



# Refugee Transitions Bulletin

HELP THE COMMUNITY...CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

Fall 2003

www.reftrans.org

## Comings and Goings at Refugee Transitions



Refugee Transitions says goodbye to Nora Heaphy.

### Saying Goodbye

On behalf of the staff and volunteers of Refugee Transitions (RT), we would like to bid a fond farewell to Nora Heaphy.

During Nora's five-year tenure at RT (three years as Executive Director), she expanded our services into the East Bay and designed and implemented the Bosnian Youth Program. Additionally, she spearheaded the initial design, funding, and implementation of the English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) Civics Education and Orientation program and the ESL Technology program.

Although we are sad to see her go, we are pleased that she will be bringing her wealth of non-profit and multi-cultural

experience to another local non-profit organization, the Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation (NYOF).

NYOF provides education, housing, medical care, and support for thousands of destitute children in Nepal. As Director of U.S. Operations for the Sausalito-based agency, Nora will juggle a number of responsibilities, including program design, fundraising, financial management, and strategic planning.

Even though Nora will be busy with her new position, she will continue to help conduct volunteer trainings at RT.

We are very grateful for all that Nora has done and continues to do for Refugee Transitions, and we wish her much luck in her new position.

Refugee Transitions' staff and board will miss Nora but are very fortunate to have a familiar face at the helm.

### Taking the Ropes

Laura Vaudreuil, who has served as ESL Program

Manager at the agency for the last two years, will assume the position of Executive Director.

Laura has been the key staff member involved in implementing our ESL Technology program and our new youth tutoring program—the Bridge 2-Success Refugee Youth Development Partnership.

Additionally, Laura has been responsible for designing, evaluating, and conducting trainings for Refugee Transitions' programs.

Laura's extensive experience at the agency will mean smooth sailing during this time of transition.

Thank you Laura!



RTs Board of Directors welcome Laura Vaudreuil as Executive Director.

*Thank you and good luck, Nora!*

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## On the Town Showing Appreciation for our Volunteers!

From the lively Mission district to the heart of Chinatown, Refugee Transitions volunteers enjoy San Francisco's diverse nightlife.

On February 28, the agency held a volunteer appreciation party at El Rio, where around 35 volunteers stayed late into the night mingling, sampling Middle Eastern cuisine, and grooving to world beats.

On July 31, the party moved to Chinatown, where around 25 volunteers gathered in the gold- and red-hued interior of Lipo Lounge. Under the watchful gaze of a statue of Buddha, volunteers got to know each other better, sipped cocktails, and--for the brave of heart--munched on dried meat from Bosnia.

Fifty volunteers received certificates for completing their six-month commitment to Refugee Transitions. Thank you to all volunteers for your hard work, and stay posted for future volunteer appreciation events!



“THANK YOU

TO ALL  
VOLUNTEERS FOR  
YOUR HARD  
WORK...”

CONGRATULATIONS!

From left to right: Bonnie Blaha, Cody Witka, Bronwen Trice, Arlette Vargas, Eva Zeltzer, and Rita Ogden show off their certificates at Lipo Lounge.

## Congratulations to Volunteers Who Completed our Program in 2003

### February 2003

Emily Ausbrook  
Nesa Azimi  
Kay Beers  
Erin Daly  
Shannon Day  
Niya Dodd-Waddington  
Genevieve Fontan  
Roop Kaur Ghangas  
Tenley Harrison  
Paul Heller  
Melissa Lee  
Ahnee Min  
Jill-Marie Parillo  
Jennifer Joan Parma  
Roderick Paton  
Katheryn Perry  
Katherine Adams Pitarys

Randan Price  
Gina Repp  
Alejandro Duncan Reyes  
Zach Schwartz  
Melissa Semence  
Jason Solle  
Amy Swerdlin  
Megan Ann Warnick  
Jodi Michelle Wynn  
Emily Young

### July 2003

Geordie Armstrong  
Qamrul Bhuiyan  
Bonnie Anne Blaha  
Suzanne Callor  
Pablo Crisologo  
Mairead Keavney Daugharty

Lynn Marie Dolan  
Karen Fairchild  
Amy Gerber  
Heidi Hartman  
Jennifer Landsidle  
Meghan Levee  
Melissa Ann Millsaps  
Rita Ogden  
Nina Rothberg  
Erin Ingrid Severson  
Brandon Trapp  
Bronwen Trice  
Arlette Vargas  
Katherine Everett Whelan  
Cody Witka  
Sonya Worthy  
Eva Zeltzer



Special Thanks to Anna Rota for Five Years of Volunteer Service at Refugee Transitions!

## Glimpses of Success

Board members Tenley Harrison, Diana Scarce, and Joe McCrossen wanted others to see why they were so committed to Refugee Transitions, so they decided to visit our clients' homes to get to the heart and soul of the organization. What they discovered were committed volunteers who had become integral parts of their students' lives—helping them obtain job skills, access community resources, set up bank accounts, and make doctor appointments—and also motivated students who were working hard to better their lives in the United States.

Now Tenley, Joe, and Diana are in the process of creating a storyboard of client and volunteer stories which will be shown at our upcoming fundraising event. Thank you to Tenley, Joe, and Diana, and to our other dedicated board members Jodie Stein, Bounlahong Phomsopha, Marilyn Higi, Jenny Everett, and Pablo Crisologo for their commitment to Refugee Transitions!



Volunteer and board member Pablo Crisologo (right) helps his student, Ana Segovia from El Salvador, develop interview skills and use a laptop so that she can eventually obtain a higher-paying position. Pablo has become a part of Ana's family, visiting twice a week and working with her son.



Volunteer Stephanie Hoffman (left) helps her student Refika Arapovic from Bosnia attain the language skills needed to manage her husband's company.

## Success with Technology

RT's on-site ESL/Computer class offers students in the Fruitvale area of Oakland English language and computer instruction. Through this unique program, students who have never touched a computer before overcome their fear of technology and learn the basics of word processing and internet connectivity.

Since the majority of participants are young mothers with few childcare resources, the program also offers a childcare exchange program, enabling mothers to exchange one hour of childcare for one hour of computer instruction.



RT teacher Amy Lombardi (far right) photographed with some of her students. From left to right: Ana Marina Escobar, Andrea Gonzalez, Miriam Hernandez (with her child), and Maria Elena Doval.

**“Thank you to Cisco Systems Foundation for giving RT a \$15,000 grant to support our on-site and home-based English language and computer tutoring program.**

**You can visit Cisco at [www.cisco.com](http://www.cisco.com).**

## **New Volunteer Log!**

Dear Volunteers,

We are pleased to announce our new web log. Now you can go to our web site and fill in the hours you spend with your student and the activities you participate in together.

It's easy and only takes a few minutes—just go to <http://www.reftrans.org/volForm.html>, fill out the form, and click on the submit button.

Please do this once in a month.

Thank you,

Muhammed Tokmic  
Volunteer Coordinator



Muhammed (left) with volunteer Scott Falcone at a volunteer appreciation party at El Rio.

**We'd like to thank Amy and all Refugee Transitions' volunteers for dedicating their time to help their students access community resources! We know there are a lot more success stories out there.**

**If you're a volunteer and would like to tell us about your student, please call us at 415-989-2151.**

## **Volunteer Helps Her Student Access Health Services**

"Using the skills I take for granted as a U.S. citizen and my knowledge of the health care system, I was quickly able to find a health service that could assist my student.

My student is now a member of a clinic within her community, where she knows that she and her family may receive free medical care when needed.

This is just one of many steps we have taken together that help my student in becoming resourceful and self sufficient, while simultaneously transforming her foreign surroundings into a familiar and welcoming community."

## **Interested in Working Overseas? Join the Peace Corps!**

The Peace Corps sends volunteers overseas on two-year assignments in over 70 countries around the globe. As a volunteer, you'll receive a stipend to cover all of your living expenses, \$6075 upon completion of service, full medical and dental coverage, 24 days of vacation per year, and memories that will last a lifetime!!!

Volunteers who complete four months of ESL tutoring with RT qualify for overseas teaching positions with the Peace Corps. Contact Kate Kuykendall at [kkuykendall@peacecorps.gov](mailto:kkuykendall@peacecorps.gov) or call 1-800-424-8580/option 1 for more information.

## Youth Tutoring Off the Ground!

Refugee Transitions is pleased to announce that our new youth program, the *Bridge-2-Success Refugee Youth Development Partnership*, is off to a great start! We are the lead agency in this partnership and are collaborating with the Afghan Coalition, Cambodian Community Development (CCDI), and Jewish Family & Children Services (JVCS) to provide Afghan, Bosnian, and Cambodian youth with the support and opportunities they need to succeed academically, form healthy attachments, and develop supportive relationships with adults and peers. Activities include one-on-one mentoring, academic assistance, and mental health counseling.

Refugee Transitions brings to the partnership its years of experience recruiting, training, and matching volunteers for one-on-one tutoring, as well as its outreach efforts to the Bosnian community in particular. For the last three years, through the *East Bay Bosnian Community and Family Strengthening Project*, we have provided home-based English language instruction and after-school youth tutoring to over 65 families who have been resettled in the East Bay. Among those we helped were Esmā, a war widow, and her four children, ranging in age from 7 to 16 years.

Our after-school tutoring program offered academic support to the kids three days a week, enabled them to express themselves through art workshops, and took them on several field trips, giving them a much-needed change of pace. Several volunteers visited the family at home and tutored both the kids and the mother in English, and on several occasions staff members helped the mother communicate with school teachers and administrators by organizing meetings and translating. The struggle of Esmā and her family is indicative of the challenges facing refugee youth from all cultures who settle in the Bay Area. Through the *Bridge-2-Success Refugee Youth Development Partnership*, we will be able to reach more refugee youth with expanded services.

Twelve new volunteers recently attended our first orientation and training on September 3rd and 4th. At the orientation we were fortunate to have had Klara Ernyes from Survivors International share her insights about working with refugee families who are experiencing post-traumatic stress. For the training, Maggie Ballard, an experienced English language teacher and writer of children's textbooks, provided volunteers with valuable tools for tutoring youth in language arts.

Risa Wolfson, who consults teachers from the Oakland Unified School District, provided volunteers with fun games for improving youths' math skills and also gave them useful information about helping youth reach Oakland's math standards.

### **If you are interested in tutoring a refugee youth, attend our next orientation and training!**

Contact Alex at [reyes\\_al\\_d@yahoo.com](mailto:reyes_al_d@yahoo.com), or call him at (415) 989-2151 to sign up.

## Please Welcome Alex Reyes!

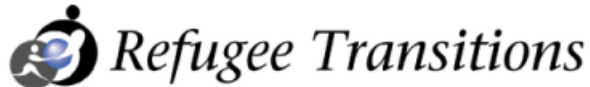
Refugee Transitions is pleased to welcome Alex Reyes as our new Volunteer/Youth Coordinator. We met Alex last year when he began volunteering for our adult ESL Civics Education program.

Before joining the RT staff, Alex worked in Oakland Public Schools as a youth mentor/tutor for AmeriCorps, where he received extensive training on mentoring youth, developing literacy skills for non-native speakers of English, tutoring other core subjects such as math and science, conflict resolution, diversity in the classroom, and incorporating community service learning into school activities.



Alex Reyes (left) interacts with volunteers at a recent volunteer tutor training. From far left: Seema Faizi (Youth Coordinator at the Afghan Coalition), Alex Reyes, Linda Vang, Vanessa Rodriguez, Victor Smallberg, and Jack Doan.

**Thank you to Y & H Soda Foundation for a \$10,000 grant and to Walter S. Johnson for a \$28,000 grant to support our Bridge 2-Success Refugee Youth Development Partnership!**



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## Announcements

### **Come to Refugee Transitions' Fifth Annual Fundraising Event!!**

How can you meet great people, sip fabulous mojitos, and support refugees and immigrants in the Bay Area, all at the same time? Easy—come to Refugee Transitions' upcoming fundraiser! The event will be held at Zebulon, in the heart of downtown San Francisco, on Wednesday, November 5. The event will feature live musical entertainment, door prizes, ethnic food, and a silent auction of goods and services from local shops, wine distributors, personal trainers, spas, and theaters.

**Date:** Wednesday, November 5, 2003

**Place:** Zebulon, 83 Natoma Street  
(between 1st and 2nd Street and Mission and Howard)

**Minimum Suggested Donation\*:** \$30 at the door and \$25 in advance (both include one complimentary drink and appetizers). Donate in advance at <http://www.reftrans.org/help.html> or by mail (envelope attached).

\*We encourage current volunteers to attend and to bring their students—donations are optional for current volunteers and for students.

**Hope to see you there!!**