him with his reading and writing. He is an incredibly hard worker and has shown vast improvements over the time that I have been working with him! I will miss him this summer!"-

Carter Magnano-10th grade Ponte Vedra High School



MORE SATURDAY FUN WITH OUR STUDENTS! SCIENCE, READING, SOCCER, AND ART



WE HAD FUN CONNECTING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM...



Finding opportunities to get to know some of the local refugee youth outside of tutoring is incredibly important. So, during a day off from school last November, JaxTHRIVE partnered with Lutheran Social Services and enjoyed an amazing afternoon. With funds awarded from the America's Promise Power of Youth Award, they met for a delicious lunch in the park and then a trip to the Cummer Museum. Discussing the art and getting to know these students on a more personal level was an incredible experience. -Hope Freedman 12th grade Ponte Vedra High School

JaxTHRIVE was awarded a grant through the Whole Foods Market Community Giving Program which aims to support the local community. We partnered with Lutheran Social Services once again to coordinate a field trip to visit Sweet Pete's, the largest candy store in the southeast United States. A master candy maker led the teens in a candy cane workshop and, afterwards, they were provided with a behind-the-scenes tour of the candy factory. The group had a fabulous time designing fancy candy creations that they could eat and bring home to their families. It was an exciting day for everyone! -Alexis Magnano 12th grade Ponte Vedra High School



A Day at the Beach!

On Saturday, May 30th, we had an exciting day taking our new Ukrainian refugee friends to the beach for Memorial Day! We are helping two families (two mothers each with two children) who fled Ukraine on April 11th, 2022. We wanted to share with them how Americans celebrate Memorial Day, honoring the men and women who served in our U.S. military. This was especially significant for these families because they had to leave behind their husbands, fathers, uncles, and brothers to fight in the war to save their country. JaxTHRIVE now has one tutor working with the mothers and another tutor helping the 4 children to learn English. -Alexis Magnano 12th grade



"Fight Like a Girl" Self Defense Clinic



It was great having some of our students attend the annual "Fight Like A Girl" self defense clinic hosted by the Ponte Vedra Generation WOW club. Our instructor stressed the importance of how not to be a victim, situational awareness, never giving up your back, and using certain body positions to exploit strengths of a smaller body against a larger, would be, attacker. The girls learned how to fight off someone from a variety of angles, break arm holds, and get away from an attacker when on the ground. While they hope to never be in this type of situation, they are more prepared should anything ever happen.-Hope Freedman, 12th grade Ponte Vedra High School

"GO CONFIDENTLY IN THE DIRECTION OF YOUR DREAMS...LIVE THE LIFE YOU HAVE IMAGINED."



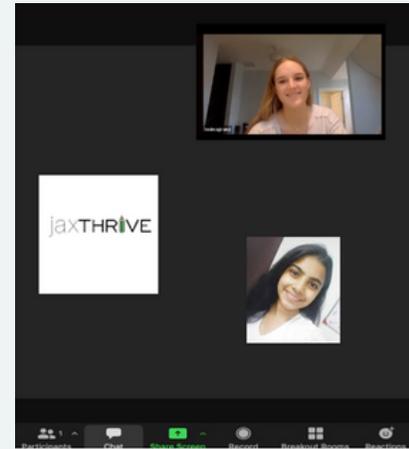
"Hi" to all of my American, Asian, African, Spanish, and Mexican friends! My name is Abdul. I am 16 years old, just finishing 10th grade and I was born in Afghanistan. I am so happy that I am here with you all today. I left my country of Afghanistan in early 2021 because there were so many problems. I could not do anything in my country because the educational system was such poor quality. I came to the U.S. right before the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021. Now, it is so hard for me to watch my friends who have had to deal with the Taliban controlling our beautiful country. People are not safe in Afghanistan, and this is a real problem! America is a great place for me to study. I want to develop my future like other students in the U.S. Although I sometimes do have problems, I can easily solve them in America! I would like to study hard to become a dentist. In American, if I study hard, I can become a dentist which is great! This is my dream! Thank you!



Our JaxTHRIVE student, Mehrab was able to realize her dream of owning her own luxury car business by spending the day shadowing Frank Mattar at Mercedes! He let her shadow him, sharing a bit of what he does in a regular day and then gave her and her younger brother Monzier a behind-the-scenes tour at Mercedes. They were even treated to pick out a special item at the Mercedes store! Monzier used to want to become a policeman, but now wants to work in sales at Mercedes or BMW!

IT WAS AMAZING TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER COUNTRIES

This past year, I had a unique opportunity to coordinate a JaxTHRIVE partnership with OneProsper International, a nonprofit based in Canada that is focused on ending female illiteracy and gender-based poverty in rural India. I set up the east coast OneProsper English Learning Buddy program which is a virtual mentoring program designed to help girls in the Thar Desert area of India to learn English. I managed volunteers from 3 schools and one university. Although the program was paused for five weeks when India shut down to manage their COVID cases, and then again during their country-wide school examinations, it was exciting to have an opportunity to get to know a girl my age living in India. I was paired with Diya, a 16-year-old student who enjoys reading, listening to music and "watching the stars" in her free time. I remember our first Zoom call, how interesting it was that her room was decorated just like an American teenager's room, filled with posters and colorful pictures. Her career goal is to one day, become a doctor. -Alexis Magnano



An important part of JaxTHRIVE is our JaxTHRIVE Journeys program, which is a community-based interactive lecture series featuring speakers from many of our refugee countries. Each program explores the food, culture, and politics of a particular country. Topics have focused on Syria, the Lost Boys from Sudan and most recently Afghanistan.



We also started a Zoom teen series where we invite students from all over the world to discuss and attempt to solve some of our current global challenges in a safe and open virtual environment. We have discussed a variety of global issues including global warming and our differing experiences with COVID-19 rules and restrictions. Our most recent group included teens from Iraq and across the US who shared insights, opinions, and questions.



NEVER FORGET...

Hello everyone, my name is Dar Salam, and I am from Sudan. Of course, everyone knows me, but I wanted to introduce you to my name, which means the “Place of Peace”. My goal is to bring peace everywhere in the world. I attend Atlantic Coast High School and this year I am a senior. This is my final year in high school. I recently graduated high school with the help from a few caring, and loving groups in Jacksonville. These programs are Kim’s Open Door, Lutheran Social Services (LSS), and JaxTHRIVE. When I first came in the United States, I didn’t speak any English, not even A to Z. My sisters and I started summer camp at Kim’s Open Door where they taught us the alphabet letters and basic English. Eventually, I started school. At this time, I also started coming to the LSS after-school program where they help refugee students with their homework using online mentors, and fun activities. Since I was in 9th grade, Mr. Gene (from LSS) has picked me up from school and taken me to work with volunteers who have taught me what to do and what not to do. I even had a mentor one or two days each week over Zoom.

Another program that I loved was the Super Saturday School with JaxTHRIVE that helped Refugee students with English as their second language. They have many volunteers helping students with their homework, reading books, math, science, and fun activities. They also have online mentoring that I used. My mentor’s name was Roberto; he’s an excellent student who helped me with geometry and SAT test. These programs are not the same as a school. What I mean by that, in high school no one will teach you how to read step by step, rather they teach you as whole students; but these programs were on site with me and taught me step by step to learn.

Because of everyone’s help, I was able to get good grades, especially this year. I got all A/B’s and surpassed my SAT test goal which was exciting. Without their help, I wouldn’t have made it. I want to thank each and every one of you for the time you spent teaching me and always being positive with me. These programs are absolutely making a big difference! I am very grateful for all of your help and wish the best to all of these amazing volunteers! Love you and miss you all!

