

jaxTHRIVE

JUNE 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

A MESSAGE FROM GRACE AND CHASE:



Dear Friends,

It's been another incredible year for JaxTHRIVE. We are so grateful to our volunteers, donors, and our partner non-profits for giving us the opportunity to positively impact refugee children in our community. This year, JaxTHRIVE went well beyond math and English tutoring. From assisting with science fair projects to building a balloon powered rocket car, our volunteers have dedicated their Saturdays to improving the lives and education of America's newest arrivals. We've also built friendships along the way as we continue to be seen as a "welcoming wagon" to those in need.

We thought you should hear directly from our volunteers, so this year's annual report is filled with articles and pictures that capture the unique experience of our JaxTHRIVE volunteers. We hope you enjoy reading their personal stories.

One of our founders, Grace will be heading to Yale University in the fall and plans to continue her involvement with the refugee community in New Haven. Who knows there might even be a "NewHaven THRIVE" in the future? Thankfully, Chase is well positioned and has been busy successfully recruiting additional volunteers, planning for additional JaxTHRIVE clubs in local high schools, and creating a leadership team that will take us into 2020 and beyond.

The many generous donations received along with competitive grants we won will help ensure JaxTHRIVE continues to remain a vibrant resource for the Jacksonville community. We are forever appreciative of your support.

With Gratitude,
Grace and Chase
Co-founders

OUR MISSION:

JaxTHRIVE is a welcoming resource to refugee students who have come to this country under extraordinary circumstances.

Our aim is to provide a nurturing environment where tutoring, life skills mentoring, and friendship help them advance in the classroom and flourish in our community.





Science Fair Success!

by Eesha Reddy and Anna Lerch

Last October, we were given the opportunity to help Badura and Chantelle with their science fair projects. Over the course of the month, we met numerous times to work through each step of the science fair process. Badura choose to focus her project on the density of different candy bars and Chantell did her project on how the coloring of Skittles affects their dissolution. Seeing the kids with fully completed science fair projects and a new set of knowledge and so much confidence was truly amazing! Later on, we learned that Chantell placed first in her school's science fair and Badura placed second in her school's science fair. We were thrilled!

Impact on Children

by Grace Freedman

- We mentored/tutored 75 amazing children at two different sites. Refugee students have come from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, Central African Republic, Colombia, Cuba, D.R. Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, South Sudan, Sudan and Syria.
- We are thrilled to share test results based on measurements made in conjunction with our partner non-profit indicating that 88% of our kids improved by more than 3 reading levels demonstrating tangible progress!
- At the beginning of the academic year, each child is given a binder which volunteers use to write notes about their progress and highlight what they worked on for a particular Saturday. The children earn stamps based on their performance, weekly attendance, and attitude. Twice each year, these stamps can be redeemed during a shopping trip with their tutors at the local Dollar Tree store. The students appreciate the opportunity to earn money via their efforts as well as the satisfaction of using their newly acquired math skills to determine the best way to spend it.

Our Amazing Volunteers

- We recruited over 161 volunteers rotating on Saturdays throughout the school year.
- Volunteers represent 8 High Schools (Ponte Vedra, Fletcher, Bolles, Episcopal, Stanton, Greenwood, Oakleaf, Creekside) 2 Middle Schools (Landrum, JCDS), and 1 university (UNF).
- We logged almost 5000 community service hours over the past 2 years!
- Volunteers were inspired to create their own fundraising efforts in support of JaxTHRIVE, including our 2nd annual holiday fun run, school supply and school uniform drives, book and clothing collections, shoe drives, dance costume collections and a LEGO donation drive.



Stem Projects Spark Interest by Chase Magnano

For the 2018-2019 year, we focused on integrating weekly STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Math) project-based learning activities into our Saturday lessons that were designed to spark our refugee students' interest in these areas. The STEM activities involved teamwork and thoughtful dialogue where students exchanged ideas and discussed ways to critically analyze the project and problem-solve. Through these activities, students learned how to divide up responsibilities, compromise, listen to and encourage each other and foster a love for STEM. After each project, we shared our thoughts about what worked well and what could be improved upon next time, while each team showcased their completed project. One of the most memorable days at JaxTHRIVE was when we constructed cars out of old boxes and bottle caps that were powered by a balloon releasing air.



Every child had a different plan for how the car should be built, but as they were grouped into teams, they had to negotiate with each other and collaborate, in many cases, to improve upon their previous designs. When every team had completed their cardboard car, they lined up to race each other for the final metric to determine which design was superior. However, as the cars whizzed down the hallway, every child forgot about winning and losing and simply enjoyed the moment with their friends, refugees and volunteers alike. Remembering that day, reminds me of the incredible value these projects hold, and they excite me for the future of this organization and, more importantly, the future of these children.



JaxTHRIVE Children Celebrate Their Mothers by Eesha Reddy

As I was getting ready to head over to World Relief, I kept wondering what to get my Mom for Mother's Day. I knew I wanted to get her a card and flowers. Then it hit me, why not have the kids write their own Mother's Day cards. So I grabbed some construction paper, markers and chocolate, because we all love chocolate. The kids had so much fun making the cards, and I'm sure their moms were excited to receive them.



Hunger Fight

by Chase Magnano

Each December, JaxTHRIVE partners with Kim's Open Door to support their Hunger Fight initiative to feed the homeless of Jacksonville! Teams of 10 are organized consisting of JaxTHRIVE volunteers paired with refugee students. We work together to measure and pack nutritious meals of beans and rice, macaroni and cheese and brown sugar oatmeal that are delivered to homeless shelters and organizations that support the homeless throughout Jacksonville. This year, we helped to prepare 22,700 meals! We all agreed that it was an amazing day!



Unsure

by Charlotte Rosenberg

Living in a new country where the language and culture are unfamiliar is difficult enough but comprehending a new currency in which the bigger coin does not always indicate higher value is unfathomable to a young child. In the math room at JaxThrive, we teach basic money skills to the kids, but the best way for them to understand American money is to practice using it. We took the kids to the Dollar Tree to help them transition from unsure to a bit more familiar with American currency as well as to treat them to a day of Christmas shopping.

Likewise, everything we do at JaxTHRIVE helps the kids become more familiar, with their homework, learning English, and American culture as well!



JaxTHRIVE Journeys by Chase Magnano

JaxTHRIVE Journeys is our most recent program expansion. We started this quarterly interactive community education program series to explore the food, culture and history of the countries of our JaxTHRIVE refugee youth.

Our first discussion that focused on Syria was led by Dr. Yazan Khatib, President of FCCI-First Coast Cardiovascular Institute and winner of the 2012 ONEJAX Humanitarian award. Dr. Khatib is an interventional cardiologist and an active philanthropist, dedicated to inter-cultural dialogue and to the promotion of a greater understanding of the world.



Our next presentation series will take place in the fall. Check back on our website (www.JaxTHRIVE.net) for details.

Saturday Morning Connections by Anna-Grace Coffing

JaxTHRIVE has given me countless opportunities to broaden my perspective on life, and has allowed me to meet many new people from my area and beyond. Being greeted with smiling faces every Saturday morning is something I always look forward to, and I love having the chance to sit down with the kids and help them read a book, or do some math problems. Whether it's a game, or a one-on-one interaction, both the child and the volunteer are gaining so much from each other.



Volunteer Training by Scout Snell

JaxTHRIVE is my favorite part of every Saturday! The way that the kids light up when they see me or when I teach them something new is a feeling that you just can't get anywhere else. Working with the other volunteers has taught me about leadership and the importance of setting a positive example. Teaching the other volunteers how to work with the kids and training them about tips and techniques makes it easier to get to know them and makes JaxTHRIVE a better experience for everyone involved!



Stanton Toy and Shoe Drive by Sydney Chin, Anna Lerch & Eesha Reddy

After working with the children at World Relief for the past few months, we noticed that the kids loved getting to select an item to take home with them. With that in mind, this past April we held a toy & shoe drive to collect more donations. We held the drive at our school, Stanton College Prep, through our National Honor Society club. All in all, we were able to gather over a hundred pairs of shoes and around fifty toys! The shoes went to support Kim's Open Door's programs for the kids, while the kids at World Relief got the toys. It was wonderful to see how ecstatic the kids were as they picked out their favorite stuffed animals, toy cars and even purses. We can't wait to continue working with these fantastic kids this upcoming academic year.



CORE Values Showing Through: Girl Scout Troop 27 Makes an Impact

by Alexis Magnano, Lindsey Blisko, Julia Peiris and Emily Rohan

Over the past two years, financial and social support for refugees has declined drastically in Florida. In response to this challenge, Girl Scout Troop 27 designed and executed their CORE (Creating Opportunities for Reading and Empowerment) project, to fulfill the Silver Award Requirement. The Silver Award is the highest award a Girl Scout Cadette can earn. Their project was a multifaceted initiative that provided mentoring, school supplies, school outfits and uniforms and a mobile library to new refugee students in the Jacksonville community.



Troop 27 chose to initiate this project after they saw firsthand the profound lack of support and resources available to refugee children in Jacksonville. Mentoring refugee children each Saturday and providing the resources necessary for them to succeed in school, enabled Troop 27 to make a substantial impact on these vulnerable students. Troop 27 created their CORE project because they wanted to give refugee children in Jacksonville the skills and resources necessary to succeed in life and flourish in their community. Girl Scout Troop 27 aspires to help ensure that refugee children have educational and social support that will help them be successful, self-sufficient and contributing members of their new communities here in the United States.



Fletcher High Honor Students Feed the Dream by Ford Chandler

My name is Phillip (Ford) Chandler and I have seen JaxTHRIVE grow from a dream to a reality. JaxTHRIVE has successfully recruited volunteers from all corners of Jacksonville and beyond. The organization provided me with a unique leadership experience early in 2019 by tasking me with expanding the volunteering opportunities through my high school- Duncan U. Fletcher. I specifically worked with National Honor Society (NHS) which is a club at school I also participate in. The feedback from the members of NHS, who successfully completed 50 hours of refugee tutoring, was positive with an interest in pushing JaxTHRIVE to its highest potential. As a JaxTHRIVE Ambassador, I am excited to see what we accomplish next year.



"After I've had a stressful week, I enjoy going to JaxTHRIVE to unwind by helping others" - Marc Hardman, rising freshman and the University of Georgia

UNF Students Pitch In!

by Trevor Moore

As a student at the University of North Florida, I am always searching for ways to make a difference in the world. During the spring semester of my Global Health course, we were tasked with finding a way to make an impact on our community and I decided to focus on coordinating a donation drive for JaxTHRIVE. It really was quite an experience to put together a drive and get the word out to people and encourage them to donate. However, I did not undertake this on my own, I got help from a kindergarten Sunday school class at my church. The children were excited to get involved. This affected me personally because I was able to energize the children to support each other purely from the satisfaction of helping someone else. Executing this project reinstalled in me the incredible value of helping others. I believe the project not only impacted me, but also affected those who supported my cause. As much as this project allowed me to fulfill my love for philanthropy, I feel that the donors received an equally important appreciation for the cause they supported.



After completing this project, it was clear that we had made a real impact. Many of the refugees do not have access to a library and any new book they receive could encourage them to develop a love for reading. JaxTHRIVE helps tutor, teach life skills, and provide friendship to those who truly need it. It is so incredible to believe that I can help them reach their goals by merely collecting school supplies and books. The nurturing environment that JaxTHRIVE is providing shows the children that a school is a positive environment to learn and socialize.

These experiences will help them to grow and move forward to become the best they can be. This project revealed to me that little things really do help in a big way. It was not only the collection of these items, but it was the intrinsic feeling from all of my past, present and future missions that I will play a role in that makes this truly amazing.



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