

NICERFL- NEW IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION SUPPORT

Connecting people-building inclusive communities!



20 ANNUAL IMPACT
22 REPORT

SW FLORIDA NEWCOMER
IMMIGRANT EDUCATIONAL CENTER

DBA **NICERFL**

Connecting People—Building Inclusive Communities!

This year was full of growth, not only for us, but for all the new immigrants and refugees we welcomed at our 4 locations and online. As a relatively new organization founded in 2020, NicerFL developed incredible partnerships that helped grow our programs and solidify our role within the community. We express our deep gratitude to Sarasota Friends of Refugees, First Church of Sarasota, USF Tampa English language Program, North Port and Shannon Staub Sarasota libraries and Barbara Ponce Library in Pinellas Park for donating to our educational fund and lending their space to meet and support our students.



As a beacon of diversity and support for new immigrant integration in our communities, we welcomed 312 new immigrants, including, 69 children, from Ukraine, Russia, Sudan, Kazakhstan, Venezuela, Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.

On April 30, 2022, our volunteer Liliya Soyfer and I responded to the increasing number of refugees from Ukraine who were fleeing the war and were looking for help. Our outreach gathered 75 Ukrainian refugee adults and kids at the North Port Library who shared with us what they needed. Based on the analysis of needs, the first in-person NicerFL resource center in North Port started sessions on May 7 at the Morgan Community Center. Due to lack of funding to hire teachers, I started teaching 3 online English groups on May 5 to meet the need for English language services for beginners and advanced immigrants.

In addition, we also enlisted 104 volunteer tutors and mentors from the local communities in the Sarasota County and the Tampa Bay areas to help bridge the social, cultural and communication barriers for newcomers. Our amazing volunteers, many immigrants themselves, contributed significantly to the success we experienced this past year and are the heart and driving force of the NicerFL integration support programs. Our volunteers built warm relationships, provided life skills English communication practice, resources and information about institutions and community services, tutored the immigrant kids, went to agencies with the immigrants, called to make appointments and were available to answer questions during the week. We are deeply grateful to our volunteers for the passion and for selflessly dedicating their personal time, knowledge and skills to serve as cultural brokers and mentors to new immigrants!

Most Importantly, we built new inclusive Florida communities by connecting local residents with the new immigrants and refugees and provided opportunities for immigrants to network and connect with each other. Our centers have indeed become welcoming spaces where the new immigrants can find friends and support.

Our growth and advancement of our mission has come from the dedication, passion and commitment of our volunteers and supporters like you. Thank you.

We thank you for your generous support of your time, talents, and resource, which will help us advance our mission and make a greater impact in our community this year.

Gratefully,

Maya Lane
Founder & CEO

NicerFL 2022 Highlights

Creating Innovative Programs

We prototyped the innovative program **English Conversation Club for New Immigrants- Tutoring, mentoring and family resources.**

205 newcomers served/ **73** volunteers engaged/
1948 hours of support services delivered

60 newcomer kids tutored/ **942** hours of
youth tutoring delivered

Expanding Our Services

We listened to the needs of our new immigrant and refugee students and expanded by offering **Online English classes for beginners and advanced, Individual tutoring for school-age kids and adults, and Career Coaching and Job Search**

107 adult newcomers served. **35** online tutors delivered **1768** hours of services

Seeking Collaborations

We collaborated and partnered with:

- English Language Program-USF, Tampa
- USF, Tampa -Internship Program
- Sarasota Friends of Refugees
- Sarasota Public Libraries
- First United Methodist Church of Sarasota
- Barbara S Ponce Library-Pinellas Park
- St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, North Port
- Danube International- refugee support nonprofit
- Lutheran Refugee Services
- Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services

Diversifying Community Outreach

We actively used social media to reach more people and diversified our student and volunteer base!





Our Noble Mission

NicerFL- SW Florida Newcomer Immigrant Educational Center is committed to empowering recent refugees and other new immigrants to be self-sufficient and successfully integrate in the economic, cultural and social fabric of Tampa Bay and Suncoast regions of Florida by delivering high-quality personalized, yet free educational programs and new immigrant and refugee integration support services through the volunteer work of local residents and partnerships with libraries, schools, and local community organizations.

Diversity

We believe new immigrants have diverse skills and needs. We do not employ a one-size-fits-all approach

Inclusion

We connect new immigrants with local residents to build cross-cultural awareness and personal relationships

Family Empowerment

We help Immigrant families lead healthy lives through financial, education, career, and wellness support.

Leadership

We provide opportunities for new immigrants to become teachers, tutors and mentors of other immigrants like themselves



WELL-BEING PROJECTS

- Arts and Music projects
- support with self-care, dietary needs and nutrition
- referrals to community providers

ONLINE ENGLISH PROGRAMS

- **3** online English classes at 3 language levels.. Two of the classes are taught by refugees who not only teach English to their peers, but also provide integration support and resources.
- Online Individual tutoring
- Online English Conversation and Support Groups

CAREER COACHING

- support with job search
- resume writing and interview skills
- employee rights
- US job culture

NicerFL Programs

NEW IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SUPPORT GROUPS

- students are grouped by language level
- in-person English language communication practice with life skills and cultural integration focus,
- mentoring, community and family resources,
- well-being art projects for new immigrant adults and youth,
- career coaching,
- academic tutoring for new immigrant kids.
- workshops and community speakers

NEW IMMIGRANT YOUTH PROGRAM

- academic and English tutoring from trained volunteers
- online academic tutoring
- college counseling and test prep

NICERFL VISION

We envision that every refugee and new immigrant family living in Florida communities is welcomed and supported to achieve self-sufficiency, stability, and bright futures

Student Experiences

"The program is well organized and the tutors are competent and enthusiastic. Also, in this organization I received a lot of useful information on solving everyday problems, which is different from the principles of solving in my home country Ukraine" (Iryna Kolchanova).

"We like our English sessions on Saturdays. We are engaged very much with friendly English-language teachers. For two hours we communicate with native English speakers. And there you can always find help and answers to questions related to with emigration and job search. A lot of new acquaintances with wonderful people. Each time we look forward to next Saturday. Also twice a week we practice English online. It's very convenient, especially for those who do not have the opportunity to travel to school" (Tetiana Semenchuk).

"WE ESPECIALLY ENJOY INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH NATIVE SPEAKERS- AMERICAN CITIZENS AT THE USF TAMPA. THESE MEETINGS GIVE NOT ONLY A POSITIVE RESULT IN THE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, BUT ALSO PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION OF OUR STATE OF MIND! FOR WHICH WE ARE INFINITELY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO TAKES PART IN THIS " (NATALIA AND OLEKSANDR ORLOVI).

"Thank you so much. I found a job in Publix. You helped me so much " (Anna Krupich, career mentee).



Volunteer Experiences



"I have a lot of respect for the immigrants I meet at NicerFL. Their lives have been uprooted by circumstances beyond their control. They've left family, friends, careers, homes and more behind. Most have high level skills back home, but are willing to do manual labor here if necessary to be self-supporting. I'm motivated to help them any way I can to reach their goals here" (Dale Eckholm, Pinellas Park Volunteer).



"Working online has been the most exciting experience for me. Last year I thought I had already burnt out after all the events in my lovely country and all the experiences I faced as an immigrant. But luckily, NicerFL found me and opened up a new opportunity to teach. It helped me a lot" (Anastasia Zhyvaga, refugee and NicerFL online English teacher).



"Spending time with each of these strong, kind, loving, incredibly resilient refugees has enriched my life in ways I could never fully express in words. I am a better person for knowing each and every one of the students who participate in this program, and I am honored to call them my friends. My heart is full " (Marlene Toquica, Sarasota volunteer).



"I'm a student at USF, so when I saw the opportunity to sign up I jumped right in! I had no previous experience in tutoring/teaching, but I was still made welcome and was given the guidance needed to find my footing. To be able to connect with these people is a wonderful thing. Each week it feels like I'm visiting friends, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to help them. We are always trying to improve what we can offer as an organization" (Maxwell Cook, USF Tampa Volunteer).



Our Community Events

Outreach to the Ukrainian refugee community, North Port, April 30, 2022



November 8, First Social event, Tampa



November 19, Thanksgiving Picnic, Sarasota



December 10, Pierogi Festival, Sarasota



December 11, Christmas Picnic, Pinellas Park



December 17, Christmas Picnic, North Port



Our Partnerships



Sarasota Friends of Refugees

Our first NicerFL Community Partner Group "Sarasota Friends of Refugees", formally DoDDS (Department of Defense Dependents Schools-South West Chapter), supports the educational needs of our newly arrived students to the Sarasota area. The group members are former overseas educators who understand the struggles immigrants and refugees have to go through transitioning to a new life in Florida. Through their generous donation of \$ 1242.39, we were able to purchase three ring binders, ink and paper, and educational games for the children. The community group will help us purchase licenses for the Burlington English program so we can continue providing online classes and tutoring.

"Sarasota Friends of Refugees" have also begun to directly support the basic needs of newly arriving immigrants from Ukraine, some of whom are our students, by collecting household items, furniture, and gift cards for them. Photo shows Burton Gloor, the president of the organization, with the 2 newly arrived Ukrainian refugee families he helped.



First United Methodist Church of Sarasota

"Our Community Partners from the FUMC of Sarasota generously allow us to hold our meetings for free at their Family Life Center and spread the word about our work in the community. The church kindly allowed us to use the center for our fundraising event 'Pierogi Festival' and our students cooked and participated in the church event to support building housing in Ukraine. We are deeply grateful and look forward to more work together in support of refugees and new immigrants resettling to Sarasota.



Tampa USF- English Language Program

"In June 2022, Dr. Ariadne Miranda, Associate Director of the English Language Program reached out to us and offered their rooms to set up our support center in Tampa. The English Language Program (ELP) is an Intensive English Program (IEP) that provides English study programs and courses for INTO USF international students, as well as courses for international teaching assistants and other special groups needing English language instruction. Dr. Miranda, Dr. Harvey and a number of USF professors and students volunteered to tutor and mentor refugees every Thursday from June to December, 2022. This year we started an internship with USF and partner with UndocuUnited, an organization which helps us with tutors and mentors and reserving rooms at the USF Marshall Student center.



Sarasota and Pinellas Park Public Libraries

Barbara Ponce Pinellas Park library and North Port and Shannon Staub Sarasota Libraries offer their space and support for our Saturday meetings. Library director David McMurry purchased educational materials for our youth tutoring program and art and music supplies for our "Cross-Cultural Art and Music" project for refugee kids. We look forward to continued and new partnerships with libraries in the region.



Messages from our Ukrainian REFUGEE YOUTH

Maks

"Integration for me is when the immigrant can communicate with the natives".

"We had a tutor, a mechanical engineer and he shared how to become an engineer here. I need time and forces to do it"



Igor

"To become self-sufficient here you need to find nice people here so they can help you in English-like you"

"To have good communication skills so people can like you" .

Yehor

I like tutoring other people. I like help them. Also I like to hang out with my friends who are visiting speaking club with me.



My name is Daria Yashchyshyna, and I'm originally from Ukraine. My family and I were forced to live our country because of war. Now it's a year since we moved here, in United States. When I first arrived, I struggled with the language barrier and adapting to a new culture. That's when I discovered the tutoring programs offered by volunteers, and I can honestly say they have been a lifesaver. The tutors are patient, knowledgeable, and always willing to help. They have not only helped me improve my English skills but have also provided valuable guidance and support throughout my academic journey. Thanks to their help, I have gained more confidence and feel more prepared for my future. I highly recommend this program to anyone who needs extra support and guidance in their language studies. (Daria, refugee youth).

2022

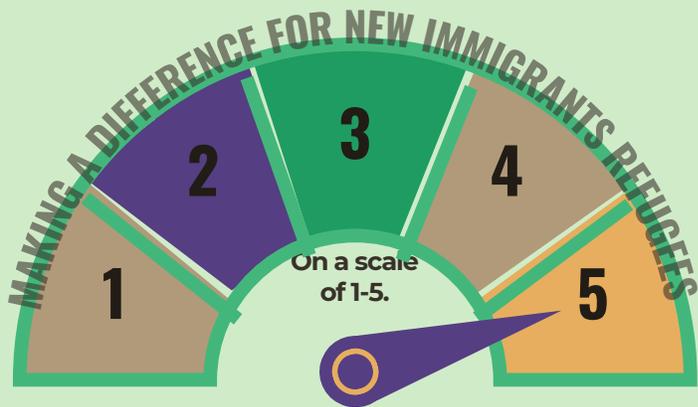
108 volunteers - 3714
volunteer hours

312 adult new immigrants
tutored/mentored

69 children - 1224 hours of
academic and English
tutoring.

EMPOWERING *New Immigrants and Refugees*

- 4.66** I became more confident in communicating in English
- 4.33** I feel more prepared for a career or school in the US
- 4.80** My family received support with problems in our new life here
- 4.95** I formed new connections and friendships
- 4.95** I liked that they worked with me individually or in a small group
- 4.83** My children received tutoring that helped them in school
- 4.95** Volunteers were supportive and helped me
- 4.95** I feel more as part of the community
- 4.80** I learned about the systems and institutions in USA



NicerFL supports refugees
and their families to
successfully integrate into
their community

"When I come here,
teachers here show me how
the life is going here, teach
me to improve myself, how
to get a job. I have a lot of
friends now. My child now is
with me here and he
became very good, better,
and he is helping me also
now." (Saeed Tyso, refugee
from Sudan)

-Saeed



EVERY NEW IMMIGRANT FAMILY IS *navigating* DIFFERENT, YET *similar journey...*

Of the refugees and new immigrants NicerFL served in 2022...

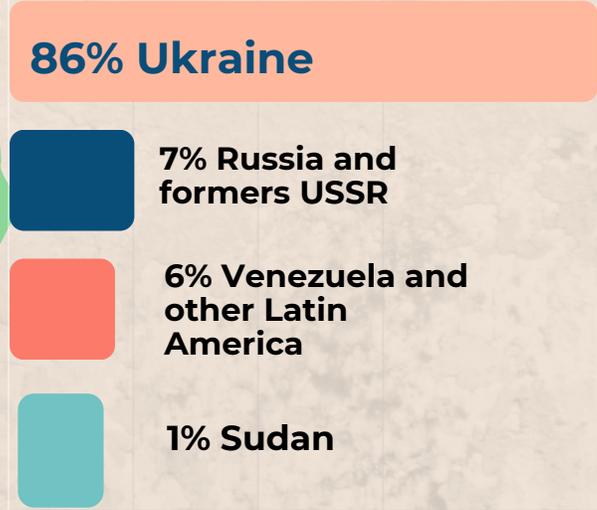
93% were families

63% were children under the age of 12

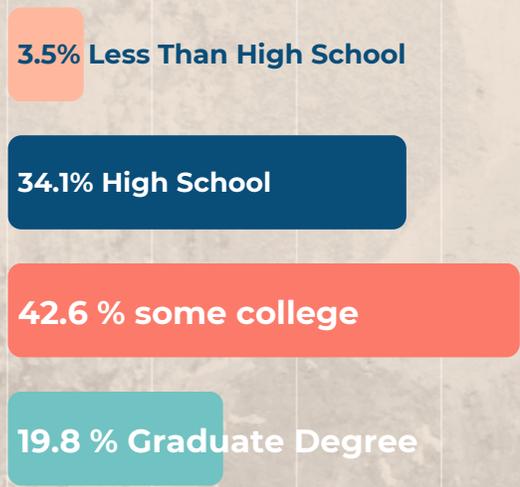


NicerFL STUDENTS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT





GROWING NicerFL



More NicerFL Community Partner Support Groups

As more and more refugees and other new immigrants arrive in the Tampa Bay and Suncoast area, the need for support services will grow. As additional support to our **NicerFL New Immigrant and Refugee Support Groups**, we will connect with local organizations that would like to help one or more new immigrant or refugee families. For one year the **NicerFL Community Partner Support Group** will tutor and mentor the family or families and their children and provide integration assistance. Eligible families are low income and recently arrived in the community-in the last 3 years. Our partner community group will assist the family as needed with community resources such as healthcare, food banks, career orientation and referrals to workforce development agencies, referrals to community services available to them, help with navigating the institutions and systems, help communicating with schools and counselors, and any other services and resources as needed. Volunteer tutors from the Community Support Group will help the family improve their English language skills using our Life Skills and Cultural Integration curriculum and other program materials NicerFL uses in the in-person and online programs as our Resource Bank to local services and resources that can help newcomer immigrants navigate systems and become self-sufficient. The group will raise funds to assist the family with school and household supplies and other specific needs. We will provide interpreters and cultural training from older refugees.

Our Goals

Our Strategy Plan sets out the NicerFL mission and vision for the next 3 years. Our strategies ensure that the impact of our programs and the influence of our innovative approach empower our new immigrant students to successfully integrate in local communities and achieve personal and professional goals and build a new life for their families. Our Strategic Plan focuses on 5 main goals:

1. Grow the impact of our programs
2. Focus on Family Engagement and one-stop shop services for the whole newcomer family
3. Build stronger teams of volunteers and supporters
4. Ensure we have funding to accomplish our goals
5. Expand our partnerships with other organizations to work with more "Refugee and New Immigrant Community Support Groups"

Find out how you can get involved at www.nicerfl.org



With Gratitude

2022 SUPPORTERS

We are so grateful for each and every gift Every gift makes an incredible impact on the refugees we serve. We could not do it without the help from our gracious donors.

Thank you to our incredible supporters!

\$ 3006.00 Family Donations

Maya and Jim Lane

Petya Getsova

Seth Mattox

Emily Martin

\$ 650.00 Volunteers and other individuals

Dale Eckholm-\$200

Lynn Lotkowicz- \$100

Ellie Wojtowicz- \$100

Marta Hernandez-\$100

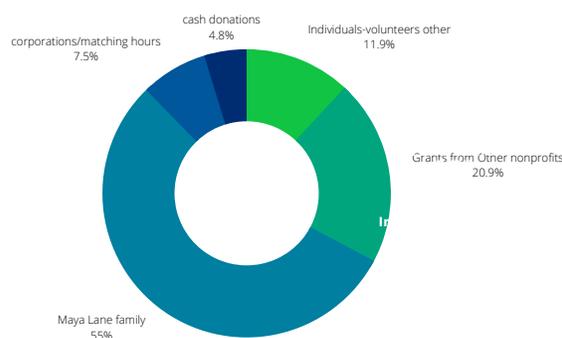
John Norris-\$100

\$ 641.39 DoDDS, Sarasota Friends of the Refugees

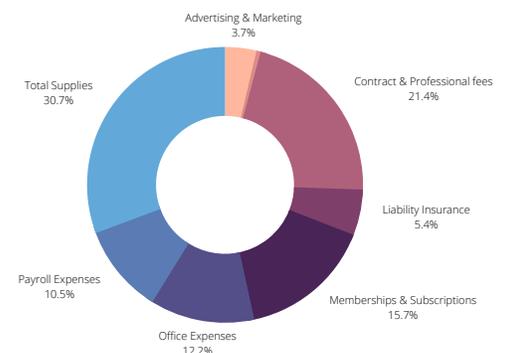
\$500.00 Danube International non-profit, Pierogi Festival

\$ 410.00 T. Rowe Price Volunteer Matching Hours

Revenues = \$ 5604.48



Expenses = \$ 9628.23



NicerFL Volunteers and Students Photo Collage



CONNECT WITH US

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