

jaxTHRIVE

2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

A youth-led, non-profit organization with a mission to educate and inspire refugee children

www.jaxthrive.net

**Hope Freedman and Alexis
Magnano-
Leadership Council
Co-Presidents and Founding
Members**



Year in Review

BY ALEXIS AND HOPE

With the emergence of the Coronavirus disease pandemic, JaxTHRIVE successfully transitioned to virtual tutoring in the Jacksonville community and beyond. Leveraging technology, we were able to expand our volunteer base as well as our student population to other cities across the country and, eventually, around the world. Virtual tutoring has afforded volunteers and students the opportunity to be available, not just on the weekend, but also during the week (24/7) thus expanding our impact. Having harnessed the infrastructure to scale operations, we extended our reach, partnering with several non-profit organizations across the country that also work in the refugee arena to pair our volunteers with new students. COVID-19 also highlighted the needs of another overlooked, vulnerable and growing population in our community - homeless families. We now offer virtual tutoring/mentoring and lead face-to-face STEM and art projects for the children living at the Emergency Services and Homeless Coalition in St. Johns County. In addition to tutoring, our volunteers were inspired to initiate and lead many service projects including those collecting baby supplies, shoes, non-perishable food, elementary books and gift baskets for the holidays. **We are so grateful and appreciative of our amazing and dedicated volunteers! You inspire us everyday!**

SINCE 2017...

10,000

+

**SERVICE
HOURS**

SINCE 2017...

300+

VOLUNTEERS

Click to
Donate

**THANK
YOU**

A New Library for Kenya, Africa!



BY ELISE HARDY FROM FLORIDA

My name is Elise Hardy and I am a rising Senior at Ponte Vedra High School. I spearheaded a book donation project for a new children's library in Kenya. I gathered boxes and created flyers to post in local schools, churches, and neighborhoods so people could donate gently used books. I also sent many emails, social media posts and talked with many people to spread awareness about this project. We were overwhelmed with how many books we received! The goal was to collect 1,000 books. We far surpassed this goal! We received all kinds of children's books, from Dr. Seuss to beautifully illustrated stories about African culture, even books to help children learn to read. The shipment of books will arrive at the library in Kenya at the end of June for children of all ages to enjoy. It took a lot of effort to collect so many books and communicate with many people, but it was all worth it in the end and I love that I now have a connection with the children in Kenya.

Elise pictured with Sherry Chait, a local community philanthropist who is building the library in Kenya.



Elise Hardy
Teen Leadership Council Member



JaxTHRIVE Community

BY SARAH PARK FROM FLORIDA

“Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much” stated by Helen Keller illustrates the essence of a community, which I believe the core of JaxThrive community holds. I first joined JaxThrive two years ago to fulfill the community impact component for the First Lego League robotics competition that I have a huge passion for. All I had to do was join one session of tutoring service in math for the non-native English speakers. I still recall that the first time a tutoring session changed my perspective on what “community impact” really means and what “volunteer” truly represents. Prior to working with JaxThrive, the community impact and volunteer work felt like an abstract concept to me. I was not so sure about how much impact I will be making nor what impact I would give to the students. However, when I met other high school volunteers, coordinators, and refugee students, I immediately felt the positive impact JaxThrive made to the community. That one session of tutoring service turned out to be my very special bi-weekly Saturday routine during my middle school years. Up until the global pandemic hit, cont'd...

Both refugee students and the volunteers met in-person sharing language, knowledge, and culture. It was full of energy and teaching and learning about each other’s differences and similarities. I was there to tutor the refugee students but it turned out to be me who learned the most about how to communicate with friends who speak different languages. The refugee students became my friends. To minimize the language barrier, I needed to utilize strategies such as visuals, drawings, models, and more. Each session was an exploration of communication and learning about topics in culture, language, and math together. This year, the global pandemic stirred many changes, but JaxThrive sessions continued online virtually. We found creative and fun ways to interact despite technical glitches. Although we did lose the face-to-face contact for the safety of all of us, the interactions were meaningful and exciting itself. The refugee students and I read books or followed along with audiobooks, drew pictures about fun facts, and learned vocabulary in both their native language and English. I believe JaxThrive spreads



A Unique Experience

BY MIRA BHUTANI FROM FLORIDA

I have been with JaxTHRIVE for a year, and I have been able to volunteer with JFCS Refugee & Immigrant Services and Kim's Open Door. Tutoring and mentoring each week through JaxTHRIVE has provided me with a unique experience: I have been able to meet so many new people from different states and countries, which has helped broaden my perspective on the world.

I loved working with my mentees each week and it was extremely rewarding to see their English and interpersonal skills develop during our sessions this semester. I really appreciate the fact that these sessions are not for tutoring the students in specific school subjects, instead, they help the students develop skills that will be necessary throughout their lives. I looked forward to developing each week's lesson plan and enjoyed figuring out which resources to use to ensure that my mentees mastered their new skills and remained engaged. I am excited to continue volunteering with JaxTHRIVE, meet new students, and be a part of their journey to becoming confident and articulate English speakers.

A Letter from a JaxTHRIVE Student, Dana



Dear Yasmine,

I want to write to you and Thank you, for sticking with me and supporting me with my homework. Without your support and time I will not be able to pass 7th grade with all A's. This year was hard in so many ways including not being around my peers at school but I love the talks and the bonding time that we had on our calls. In short time I have learned so much about you and I now I have a new friend.

*Hope we can stay in contact,
Your friend,*

Dana.



Paying It Forward

BY ROBERTO LACHNER FROM FLORIDA

The events of the past year were ample enough that they seeped in to the Jax THRIVE program and changed many of the staples of how it was run. Change isn't always bad though, and I've learned a lot this year about the benefits of doing things differently.

Zoom one-on-one lessons have been a great addition to the THRIVE program, as has been evident by my tutoring sessions with Dar Salam. We've been able to take an hour out of each week, whenever she needs, to work on Geometry, US History, and SAT. This type of tutoring has its benefits over the group sessions, as we can work on specifically what Dar Salam needs help with, and I can focus my attention on what needs to be done.

In fact, the convenience and efficiency of the online format is so much that this summer, I'll be setting up a one day a week, month long SAT boot camp for anyone who needs it, all across the country. Hopefully I'll be able to make an impact, however small, on the scores and the future of these students.

That is why I love JaxTHRIVE, after all. Years ago, I was in the same boat as many of the kids in the program, having just come over from Costa Rica to a brand-new country with customs I didn't understand and people I had a hard time speaking with. Every time I'm able to sympathize with a student on a group session or share a smile (even through a screen) with one of the kids, it makes my day. Only because of the kindness I was shown by complete strangers was I able to integrate into my new life, and I hope to pay it forward with my work in this organization.



**Roberto
Lachner-
Teen Leadership
Council Member**



A Message from our Volunteer...

BY BENJAMIN MAY FROM CALIFORNIA

"Reading is the foundation of education, and through extension, the ability to read provides the foundation for a life of opportunity. Therefore, being able to provide help to young students is such a wonderful thing because we as volunteers are able to make such a large impact on the trajectory of these students' lives. Overall, working with the Coalition For Refugees From Burma was an incredible experience in every form, whether that be teaching kind and eager students, or even learning about their own cultures and life experiences. "



**Benjamin May -
Volunteer**

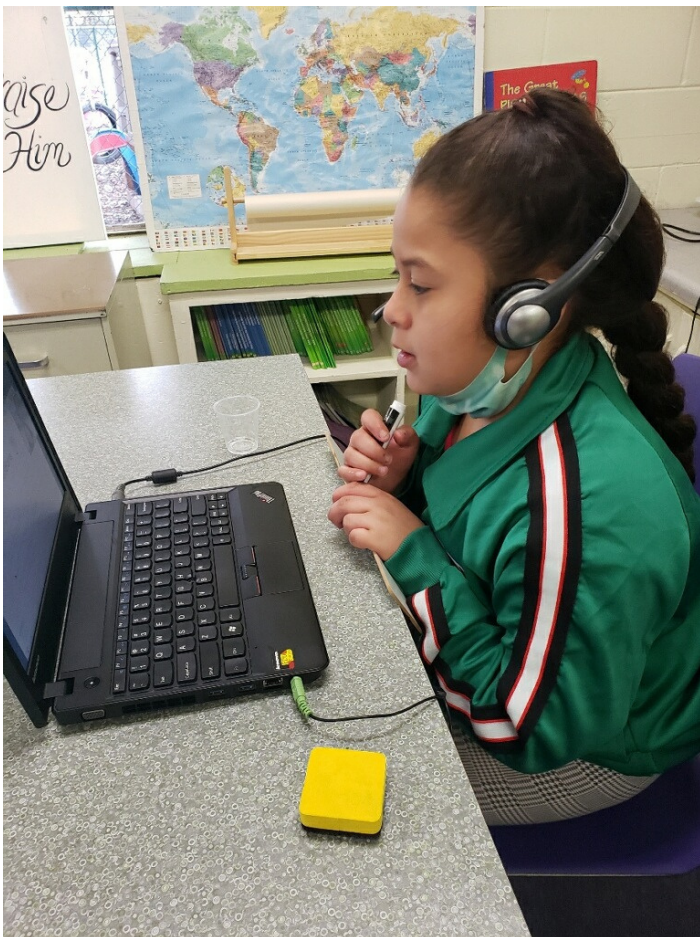
Not Your Ordinary Saturday Morning

BY JULIE RHEE FROM THE PHILLIPINES

The JaxTHRIVE Saturday tutoring programs have been really great. In my first session, I was paired with a student who couldn't speak English well, and we couldn't utilize all the slides on the presentation... so instead, we simply sang along to Frozen (Let it go) together, had simple conversations (in English), and I ended up reading her a children's book I had on my computer. We had a blast!

For the second session, my mentee was fluent in English, so we were able to review all the slides and we even have a few drawing competitions at the end (she was very passionate about drawing). We also talked about her school and friendship troubles, and found that many of her problems were issues that I also dealt with on a daily basis.

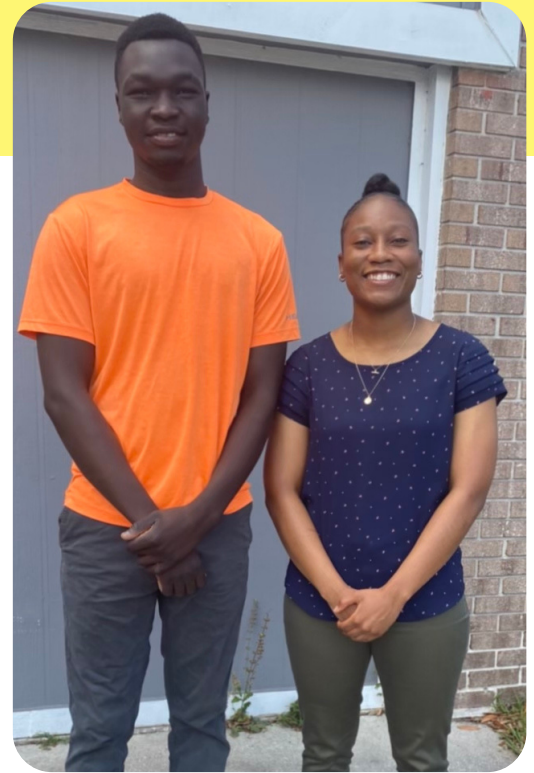
It was a very fun and enlightening experience overall, and I would love to converse with these students again!



My Time with Alex

BY ASIA BELL FROM FLORIDA

Tutoring Alex started as a way to fulfill my passion for helping others, but it has quickly blossomed into much more. It has become a means of connection, collaboration, and inspiration. I think the key to our success as a team is simple. We both share a willingness to learn and a drive to be the best versions of ourselves. I show up to each session with the intent to serve because I know every moment counts. Every session we choose to come together is an opportunity to grow and challenge each other to be a better person. I truly believe that the greatest impacts are often made from simply showing up, being kind, and having patience.



Johntrel's Super Bug!

BY CARTER MAGNANO FROM FLORIDA



Florida ranks 4th in the number of homeless families with children in the United States. The St. Johns Homeless Coalition is doing its part to rehabilitate and temporarily house homeless families in the St. Johns area. JaxTHRIVE has been tutoring some of the children at the Coalition. A few weeks ago, I initiated a drive at my school to raise supplies for these homeless families. When I went to drop off the supplies, one of my favorite students from the Coalition, Johntrel, needed help with his science project. I tutored Johntrel a few times over the year and really enjoy helping him so I was excited to learn more about his project. He had to create a replica of an insect, completely out of recycled materials and he was stumped. I first brainstormed with him about insect ideas and then we discussed how we were going to find the materials needed to make this insect. Next, we researched insects on the computer to make sure we included all the necessary body parts. Then, we searched around the Coalition and found some supplies that would make do and we got to work building our super bug! This experience filled me with joy and made me feel like I was helping someone in a real way, because for students who struggle with homelessness, school is their key to success.

JaxTHRIVE Service Projects

Throughout the year, our JaxTHRIVE volunteers coordinated and participated in many service projects:

- Holiday Gift Buckets
- Shoe Drive
- Book Drive
- School Backpacks
- Food Drive
- Menstrual Products
- Technology Drive



DONATE YOUR GENTLY WORN AND NEW SHOES TO JAXTHRIVE! WE NEED 1500 SHOES BY **NOVEMBER 2ND!**

to raise funds for our youth led non profit, JaxTHRIVE, our partner Kim's Open Door and achieve our mission to educate and inspire local refugee children and underserved

PLEASE PLACE SHOES IN A BAG AND DROP OFF AT 10085 TROT ROAD

CONTACT CHRISTIAN ALLMON FOR MORE INFORMATION AT 904-527-0169

and shoes will support micro-businesses in developing nations.



CHILDREN IN JACKSONVILLE DO NOT GET ENOUGH TO EAT

JaxTHRIVE Food Drive

This monthly food drive will benefit the students and families at George Washington Carver Elementary School

What:

Fill a brown grocery bag with requested non-perishable items.

When:

Drop Off Dates:
Feb. 25th-March 17th
March 18th-April 14th
April 15th-May 12th

Where:

Bring to Front Office at Bolles High School

Requested Items:

Canned
Vegetables
Canned Fruit
Canned Soup
Dried & Canned
Beans
Pasta Sauce
Noodles
Rice
Cereal
Peanut or Nut
Butter
Dried Fruits
Nuts and Seeds
Granola & Protein
Bars

Questions? Text Yasmine Chaharvi 415-360-4847

Students may earn service hours through donations
1 filled brown bag=2 service hours



A Huge Thank you to Cairo Maughan
for updating our website!
www.jaxthrive.net

Grateful

Greetings from Abu Dhabi, Capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)!



JaxTHRIVE Arrives in Abu Dhabi!

BY AYA AFSH, FROM THE UAE

I began volunteering as a tutor for JaxTHRIVE in ninth grade! I really enjoyed working one-on-one with a few kids who needed help with math and English. I moved to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates in 11th grade and I missed tutoring and helping kids through JaxTHRIVE. So, I reached out to Mrs. Magnano (Chase Magnano's mother) to get involved with the initiative again as COVID-19 struck and education shifted to online platforms like Zoom. She was happy to hear from me and learn about my interest in rejoining the nonprofit. She even put forth the idea of opening a new JaxTHRIVE chapter in Abu Dhabi. This opportunity has introduced my region to a whole new mode of community service! While my friend and I are working to establish this new chapter, we are incredibly excited to introduce new forms of community service opportunities that the unprecedented times of COVID-19 has allowed. We are thrilled to help refugees and underprivileged students across the globe, despite not being in the same space as them.



Tutoring Around the World!

BY ANMAR NASSER FROM THE UAE

Living more than 7500 miles away in Abu Dhabi posed many challenges when I first joined JaxTHRIVE. I started tutoring with JaxTHRIVE so that I could help contribute to their global initiative and their goals as an organization. I wanted to make a difference in these kids' lives, whether that be helping them to pass their math exam or helping them to identify a new country on the map. My first experience tutoring was with a student named Deninson. We started by sharing where we are both from, how old we were and what videogames we liked to play. My next student was Qusai. His conversational skills enabled me to connect through our Arab heritage; his being Syrian, mine Palestinian. I am so grateful to have the opportunity to help tutor and shape these kids from across the world and I look forward to continuing with JaxTHRIVE to support their mission.

A Special Thank You to Our Graduating Seniors!



Christian Allmon
Tulane University



Katherine Bi-Ji
University of Florida



Ajay Amarchand
University of South Florida

Our Partners....



**Coalition for Refugees from
Burma**

@BurmaRefugees · Nonprofit Organization



E.S.H.C.
Emergency Services &
Homeless Coalition
of St. Johns County, Inc.

