

# RALEIGH-DURHAM HIGHLIGHTS

January 17 – 20, 2024

With the help of 75 service providers, our team arranged much-needed support for 698 Afghans - approximately 54% of the newly arrived Afghan population in the Durham area. Many participants from other countries also attended and received services. While we cannot share every amazing story from our work, we can shine the spotlight on a handful of compassionate professionals who made a significant difference for so many. We look forward to continuing our work in Northern Virginia from January 31 to February 3 at the Falls Church Marriott. For more information, please visit [Centers for Afghan Support](#).

**Division Chief of Operations and Acting Regional Director Victoria Young** of [Kittrell Job Corps](#) shared the stories of two recent Job Corps enrollees. Sisters Habiba (23) and Zahra (19) attended our Support Center event in Atlanta in November. When they attended, they spoke with the Job Corps team about medical careers. After the initial conversation, Habiba and Zahra returned the next day with the rest of their family to learn more and discuss next steps. The Job Corps team explained the program and shared a virtual tour of the campus and dormitories. The sisters were then enrolled in the Brunswick Campus and will be rooming together.

Their first step will be to earn their high school diploma, which will take about a year. Then, Zahra will be focusing on a patient care technician program while Habiba will go into a clinician medical assistant program. They'll also be working on obtaining their driver's license and basic medical certifications as they are introduced community resources to ensure their transitions is as smooth as possible.

In Durham, **Outreach Admissions Counselor Barnard Allen** helped enroll Shirwali (18) in a Job Corps certified nursing program at their Kittrell campus. Shirwali is a recent graduate of Charles Jordan High School in Durham with dreams of pursuing a medical career as a doctor. He considered enrolling in a community college and applying for financial aid, but he didn't have the proper citizenship and residency requirements for that step. At Kittrell, the Job Corps team will provide wrap around during the two-year tuition free program.



[Refugee Community Partnership](#) is a grassroots organization working with refugee and migrant communities across central North Carolina. The team focuses on facilitating access to systems – from public assistance to health care to law enforcement. Their Bridge Builders program helps neighbors take care of one another. Trained volunteers are matched with RCP families, focusing on immediate needs like finding housing and employment to establish stability and security as quickly as possible. They also provide computer-related guidance on how to create an email account or check a student's academic record. Advocacy is the bedrock of their approach, ensuring clients can articulate needs independently as they move forward.

**Spanish Community Coordinator Carolina Torres** and **Afghan Community Coordinator Atiquallah Pardisi** shared their backgrounds and why the work matters to them. Carolina joined RCP in 2023 as volunteer working in medical field. She was interested in helping families in need and believed RCP was a great organization. She was an architect in Honduras before making North Carolina her home. Atiquallah served an interpreter for the Marines in Afghanistan, coming to the U.S. in 2012. He joined RCP in 2021 and talked about how the services they offer have helped dozens of families in the area. Particularly important is the work they do in providing transportation to families so they can get to necessary appointments, like immunizations so children can be enrolled in school. Today, even as many families have cars and employment, there are 30-40 families in the region who need help establishing stability.

During the summer months, RCP hosts camps for children and youth they describe as a "bustling microcosms of culture-first community building." RCP staff and student volunteers from local universities plan and lead programming celebrating cultural traditions and creating new memories.

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[NeighborHealth Center](#) in Raleigh is a growing clinic serving the primary health needs of many in the community without access to quality health care. Serving all ages, focusing on areas of high need where no safety-net clinic exists, they welcome patients with Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance and the uninsured.

**Clinical Operations Administrator Berkely Dixon, Care Coordinator Davion Alexander, and Communications and Marketing Outreach Coordinator Isabel Rodriguez** discussed the importance of demystifying the health care process and system for those they serve. Staff educate clients about annual exams, immunization schedules and the difference between scheduling an urgent care visit versus seeing a primary care doctor. They also spoke to how their team works to make language more accessible. Too often, feelings and emotions have one or two labels that can be stigmatized in certain cultures. Giving patients the ability to describe what they are feeling, especially when it's related to mental health, is critically important to the healing and care process.

NeighborHealth Center also provides comprehensive OB/GYN services, caring for many women in need of prenatal services and support. Their goal is creating a safe and welcoming environment in what can be traditionally can be an invasive or intimidating process for clients. Founder Susanne Berger was inspired to create NeighborHealth after seeing many in the community without access to medical services or could not afford medication. She was determined to ensure anyone who didn't have the ability to pay for their healthcare needs would have a place to go. The organization opened its doors in 2018 with five employees. Today, they've grown to nearly 90 employees.



[CWS Greensboro](#) welcomes refugees, immigrants and asylum-seekers from around the globe into lives of freedom, hope, and opportunity through direct services, advocacy, leadership development and relationship-building. They focus on helping the Afghan community achieve self-sufficiency and reach their long-term goals. They provide career development planning and counseling, training and certification and community support through professional networking and mentoring.

**Career Coordinator Lori Suarez and Career Navigator Savannah Kendrick** are working with over 25 Afghan clients enrolled in their program, many who had successful careers back in their home country and need support continuing their career growth in the United States.



A recent client was an OB/GYN while in Afghanistan and is looking to take her extensive experience and find roles that would match her skills. It's incredibly difficult for new arrivals to resume careers at the same level in the medical profession given the time and expense required by American education and residency requirements. The CWS team set her up to shadow medical providers including physician assistants, nurse practitioners and midwives at a local facility. Through this opportunity, she's been able learn more about their day-to-day activities, licensing requirements, and ask about professional development.

Lori and Savannah also talked about the challenges Afghans continue to face. Chief among those challenges is a desire to improve their economic security through education and training while balancing the immediate pressures of paying for basics like food, rent, and transportation. These men and women arrive ready to contribute to our economy and society, with energy and passion. Support and encouragement from a nurturing community, like what we see happening in the Raleigh-Durham region, makes all the difference in the world.