



Winter 2014

A Publication of The Episcopal Refugee Network of San Diego

Positioning Students for Success at School

Join us! You'll love it.

When refugee children begin school here, they are placed in grades based on their age rather than skills. They rarely speak any English, and ESL classes are mostly geared towards Spanish speakers.



Tuesday through Thursday the Network provides the space, organization, snacks, transportation and translators to help these children succeed. The volunteers who invest their talent, time and energy, provide the heart and soul of the program.

The day our fall program began, twin six-year old, Arabic-speaking boys arrived to work with "Ms. Joyce" [Board President]. One boy announced that he can now speak English and raced to the board to show her how to solve arithmetic problems. The quiet twin traced letters to write words. When the boys entered first grade in the middle of last year, Ms. Joyce helped them learn numbers and ABC's. They're progressing at different rates, but each is excited about his progress.

Another second grader explained subtraction to Ms. Joyce. Grinning, the student waved the fingers of one hand saying, "five" then waved two fingers on her other hand and said "six, seven, that's two. Seven minus five is two." Subtraction was a new concept and she was excited to be able to explain it to Ms. Joyce.

Two lads raced to the door when Mr. Vince arrived, anxious to see if he had brought his chess set. Mr. Vince started teaching the students chess this summer and these boys are wild about it.

Several teachers read to groups of younger children, and our Executive Director Jake and other volunteers helped kids with their homework. Our caseworkers provided translation where it was necessary.

This session was everything you would expect of 35 to 40 elementary school children: noisy, serious, fun, intense, and rewarding. Because they speak only their native language at home and with their friends, they have very little opportunity to practice conversational English. That experience is one of the most important things we provide.

Congratulations to Paw Say, tutored by the Network, who graduated from Hoover High and started college this year. She still comes each Thursday to tutor children herself.

Feeding the Hungry

A child in tutoring slipped her snack into her backpack for lunch the next day, because her family is hungry.

We distribute food in a variety of ways. We pick up fresh fruit and vegetables from the food banks. We deliver the food to St. Alban's in El Cajon twice a month and their volunteers bag it and add non-food items provided by the First Presbyterian Church across the street. Our caseworkers translate for their Arabic and Karen-speaking clients.

Every Tuesday and Thursday staff and volunteers distribute food from St. Luke's kitchen in North Park.

We also deliver food directly to apartment buildings for refugees who are unable to come to a distribution site, because of work, mandatory English class or lack of transportation. Usually we drop off boxes of food and the refugee community in the building takes responsibility for sharing it among the refugees who live there. Without our food deliveries, children and their families would go hungry. **Will you help?**



Tom's in the Kitchen

Tom and Gordon volunteered 16 hours a week for eight weeks this summer.



They worked different weeks so we had help all summer driving for the Youth Enrichment Program, tutoring, picking up food from the food banks and helping in every aspect of our work – an incredible gift from each of them.

We've been introducing clients to new foods by offering them samples of melons, sweet potatoes, etc. I walked into food distribution one morning and saw that Tom had picked up basil with the fresh fruit and vegetables we usually get from the food banks, and was sharing recipes with our clients. Tom's Italian father and grandfather wore a basil leaf over their ear when they were in the kitchen and so does Tom. It was a joyous event – much laughter and chattering that crossed the language/culture barrier. He wasn't feeding poor refugees - he was sharing the joy of living. It still makes me smile.

Summer

When we asked our volunteers to bring their passions to our summer children's program, so many creative people listened! Ron, who retired from aerospace, gave a tour of the Air and Space Museum, where he is a docent. The children toured Birch Aquarium with Carol. Margaret provided a science lab and Vince taught chess. With the help of Tony, a biologist, the kids planted beans and watched them grow.

The Bishop's School sponsored a cultural exchange program with nine of their students



and 15 Sudanese, Ugandan, and Karen students. They spent a week learning to swim with four members of the Bishop's School championship polo team and studied Karen and Sudanese history, and dances.

We were thrilled to send more than 50 children off to spend a week at Camp Stevens thanks to the continuing generosity of the camp and our donors.

And of course, our volunteers continued to help with reading and math and their conversational English.

“May I Have a Word?”

During food distribution our clients speak up about their needs, or the needs of their neighbors. A newly arrived family might ask for a bed, sheets or towels, or a family might need a car seat so they can bring home their new baby.

Recently, an Arabic-speaking woman quietly asked our caseworker, Katherine for help. The woman had missed a doctor's appointment for her sick child because she had no transportation. After calling the doctor and explaining the problem and making a new appointment, Katherine drove the mother and child to the new appointment and translated for them.

Some hospitals and doctors use a phone translating service. It may work – or not. Often you need to look into a mother's eyes to see if she really understands what you're saying. If my child were sick, I would want one of our caseworkers by my side to translate and help me through the process.



They truly are a blessing to the Network for all they do!

Thanksgiving from the President

On December 1, we're moving to a new office in City Heights, where many of the refugees we serve are living. Currently we have a small office space in two locations, so we're eagerly looking forward to this change: less time driving allows us more time to serve our clients.

We brought Jake Young on board in April as our Executive Director and with his help we continue to improve our services to refugees. We are blessed with volunteers for our youth enrichment and food distribution programs, and with donations of household goods, furniture, rice, cooking oil, and clothes from so many of you. Generous donors also sent us 165 backpacks filled with school supplies this year.

Our funding comes from you. You make our efforts on behalf of refugees in San Diego possible. I'm especially grateful that we can count on your support!

Thank you. Joyce Justus

Our New Location

4265 Fairmont Avenue • Suite 130 • San Diego, CA 92105

Please be sure to visit our website to see what we do as a charitable organization:

episcopalrefugeenetwork.org

Also, "Like" us on Facebook: [facebook.com/ERNSanDiego](https://www.facebook.com/ERNSanDiego)

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The Network has its own 501(C) 3 tax exempt status.

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Or you can donate by credit card online, through our website episcopalrefugeenetwork.org

Please join us
on May 9, 2015 for our Amazing Journey Gala
at the
Hall of Champions in Balboa Park