



**Fresh Start Refugee
Assistance Center**

ESL Volunteer Information Support to Newly Arrived Afghan Families in Alexandria, VA January to March 2023

We are actively recruiting volunteers to support newly arrived Afghan families living in Alexandria, VA. Since Fall 2021, volunteers from Northern Virginia Resettling Afghan Families Together (NOVA RAFT) and Fresh Start Refugee Assistance Center have been working closely with local refugee resettlement agencies and a network of religious institutions, community groups, and volunteers to directly support over 150 Afghan families living in apartment communities in Alexandria. This support has included furnishing and equipping most of their homes as well as assisting with school registration, medical concerns, driver's licensing and lessons, employment assistance, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, and most recently youth activities. While the children are quickly improving their English (and even Spanish) language skills at school, many of their parents need help acquiring English proficiency as quickly as possible. For some, this is an impediment to seeking employment which is key to their families being able to survive and eventually thrive.

NOVA RAFT and Fresh Start has collaborated with the City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities and the Alexandria City Public Schools to provide intensive ESL classes at the William Ramsay Recreation Center and the Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School. Through these partnerships, two levels of classes were offered in spring 2022 and three were offered during the summer and fall of 2022.



In addition, NOVA RAFT and Fresh Start have also formed a second dynamic collaboration with the Resource Center for a Better Life in Arlington, VA (affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), and Westwood Baptist and Messiah United Methodist churches of Springfield, VA, to allow newly arrived Afghans living in Springfield, Franconia, Burke, and Falls Church to access ESL classes taught at the Resource Center on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons. Through this creative partnership, volunteers from Westwood and Messiah use their church's busses to bring Afghan students to and from class.

Learning English is a long and involved process. Our new neighbors must gain basic proficiency as quickly as possible to allow them to carry out daily activities and gain employment. One of the best ways for them to gain confidence and skills is routine conversation practice with native English speakers. Volunteers play a vital role allowing our students to practice what they are learning in class in a small group setting. The following is a description of the volunteer roles we are seeking for January to March 2023:

Class Leader: These volunteers will commit to consistently attending either a morning or evening class one day a week from early January through late March and serve as the volunteer coordinator for that session. The class lead will work with the ESL instructor to incorporate themselves and 1-2 additional volunteers into small group activities during the class session allowing students to have a more immersive experience with a native speaker. (2 hours per week)

Small Group Facilitator: Under the guidance of the class leader and the ESL instructor, volunteer small group facilitators will work directly with students during class. Instructions will be provided upon arrival at the class session. Volunteers in this category can register in advance using the Sign-Up Genius but must complete an online orientation before participating. (2 hours for each session)

Outreach Support (Dari Speaker): Because many of the students lack English proficiency, it is critical that we can communicate with new and existing students about class schedules, placement, and other issues that may arise. This is an on-call/as-needed function and could include managing a WhatsApp group keeping students informed of important issues.

If you are interested in assisting, please sign up at the link below. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Dan Altman at dan@novaraft.org or 202-848-6581 or Terry Modglin at 202-270-3083 or terry@freshstartrefugee.org.