

FALL 2020



— LS —  
**BOLD JOURNEY**





# MY FOSTER CHILDREN HAVE MADE ME A BETTER PARENT

*By Shavonne Bowman, Foster mom*

**In 2020, LSSNCA placed 20 refugee youth in loving homes.**

My husband and I became first time parents at the ages of 23 and 19 respectively. When I became a parent, I knew this child had to stay with me forever; my instincts for loving another human instantly took over, as if I was a natural caretaker. Of course, this was the beginning stages, the real test came when our children grew up, started school, and their personalities began to blossom.



Having a teenager with an opinion is totally different than having an infant who only cries and poops. Your tolerance for one is totally different. In raising teenagers, you have to constantly think and reflect back to when you were their age. You have to constantly remind them to make great choices and limit their regret. You have to remember they are going to have an opinion, and you have to be open and receptive to listening to them. These were some of the things my husband and I came to the table with; however, we learned there was so much more we could be doing to ensure our kids were well-rounded individuals.

Fast forward to 2020. Our household has grown from just four biological children to having eight wonderful children, four of them coming from foster care. We have fostered over 26 kids since we began our journey as foster parents. Being a foster family helped us be more empathetic to others, understanding that everyone's story is not the same and recognizing early that love heals broken wounds.

Shavonne Bowman has fostered several refugee youth through LSSNCA. She compared this experience to traditional foster care in a recent, live Zoom event saying, "You have a refugee child come in [to America] and they are just appreciative of everything. That was my wow! To see so much gratitude for the smallest things."

My most important quote to my kids is "Do not be like me, be better. Take my wrongs and make them your rights and my rights; try to perfect them."



# THANKFUL FOR OUR COMMUNITY

This spring, our community faced many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has forced us to get creative in how we serve our clients, fundraise, and engage our community partners. We have adapted by providing telehealth therapy, converted to a virtual Youth Haven summer camp, conducted mentoring and tutoring programs virtually, and provided both safe and remote home set-ups for newly-arrived refugee families.



While we worked to provide remote and virtual services and programs, it is our DMV community that heard our cries for help. Over the past several months, we asked for assistance for our refugee and immigrant families and youth who were particularly impacted by this health crisis. Several of our clients reported loss of jobs, reduced hours, and reduced household incomes. This, in turn, directly affected their ability to pay for rent, utilities, groceries, technology devices, and other necessities.

Not only did we receive several donations for our emergency assistance fund, groups supported our families as virtual Good Neighbor Partners and through many financial and in-kind donations.

In Maryland and DC, we received meal donations through an initiative called In This Together (or Juntos En Esto), a partnership between The Viva Center, Hook Hall Helps, and several DC-area restaurants. During April, our Maryland families were able to welcome the Ramadan season with food and gift card donations from the Diyanet Center of America, the Montgomery County Muslim Foundation, and the Good Neighbors of Capitol Hill.

In Maryland and Virginia, urgent and immediate in-kind donation needs were met. Donations of laptops and tablets ensured our clients were connected, adult and child bikes provided transportation to work and for exercise, household supplies and furnishings for home set-ups, and various much needed supplies for expectant mothers.

Our gratitude goes out to group partners Homes Not Borders, Capitol Hill Good Neighbors, KindWorks who continued to coordinate home furnishings and home set-ups for newly-arrived refugee families. And to all of our numerous individual donors, congregations and groups that continue to jump at the call to support us and our clients during this difficult time, we appreciate you!

***We appreciate you and  
we thank you for serving boldly!***



**Stay up-to-date with our volunteer and donation needs by signing up for our E-News and learn how you can support our clients by visiting [LSSNCA.org](https://LSSNCA.org).**



# YOUTH MENTORING IN THE TIMES OF THE PANDEMIC

*With contributions by Debi Kant,  
Mentoring Coordinator and Volunteer*

**30 youth paired with a  
mentor in MD & VA this year.**

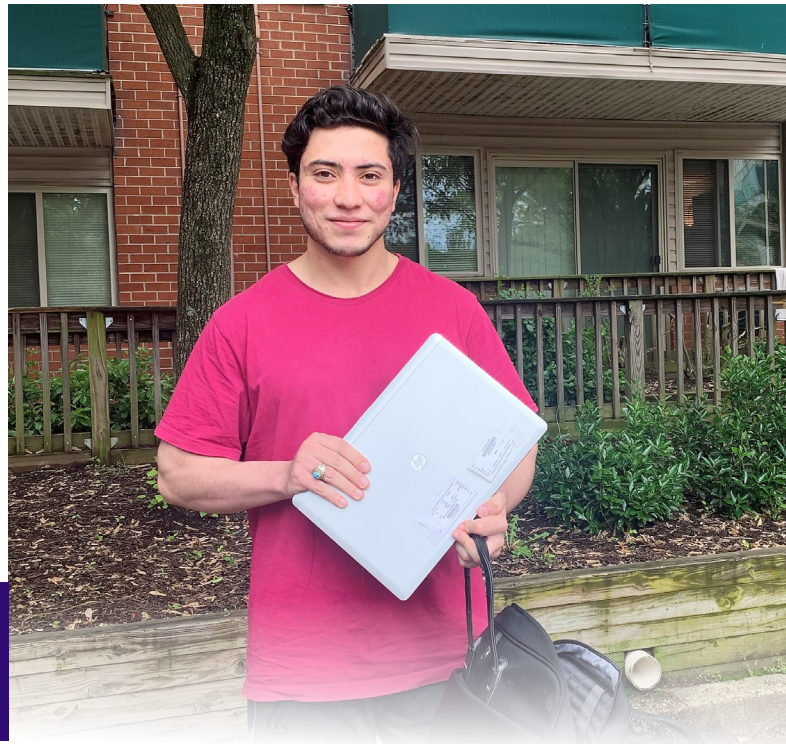
In June, Debi Kant, volunteer mentor and coach, was matched to the Najamyar family and their eldest son Mujtaba, working with him to plan his future career in Information Technology. Mujtaba said, "We discuss about my job and because I study IT, so I need a flexible job."

To Debi, the mentoring experience is about both friendship and guidance. "We laugh and have fun! I also engage virtually with other members of the family even if it is just to say hi, wave, smile, and show I care. Even the smallest gestures mean a lot."

**18 families paired with virtual  
tutors since May 2020**

According to Mujtaba, Debi has helped him when his computer was inoperative and helped the family enroll in ESL classes. "Every week she wants to know what we learned from our ESL class." Mujtaba firmly believes that the mentoring program serves an important component in the welcoming of refugees. "Actually, a mentor can guide you in the right way. Each family that has just arrived in the USA needs a mentor and it will help them a lot."

Our Refugee Youth Mentoring Program is designed to support civic and social engagement, as well as academic and vocational achievement of refugee youth clients, ages 15-24, in Maryland and Virginia.



As friends and advocates, mentors play a valuable role in helping youth clients adjust to their new communities, explore career and educational pathways, and learn skills in areas such as time management, financial planning, civic responsibility, and leadership.

Despite COVID-19, our youth mentoring programs continue to thrive. We've gone virtual, enabling our volunteers to continue to offer support and guidance to their youth mentee. Since 2020, Debi has spearheaded an expanded training and support model that includes mentor onboarding, peer discussions, skills-based workshops and programming to enhance our support for mentors and mentees.





## DOWN THE PATH

Despite the challenges presented in 2020, we continue to support our current clients and bring on new programs. In January, we were awarded a program to provide mental health and trauma screenings for individuals and families seeking asylum in the US. As both the national leader and local service provider for this initiative, we have been providing behavioral telehealth services to clients in the DMV.

In September, we were accepted as a Preferred Provider to the Prince George's County Public School System (PGCPS) for the 2020-2021 academic year. We will be listed in their directory to receive referrals for services that fall under our refugee and immigrant services, healthy relationships, and Youth Haven camps. We also received a renewed contract from Health and Human Services for our Healthy Relationships education program. So far we have reached 286 high school students in DC. With renewal, we will expand our work with a new curriculum to 300 DC youth and 1000 youth in Prince George's County over the next two years.

This year our Board of Directors approved the creation of the Bold Journey Endowment Fund supporting our clients seeking to further their education and vocational training. The Fund will provide scholarships to past and current clients working to improve their lives and build a stronger future. To donate to the Fund visit [LSSNCA.org](https://LSSNCA.org).

## GET INVOLVED

### ► OPEN YOUR HOME TO A REFUGEE YOUTH

We are seeking families interested in opening their hearts and homes to refugee youth. To learn how you can foster an unaccompanied refugee minor, contact Patricia Britt at 202-723-3000 ext 254 or [Brittp@lssnca.org](mailto:Brittp@lssnca.org).

### ► DONATION NEEDS

We have ongoing donation needs, particularly for our newly-arrived refugee families. We need laptops and tablets for remote learning, household items and furnishings, and baby/toddler essentials. Visit [LSSNCA.org](https://LSSNCA.org) for a full list of how you can help.

### ► VOLUNTEER NEEDS

We have gone virtual but still need the help of volunteers and interns! We need virtual family and youth mentors and tutors, Youth Haven and refugee resettlement interns, and employment development volunteers. View all opportunities at [LSSNCA.org](https://LSSNCA.org).

### ► MAKE A PLANNED GIFT

You can support our programs and services by adding a bequest in your will, contribute to us through your retirement plan, and through designation in your life insurance policies. For more information on planned giving, contact Susan Haine at [Haines@lssnca.org](mailto:Haines@lssnca.org).

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## READ OUR STORIES INSIDE

### THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING



Youth Mentoring

### WE'RE THANKFUL FOR OUR COMMUNITY



COVID Response

### A MOTHER CHANGED FOR THE BETTER



My Foster Children

## SERVING & WELCOMING BOLDLY

We are mobilizing our community of volunteers, donors, organizational partners, and congregations to provide opportunities that strengthen and empower our neighbors. Please join us!

To learn more visit [LSSNCA.org](https://LSSNCA.org) & read more stories on our blog at [LSSNCA.blog](https://LSSNCA.blog).

United Way #8146  
United Way CFC #200306  
Maryland Charity Campaign #53-0207407  
Thrivent Choice

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