

CONNECTED @ JAXTHRIVE



IN THIS ISSUE

**REFLECTIONS OF A
JAXTHRIVE TUTOR**

**CREATING A WELCOMING
CLASSROOM FOR REFUGEE
YOUTH**

**OUR IMPACT AS
JAXTHRIVE MENTORS**

**JAXTHRIVE CONTINUES
TO GROW**



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GLOBAL LEARNING, GLOBAL SUCCESS



At JaxTHRIVE, we believe that global learning is key to creating a generation that embodies a range of viewpoints.



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Dear Readers,

Thank you for taking the time to go through the mid-year issue of Connected @ JaxTHRIVE! Our focus for this publication is on supporting various cultures with an overarching theme of diversity and global education.

In this issue, volunteers and students alike were interviewed on various topics, such as the educational system in America compared to that of their home countries, ways in which the students themselves would help other refugees, and the impact of JaxTHRIVE tutoring on their acclimation into their current schools.

Additionally, volunteers wrote articles on their meaningful experiences tutoring and connecting with students from around the globe, along with updates on JaxTHRIVE clubs in schools in the Jacksonville area, including Bolles and Episcopal.

With the leadership of Hope Freedman ('23) and Alexis Magnano ('23), along with the entire JaxTHRIVE community, we were able to conduct in-person and online tutoring sessions, along with numerous charitable and global events, such as the Holiday in a Bucket Drive and the Ukraine, Sudan, and Middle-Eastern JaxTHRIVE Journeys.

Through our ventures in JaxTHRIVE, we have come to learn that by supporting each other's education, we will be a happier and stronger community.

Thank you very much for your readership! We look forward to the new possibilities of 2023.

Sincerely,

Jaden R. Taher
Editor-in-Chief

Donate!



Support JaxTHRIVE,
Change People's
Lives!

A NOTE FROM OUR CO-PRESIDENTS

Since we began our Co-Presidency three years ago, we have seen JaxTHRIVE grow into a global organization. We successfully navigated through COVID by adding virtual tutoring which has accelerated our ability to export JaxTHRIVE to multiple cities across the country and the world seven days a week. Our volunteer base has grown from 120 to close to almost 300 teens impacting approximately 225 refugee youth. Creating a Leadership Council two years ago has allowed us to share responsibilities, encourage leadership, and empower other young people to share our mission. Currently we have established JaxTHRIVE clubs in eight different schools and we envision empowering more of our volunteers to establish JaxTHRIVE clubs in their own communities.

We are continually amazed and grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm of our volunteers. Whether it's helping a student with a science, math, spelling, or an English assignment, our virtual tutors are ready to jump in at moment's notice to help. Through our partnership with Kim's Open Door, we have our largest in-person tutoring class of thirty-five students. It's not the average teen that is willing to give up six hours on a Saturday, but our volunteers arrive with smiling faces and warm hugs.

With the situation in Ukraine and Afghanistan, we know there is more work to be done. We've grown alongside the kids and have seen how much this program has improved their lives and the lives of our volunteers. Our students share their dreams and fears. The excitement when students get a good grade on an assignment or bonding over shared interests remind us how important it is to keep this important work going.

We hope to see everyone at our upcoming fundraiser in February!

With gratitude and appreciation,

Hope and Alexis



Our Impact as JaxTHRIVE Mentors

Carter Magnano

Throughout my time volunteering with JaxTHRIVE, I have come to realize how much of an impact tutors like myself have on students' lives. When they are around their American peers at their schools, they may see their friends doing or saying inappropriate or rude things to each other. The refugee children, new to Western culture, might view these actions as "normal" for American teens to do or say, and repeat them to appear "cool." As JaxTHRIVE mentors, it is important for us to step in and let our mentees know that those behaviors are not okay. Without this intervention, it will be hard for our students to correct their habits, which could negatively impact them in the future, whether they are trying to get a job or become successful in society. It is experiences like these that make me realize the positive impact that I can have on others' lives.



Reflections of a JaxTHRIVE Tutor

Valentina Valero

JaxTHRIVE provides us with a wonderful opportunity, in being a place to learn anything. As a tutor at JaxTHRIVE, I have learned some life-changing lessons:

- (1) Nothing is obvious. Cultural differences encourage us to find similarities between us. The beauty of exchanging information is that there is a lesson in every encounter, even for the teacher. My students have taught me valuable lessons, merely by displaying their characters, about resilience, hope, community, tragedy, and even survival.
- (2) Find simplicity in empathy. Difference and variety should encourage a quest for similarities. Empathy is one of the most valuable human traits, that requires the (sometimes difficult) effort of opening our hearts. JaxTHRIVE has brought my empathy forward, as it now lies in the forefront of my mind. It has become a reflex, and life is better for it.
- (3) No two immigrant stories are the same. I quickly learned that my immigrant experience only prepared me to learn about everyone else's. In other words, my experience does not suffice my knowledge of immigration, but it equips me with the tools to learn more.

Ava Cheng: JaxThriving in the Classroom

Jaden Taher

Ava Cheng ('25) joined JaxTHRIVE in the fifth grade when her older sister started taking her to in-person volunteer sessions. She was instantly inspired. "I thought it was such a unique experience, especially that young, to be able to teach people," Cheng said.

To Cheng, forging friendships with students from other countries is her favorite part of JaxTHRIVE. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cheng has continued to tutor online via Zoom, focusing on English reading and writing for students in a variety of grades.

"English has always been my favorite subject, so getting to share my experience with others is really great," Cheng remarked. "One of my favorite activities is working on crosswords puzzles with kids," Cheng continues.

When asked about her future, Cheng expressed that she wishes to continue tutoring with JaxTHRIVE, even in college. Whether online or in-person, Cheng strives to connect with her tutees, and ensure that they understand what is being taught. "Personally, I'm a visual learner, so providing a visual aspect while teaching is very beneficial," Cheng explained. By using real-world examples or demonstrations, Cheng can ensure that her pupils fully comprehend the lesson, leading to an increased confidence in the classroom.

Whether online or in-person, Cheng's teaching skills - patience and ability to understand the students - has helped students develop the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed.

JaxTHRIVE Community

Amir Chahlavi



I have been with JaxTHRIVE for a few years, and more recently, I have started to work with organizations such as Kim's Open Door. Over the summer, I worked with a friend at Kim's Open Door at a summer camp for the refugees at JaxTHRIVE. I raised over \$1000 and volunteered to play soccer with the students. I am thankful for this experience, and I am looking forward to continuing to volunteer and help where I can.

Although one may think that the volunteers at JaxTHRIVE are only teaching the refugees, after being a volunteer, I realized I am also learning so much along with the other volunteers. At JaxTHRIVE, I have also taught many of the students English, and it has been rewarding to see their interpretation and speaking skills develop. I have also done online teaching with some of the refugees at JaxTHRIVE and have extremely enjoyed the experience.

WHAT DO JAXTHRIVE STUDENTS THINK ABOUT... FUTURE CAREERS?



MY GOAL IS TO
BECOME A POLICE
OFFICER

I WANT TO BE A
BUSINESSWOMAN

I WANT TO BE A DOCTOR

I WANT TO BE A TEACHER

I HOPE TO BE A
VETERINARIAN

I WANT TO BECOME
A TEACHER WHEN I
GROW UP

I WANT TO
VOLUNTEER AT
KIM'S OPEN DOOR

I WANT TO BE A COMPUTER
SCIENTIST

I WISH TO BE A PILOT



Episcopal School of Jacksonville Joins the JaxTHRIVE Community

This year, the Episcopal School of Jacksonville joined the JaxTHRIVE community by starting the club at school. Rohan Jones is the founder along with co-presidents Maya Jones and Anaka Davidson. The club has seen an enthusiastic response from Episcopal students. During the fall, we had Episcopal students volunteer at Saturday sessions at Kim's Open Door. We also organized a schoolwide holiday drive to make gift buckets to bring cheer to the refugee families. We hope to continue to inspire our peers to be more involved in the community.

JaxTHRIVE Continues to Grow

Lizzie Gentile

I'm Lizzie Gentile and I live in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. This is my second year participating with JaxTHRIVE's online tutoring program. With the help of my sister last year, we started a JaxTHRIVE chapter at Cape Elizabeth High School to spread awareness for this great organization. For almost two years I have been tutoring Rodina, who is now in the 5th grade. I look forward to seeing her each week to help her with homework and discuss our past week. I love hearing about her days and how she is doing in school. It's always my favorite when she comes to me proud of her work and grades; she deserves it for how hard she works! She is the best and I'm lucky JaxTHRIVE gave me the opportunity to meet her.



JaxTHRIVE Connections

Mira Bhutani

I have been volunteering with JFCS Refugee and Immigrant Services through JaxTHRIVE for three years. Previously, I was a mentor to two middle school boys who had recently moved to the U.S. This year, I became the session leader of a K-2 group with refugee students in Pittsburgh. At first, the change was daunting as I was nervous about hosting online sessions and ensuring our students were engaged, however, with each week, I feel more confident about leading the conversation. Each month we have a new buzzword that we discuss, such as “Inclusion” in November or “Community” in December. During our sessions, we open by talking about our feelings—the highs and lows and emotions we have felt during the week—then we define the buzzword, watch a video related to our topic, and discuss the lessons that it teaches. We encourage the students to think about their own experiences and understand how these buzzwords can apply to their daily lives. It is such a pleasure to help our students and watch their interpersonal skills flourish through the semester.



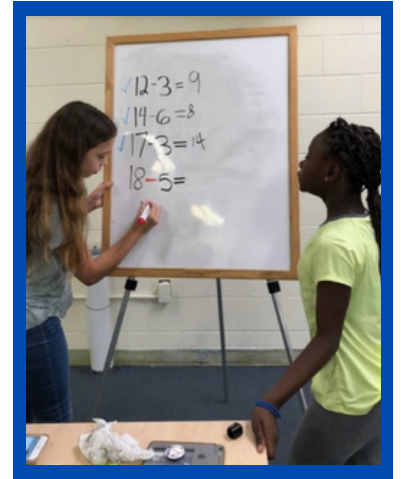
Connecting JaxTHRIVE to the Bolles Community

Sarah Park

Connecting JaxTHRIVE with the school community at The Bolles School, which now has over 70 members in the club, has been a rewarding milestone. It was made possible due to the collective work of JaxTHRIVE friends and Council members: Amir Chahlavi, Ava Cheng, and Jaden Taher. We met every month and shared JaxTHRIVE Journeys & Community Outreach and Tutoring opportunities (both in-person and virtual). We also played culture games at our meetings, including completing the idioms from various cultures. I am very grateful to share the JaxTHRIVE mission and vision with my school community and help them connect with JaxTHRIVE. That way, more students can gain experiences from teaching and learning from each other.

I also have been tutoring my very special tutee, Sindous, periodically. She is one of the most hardworking, self-motivated, and driven students I know. I am always amazed at her eagerness to learn more and do better in her schoolwork. I am very thankful I am able to help her with her academics and get her to the level she wants to reach. When I think about my journey with JaxTHRIVE, I am very thankful and humbled at the opportunity to work and grow together.

WHAT ARE JAXTHRIVE STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON... JAXTHRIVE?



“ JAXTHRIVE MENTORS
HELP ME WITH MY
HOMEWORK, AND
PRACTICE SOCCER WITH
ME. JAXTHRIVE
HELPS ME
WITH MATH
AND SCIENCE.

JAXTHRIVE HELPS ME
LEARN AND PRACTICE
ENGLISH BY TEACHING
ME HOW TO MAKE
SENTENCES.

JAXTHRIVE
TEACHES ME
NEW
VOCUBARLY
EVERY WEEK.

”





Creating a Welcoming Classroom for Refugee and Immigrant Youth

Dana Alawee

When I was five years old, I was teased about what I ate because my lunch was different from all the other kids in my class. I didn't feel welcomed because, according to my classmates, the food looked different from “normal.” I just wanted friends and to fit in, not to be lonely or left out.

I would also take speech classes to support my pronunciation of words like the ESOL. Kids made fun of my accent, which made me feel even more left out.

I started doing some research and I found out that immigrant youth are more likely to experience bullying victimization than native-born youth. Further, immigrant youth who experience bullying victimization were more likely to report interpersonal, socio-emotional, health and substance use problems. I realized it was not just me and my cousin, so many more kids like us are going through this.

To help other students understand our differences, my parents have done many educational sessions in my classrooms and are very involved in the school. And now, I can help, too. This year, I was selected to join the new American Youth Leadership council. I learned about advocacy, youth organizing, storytelling, and more with immigrant youth from all over the country. I have been learning that youth have so much power to organize and make change and I have decided to make a difference.

Tutoring Has Made Me a Better Person

Zach Jurus

Recently, I began to tutor a fifth grader, who shows a great deal of compassion for other people, and tries his best with his work. I have greatly enjoyed helping him with his work when he needs it! Working with him has made me more patient with others and I am a happier person. I think choosing to work with him was one of the best decisions I've ever made!



WHAT WOULD
JAXTHRIVE
STUDENTS
SAY TO...
OTHER
REFUGEES?

WHAT WOULD
JAXTHRIVE
STUDENTS
DO FOR...
OTHER
REFUGEES?

I WOULD LIKE TO SAY
THANK YOU BECAUSE
THEY ENCOURAGED
ME TO COME TO
AMERICA.

DONT GIVE UP.

STUDY AND KEEP ON GOING.

WORK HARD, BE
HONEST, AND BE
KIND WITH
EVERYONE.

IN THE FUTURE I
WILL VOLUNTEER
WITH REFUGEES AND
DONATE MY TIME,
FOOD, AND MONEY.

TEACH THEM WHAT I'VE LEARNED.

HELP THEM COME TO
AMERICA.



Learning is a Two-Way Street at JaxTHRIVE

Sanjana Khanna

I have been working with JaxTHRIVE as a volunteer online tutor for the past year, which has changed my life. It is a privilege to share my knowledge with refugee youth, especially being halfway across the continent. Living in Canada has allowed me to tutor children from many different regions within the United States. I am so grateful to interact with individuals who have had such different experiences than I have, including Yosan, the seventh-grade student I have had the pleasure of tutoring about once a week for one year. During this time, I have tutored her in science, math, and English and have learned about her passion for art and her dream to become an artist. She has also educated me on her experiences as a refugee from Ethiopia to her present life adjusting to the United States. In a way, we are tutoring each other, and I continue to be inspired by her. It has been an amazing, impactful year for me, and I look forward to sharing my knowledge with more students.

Volunteer Initiative: Holiday in a Bucket Drive

JaxTHRIVE successfully launched their 3rd annual "Holiday in a Bucket" Initiative where volunteers create customized, homemade gift baskets for all of our refugee families in addition to needy families at the Jewish Family and Community Services. Volunteers decorated and filled holiday-themed buckets with gift items, books, family games, cards, and homemade treats for the families to enjoy together.



While many volunteers helped with this initiative, we were excited to partner again with the USS Detroit Blue Crew who donated 25 overflowing holiday buckets! Realizing that many of the families from Afghanistan were resettled here in Jacksonville because they risked their lives to help our U.S. soldiers made this project even more special!

JaxTHRIVE Journeys: Ukraine

An integral component of JaxTHRIVE is our JaxTHRIVE Journeys education program. This is a community-based lecture series featuring speakers from many of our refugee countries. Each lecture explores the cultural and political landscape of one of our refugees' homelands. Over the past four years, we have shared programs highlighting Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and Ukraine.

Most recently, we convened two exciting programs in partnership with GlobalJax that focused on Iraq and Ukraine. Last July, our JaxTHRIVE volunteers spent the afternoon with 15 visiting Iraqi high school student leaders. They discussed how teens spend their free time in Iraq and in the US and identified many common areas related to music, movies, and video games. They shared stories about how they managed life during the COVID pandemic and how they were combating global warming. We were all impressed by their student initiatives to further prevent the impact of global warming in Iraq.

Last October, we partnered with GlobalJax to invite five visiting surgeons from Ukraine to discuss how the war with Russia was impacting life in their country. Each of the physicians shared their own first-hand account of how the war has impacted their family, their medical practice, and their country. Although their photos and videos were hard to watch, their optimism, patriotism and “never give up” attitudes were amazing! We have kept in daily contact with one of the physicians who continues to share photos, videos and stories reflecting the strength and heroism of the people of Ukraine.



WHAT DO
JAXTHRIVE
STUDENTS
THINK
ABOUT...
SCHOOLS IN
THE US?

THE TEACHER HERE ARE
NICER AND THEY EXPLAIN
THE HOMEWORK.

"I LIKE THE WAY THEY
INTERACT WITH YOU, AND THE
TIME THEY GIVE YOU TO PLAY
SPORTS WITH YOUR FREINDS."

HERE, YOU CAN TAKE A BUS
TO SCHOOL, INSTEAD OF
WALKING LIKE IN
AFGHANISTAN.



WHAT ARE
JAXTHRIVE
STUDENTS'
FAVORITE...
SCHOOL
SUBJECT?

SCIENCE, BECAUSE
IT'S FUN TO EXPIREMENT

MATH

ART, SPECIFICALLY
PAINTING. BEING
CREATIVE IS FUN



2022 Events



In July 2022, JaxTHRIVE volunteers and students took a field trip to local JAX MOSH (Museum of Science and History) and learned about topics such as sustainable cities and American history.

In August 2022, JaxTHRIVE volunteers and exchange students joined together to share and learn from each other's experiences.

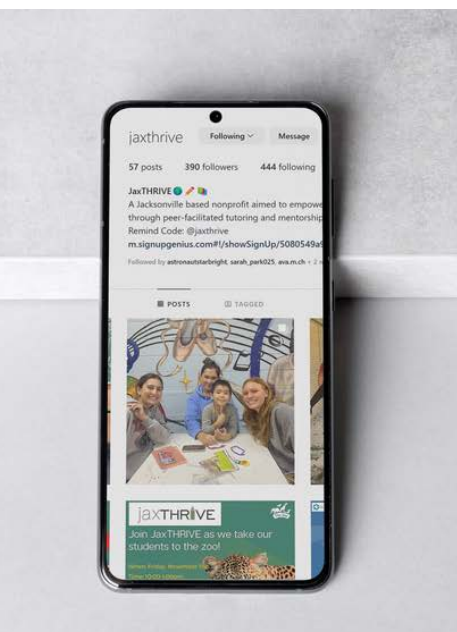
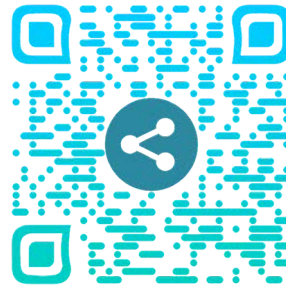


In October 2022, the JaxTHRIVE club at The Bolles School hosted Refugee students at the annual Halloween carnival and partook in activities such as pumpkin carving.

In October 2022, JaxTHRIVE hosted a Journey in support of the crisis in Ukraine. Physicians from Ukraine spoke about the impact of the war on the lives of Ukrainians and their hope for the future.



Learn more about JaxTHRIVE!



Donate Today!

