



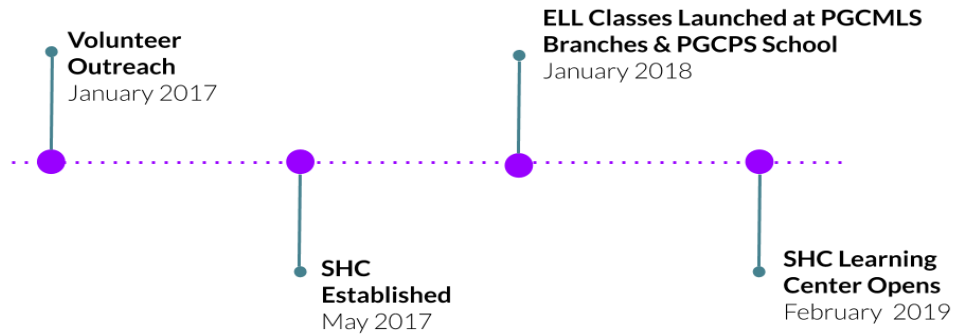
Engaging with Refugees in our Community

Solutions in Hometown Connections (SHC) is a volunteer led and run 501(c)(3) non profit organization working with refugees and immigrants in Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC. SHC supports individuals and their families through a network of mentors, tutors, community groups. Our family friendly English Language Program eases family transition into new communities and builds confidence and independence.

Our Story

SHC was established in 2017 as a result of volunteer outreach to refugee families living in Prince George's County through the efforts of SHC Founder, Merritt Groeschel. We began by coordinating volunteers to tutor and mentor recently arrived refugee families. Word soon spread and within a year we were working with approximately 200 individuals from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. Altogether, SHC has directly assisted 448 individuals through family mentoring, English language tutoring or English Language Programs since 2017.

The goal of Solutions in Hometown Connections is to provide refugee and immigrant families with the building blocks they need to access educational, vocational, and family programs. We focus closely on women who are not accessing the workforce or English programs as easily as the men in their families. Through SHC, families receive English language instruction and educational programs, learn to navigate services, and get connected to a warm and inclusive community.



Family Friendly English Language Programs

After observing that many refugee and other newly arrived mothers with young children were unable to attend traditional ESL classes, SHC developed an English Language Learner Program combining **in-home tutoring, English classes** and a **librarian led storytime**. SHC partners with [Prince George's County Memorial Library System](#) to offer classes to students of all English levels at neighborhood library branches close to many of our students' homes.





SHC's English Language Program provides a safe and friendly space for mothers and children to learn English with peers as well as age-appropriate activities for young children to prepare for school.

Once students are ready to venture further from home they can choose between continuing English classes at the child-friendly SHC Learning Center in Hyattsville, or SHC will help students connect to academic or workforce intensive ESL programs offered through the Montgomery and Prince George's County Community College System, or other programs through local organizations. We also assist students entering the workforce, and enroll their children in Head Start programs when possible.

SHC's English Language Learner classes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taught by experienced ESL teachers. ● Recognize the value of fun in learning. ● Incorporate differentiated learning for students who are pre-literate in their native language. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote family literacy. ● Emphasize the benefits of parental involvement in children's schooling. ● Teach life-skills necessary to navigate the American educational system ● Create a positive and empowering environment for families.

Family Mentoring:

Thoughtful mentoring helps families and individuals develop the skills and confidence to ultimately advocate for themselves.

Some examples of SHC Family Mentoring:

- Make medical appointments and connect to low cost dental care.
- Model preparing for interviews and applying for jobs in the US.
- Prepare for the Learner's Permit Driver's Test.
- Gather documents to register for school.
- Connect to vocational training and college career counseling.
- Understand how to apply for benefit programs when available.
- Locate and enroll in local food banks.
- Locate pro-bono legal assistance for immigration or other matters.



Volunteers and Staff

In 2019, SHC received grants from the International Monetary Fund and the Prince George's County Council to fund part-time teaching positions and an Early Childhood Specialist. When possible, SHC hires from within our network of families and our newly hired certified early childhood teacher arrived in the US as a refugee herself just four years ago.

SHC programs are possible through a network of over 60 dedicated volunteers. Most have been active with SHC for more than a year. We work hard to provide ongoing support including:

- Information session
- Tutor shadowing
- Monthly tutor meetings
- Celebrations and social events
- Regular tutor trainings and tips
- Special SHC Events



Refugee Sponsors' Group

A collaborative group of faith based organizations, non-profits and individual volunteers that is a vital part of the SHC volunteer network. SHC invites experts to present at meetings. Recent topics included financial literacy, early childhood education and mental health. Group members include:

Adas Israel (DC)
Adat Shalom (MD)
Beth Chai (MD)
Bethesda Friends Meeting (MD)
Blessed Sacrament (DC)
Bradley Hills Presbyterian/Bethesda
Jewish Congregation/Idara Jaferia
Mosque (MD)
Chevy Chase Presbyterian (DC)
DC Christian Reformed Church (DC)
Ethiopian Community Development
Council (MD)
Fabrangen's Refugee and Immigrant
Committee (unaffiliated Chavurah)
(DC)
Fairfax Presbyterian (VA)
Good Neighbor Capitol Hill (DC)
Grace Episcopal Church, Silver Spring,
(MD)
Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church
(DC)
International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Jewish Community Relations Council
KindWorks
Lutheran Social Services (MD)
Machar: The Washington
Congregation for Secular Humanistic
Judaism
Montgomery County Welcoming Our
New Neighbors Program(MD)
Montgomery County Interfaith
Refugee Resettlement Neighbors
(MCIRRN)
Muslim Community Center (MD)
National Presbyterian (DC)
Ohev Shalom The National Synagogue
(OSTNS) (MD)
Ohr Kodesh (MD)
Oseh Shalom (MD)
Peace Lutheran (VA)
Restoration Church (partner with UU
Reston) (VA)
River Road Unitarian (MD)
Rodef Shalom (VA)

St. Columba's Episcopal (DC)
St. Dunstan's Episcopal (MD)
St. Johns Lafayette Square (DC)
Saint Johns Norwood (MD)
Saint Luke Lutheran Church, Silver
Spring (MD)
Saint Mark Presbyterian (MD)
Silver Spring Christian Reformed
Church (MD)
Temple Beth Ami (MD)
Temple Micah (DC)
Temple Shalom (MD)
Temple Sinai (DC)
Tifereth Israel (DC)
Trinity Lutheran
United Christian Parish and Unitarian
Universalist Church, both of Reston
(VA)
Wallace Presbyterian (MD)
Washington Ethical Society (DC)
Westmoreland Congregational United
Church of Christ (DC)



Solutions in Hometown Connections

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