

Message from the Executive Director

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

– Maya Angelou

As I reflect on this past year, and on the last sixteen years I have been involved with San Diego Refugee Tutoring, this quote by Maya Angelou came to mind. While we may not know the exact fruit of our labor over the course of a week, a month or even a year or more, we do know that **our kids will not forget how we made them feel. We do know that being heard and seen and being part of a community is more important now than ever before.**

While the news may bring feelings of fear and anxiety for many of our students and their families, regardless of their immigration status, nothing has changed at SDRT. **We continue to be a welcoming place of safety and support.** We know our students by name. We believe in them, even when political leaders do not. We have a front row seat to unimaginable perseverance and resiliency—and we don’t plan on going anywhere.

One student, Noora*, spent this past year adjusting to her new American life as a third grader. Her family moved several times, forced to attend two elementary schools in nine months. This painfully shy child built walls and even refused to speak at home and school for quite some time. I transported her family to tutoring a few times and strategically played some Pashto music in my car (thank you, YouTube). A SDRT board member and his wife made many home visits to Noora’s family—including delivering popsicles on a hot day—and spent time getting to know all nine of her family members. Tutors worked their way through long tutoring sessions with Noora, reading simple books in English and learning some Pashto along the way. We found out in December that Noora missed her dollhouse the most from Afghanistan. We decided to surprise her with a dollhouse from OfferUp.

Over the course of the year, Noora was noticeably different. She began speaking again! When she sees SDRT staff who speak Pashto, she runs to them with a large embrace and a smile plastered on her face. As Noora continues to bloom, tutoring has become more enjoyable for her. Even though Noora’s family moved, they are committing to another year of tutoring. And, I am pretty sure it is because of how the community at SDRT made Noora (and her family) feel.

It’s a privilege that our families trust their children with us and we don’t take it lightly. While we cannot claim to all fully understand how they feel as newcomers to this country, we can commit to working our hardest to help each of our students **feel loved, capable and supported** as we come alongside them in their academic journeys here in San Diego.

Thank YOU for being a part of this community. Whether you donate, serve on a board, help out with events or tutor regularly, each of you are needed. We look forward to a new year together.

With gratitude,



Melissa Phillips
Executive Director and Co-Founder

*name changed for anonymity



Our Mission

To provide holistic academic support through one-on-one tutoring, enrichment activities, and mentorship to students of refugee background in the community of City Heights in Central San Diego.

Our Staff



Top

Andrew Younger, Keith Messerman,
Filbert Ochira, Kerry Lee

Middle

Sodaba Dehpoor, Andrea Zeidell,
Laurel Wheeler, Kristin McGraw,
Sadia Habib, Melissa Phillips

Bottom

Mauricio Hernandez,
Habon Hassan, Vivian Munoz

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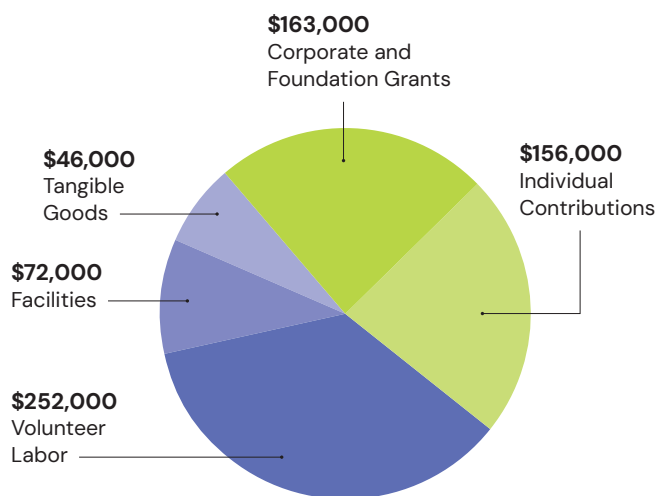
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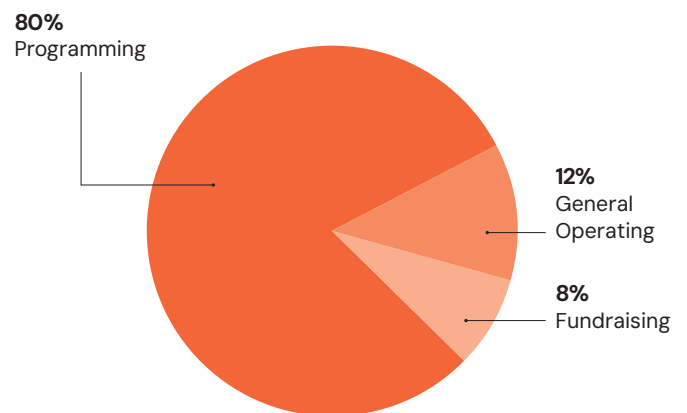


\$319,000
Monetary

\$370,000
In-Kind

\$690,000
Total

Expense



Our Programs

Tutoring

Individualized 1:1 twice weekly tutoring and mentoring program

Specialized academic support for students ages preschool through community college for 50+ sessions each school year.

Events

Special events and field trips

Provide students access to community organizations, holistic care and experiences they would otherwise not have in their cultural enclaves in their communities.

Educational Support

Educational support to families

SDRT promotes educational support for parents and family members through family book giveaways, parent and family trainings each trimester and bi-weekly family communication.

Scholarships

Post high school scholarships

\$7,000-\$10,000 is awarded annually to students in our program who are pursuing education/training beyond high school.





Our Impact

Academic Impact

SDRT provides educational support twice weekly to address the gaps in foundational knowledge that are the building blocks of success for our students.

During the 2024–2025 school year, SDRT had:

-  **139 Students**
of refugee status served
-  **6,271 Hours**
of volunteer support provided
-  **54 Tutoring Sessions**
90-minute tutoring sessions provided
-  **346 Volunteers**
supported our students
-  **\$9,250 in Scholarships**
provided to our students

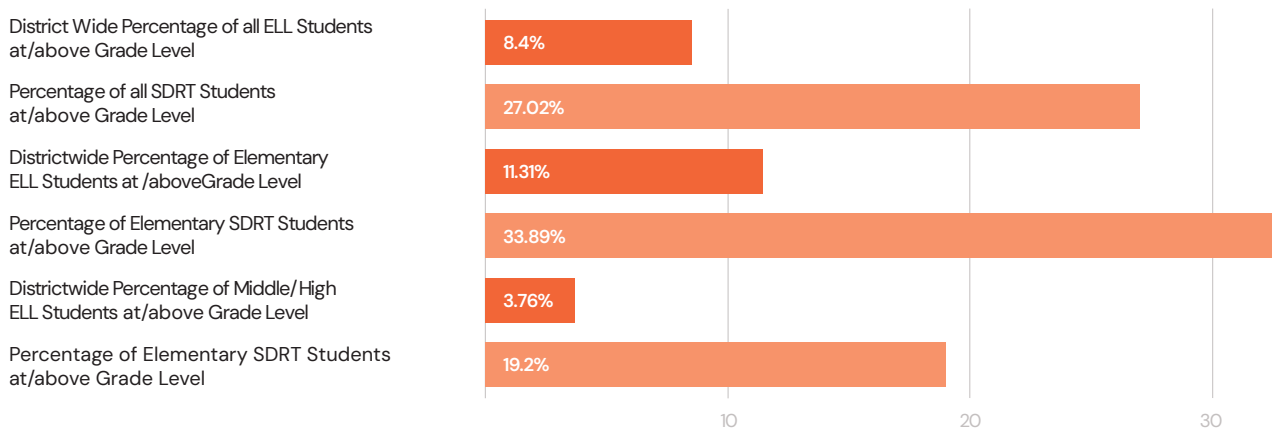
Holistic Impact

For students to be successful with academics, they need other items such as school supplies, access to books, basic hygiene supplies and more. SDRT provides this holistic support throughout the year.

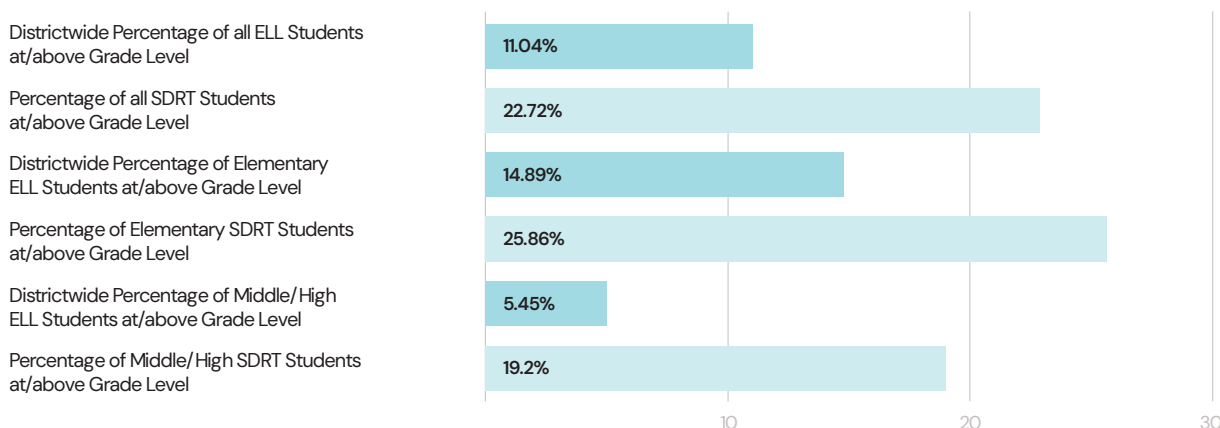
During the 2024–2025 school year, SDRT was able to support our students with:

-  **200 Pairs of Shoes**
-  **2.5 Tons of Groceries**
-  **700 Books**
-  **160 Backpacks**
-  **42 Expressive Art Sessions**

San Diego Unified English Language Learners at/above Grade Level (SBAC) vs. SDRT Students at Grade Level (STAR): English



San Diego Unified English Language Learners at/above Grade Level (SBAC) vs. SDRT Students at Grade Level (STAR): Math



Volunteer and Student Quotes

Volunteer Quotes

"My experience with SDRT has been one of the most transformative aspects of my life. The relationships I've built with these students have deeply enriched my perspective, teaching me the value of resilience, cultural exchange, and empathy."

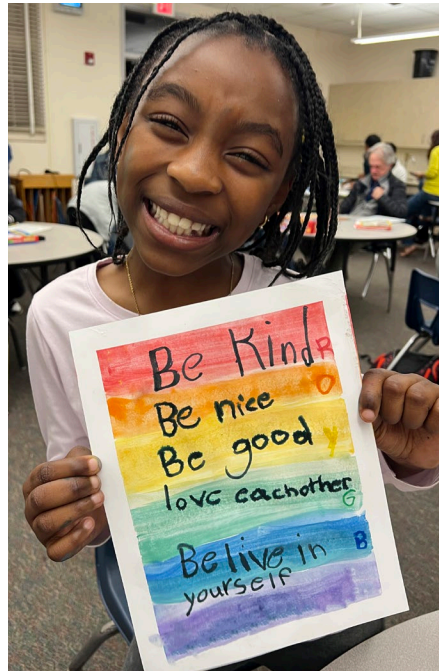
– Tutoring Volunteer

"I've met some fantastic students who inspire me to work hard and challenge myself to grow."

– Tutoring Volunteer

"Tutoring gives me a sense of purpose and connects me with a wonderful community that I wouldn't otherwise get the chance to engage with."

– Tutoring Volunteer



Student Quotes

"Because of SDRT, I quickly picked up English, made lasting friendships, and became one of the top students in my elementary class. This program changed my life. This program not only gave me endless resources but also provided me with a community."

– Rahwa (Jodi Maroney Scholarship Recipient)

"SDRT reminded me that my journey matters and that I'm not doing this alone."

– Habon (Jodi Maroney Scholarship Recipient)

"Nine years ago I was unable to read, write, or understand English and now, I am taking AP and honors classes and will be one of the first in my family to attend college. Before SDRT arrived in my life, I often felt invisible in the classroom. I was the only child who did not speak the language, and both the students and the teacher treated me as if I weren't there. SDRT helped me feel visible in a place where I once felt unseen. SDRT taught me a new language while also celebrating my own culture."

– Fatuma (Jodi Maroney Scholarship Recipient)

Events and Field Trips

Why events are important to us

Events are important to SDRT because they help build community, give us an opportunity to connect with students outside of tutoring, allow us to get to know the families of our students, and create experiences that our students often only read or hear about.

Back to School Bash

Thanksgiving Feast

Cocoa and Cookies

Books and Gifts

Elementary Movie Theater Field Trip

Ice Skating

Middle School/High School Hangout

Bike Day

Grad Celebrations

Memory/Pizza Night

Tutor Gatherings

Shoe Night

Parent Workshops

Shoe Distribution



How can YOU impact students? Give today!

\$25

One tutoring session for one student

\$50

One week of tutoring for one student

\$100

Snacks for all students for one week

\$500

One classroom of tutoring for one week

\$5,000

Tutoring for all students for one week



Thank you to our partners!

Boys and Girls Foundation
Carmel Mountain Dental Care
County of San Diego
Flood Church
Hello Neighbor Network

Hope for San Diego
Kinship Fund
Public Health Institute (State of CA)
SDUSD Community Service Foundation
Semptra Energy

True Local Realty Group
University City United Church
Women of St. James Episcopal Church

Sustaining Partners Circle

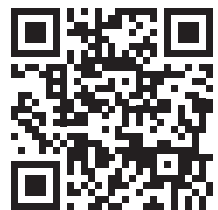
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make an
impact?**



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**San Diego
Refugee Tutoring**