










San Diego Refugee Tutoring

Impact Report

2025-2026

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.



Marie's Story

Marie* is well-known at SDRT. Three years ago, when Marie first enrolled, she was known because SDRT staff and volunteers were consistently challenged with finding ways to keep her from rolling on the ground and hiding from her tutors. Marie remained a challenge to pair until, one day, she was not! It did not happen all at once. Marie's language skills grew over time and the world around her started to make sense. Marie's test scores at the beginning were below grade level, which is common. However, by spring 2026, fourth grade Marie tested above grade level and showed her reading independently at a seventh grade reading level! With a dedicated tutor showing up for her twice a week, Marie could be found focusing on her homework, reading a *Dog Man* book aloud to her tutor, and painting her next masterpiece in the SDRT Art Room. Marie is now well-known at SDRT as a talented artist and an amazing, voracious reader.



"Working with Marie* has been such a meaningful experience. She has a great energy and enthusiasm that she brings to every session and a creative spirit that permeates her every endeavor. She asks great questions, loves to learn, and enjoys reading the same books I do! I feel both proud and grateful for my time with Marie."

- Natan, Marie's Tutor

*Name changed for confidentiality

Message from the Executive Director

Much of life can be described as “both/and”. That is my best way of describing how SDRT sits currently and how we have felt this past year.

On one hand, you can see in this annual report that our students have made wondrous gains in both literacy and math, especially post-pandemic. Since 2022, we have more than doubled our funding, tripled our part-time staff and have seen student attendance go through the roof. Our volunteers still drive from all over San Diego County, up to 80 arrive each night. This year, we awarded the highest number of Jodi Maroney Scholarships ever—our kids are pursuing college after high school! We have so much to be proud of. We all find extraordinary joy in showing up for our kids. This SDRT community is a bright light in my life, and has been for 17 years. I look forward to starting my 18th.

AND, there are a lot of uncertainties right now. We haven’t received any new arrivals. We excitedly received government funding two years ago, and it is now drying up. We do not know what the future holds for many of our students and their families and fear is in the air. We see the effects on our kids’ behaviors when their families are faced with such instability. We often do not have the words or the answers. We do not have the powers we wish we did.

AND, we show up anyway. **We do what we can for those we can right now.** We lend an ear, buy the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book, sit down and pay attention to each child in front of us. Whether it is a third snack, a planet puzzle, or a soccer uniform, we are aware of our kids’ needs and are doing our best to meet them.

It has always taken a village. Over 400 of us last year alone. Let’s not be discouraged. Let’s share hope with our kids. And keep showing up.



Melissa Phillips
Executive Director and Co-Founder



2026 SDRT Staff

Field Trips and Events

We value giving our students experiences that allow them to be kids and give them a chance to experience American culture. Our events and field trips also give our students and their tutors a chance to connect outside the classroom and often meet each others' families.



Back to School Bash

Backpacks, haircuts, hygiene products, shoes, socks and the support of SDRT. Students are given necessary supplies to start a new school year as well as register for SDRT.



Thanksgiving Feast

300+ students, family members and tutors sit down together to have an American Thanksgiving Feast together. Complete with a photo booth, pumpkin pie, games and face painting.



Holiday Nights

Decorating holiday cookies and enjoying hot cocoa with tutors is a highlight for our kids in December. Choosing a holiday gift and books to read over winter break is a delight.



MS/HS Hangout

Though we all want to hang out at tutoring, we must study and learn. This space gives our teens a chance to hang out, play soccer and volleyball, eat pizza and chill.



Lake Poway Hike

Our elementary school kids hiked, played games, ate lunch and made s'mores for the first time!



Movie Theater Takeover

Heading to see a movie on the big screen complete with popcorn, candy and a drink was a real treat, and a first, for many of our teens.



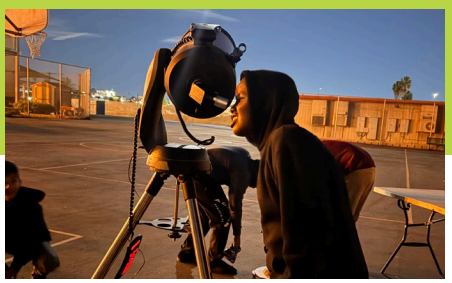
Bike Day

Riding bikes of all sizes and shapes in a safe, fun environment is a highlight for many of our kids. Some even learned to ride for the first time. Cotton candy, lunch, and more make it a success every year.



Grad Celebration

We get to celebrate each 5th, 8th and 12th grade student during our last week of tutoring. We also have pizza, ice cream sundaes, and photo books for kids to create with their SDRT memories as well as summer reading materials!



Telescope Night

We had a special guest from The Planetary Society whose boss is Bill Nye. With two high-powered telescopes, our kids enjoyed viewing the moon up close during tutoring!

Post-Pandemic: Look at SDRT's Growth!

When San Diego Refugee Tutoring returned to in-person tutoring after the pandemic in the 2022-2023 school year, we couldn't predict how many students were going to come back. After two years of online tutoring, would students want to return to the classroom? The answer: a resounding yes. Over the last three years, San Diego Refugee Tutoring is bigger than ever. Take a look at the following numbers and see how much our program has grown.

Jodi Maroney Scholarship Award amounts doubled

$7,250 → $15,000 — 106.8% increase

Cash Revenue has more than doubled

$161k → $427k — 165.2% increase

Our staff has expanded

2 Program Directors → 4 Program Directors (Early Literacy, Elementary, Middle School, High School)

5 staff → 14 staff — 189% increase

New website and branding

SD REFUGEE TUTORING → San Diego Refugee Tutoring

Our Kids are Growing and Staying!

MS/HS students who attended a session:

60 Students → 89 Students — 48.3% increase

219 Tutors → 303 Tutors — 38.3% increase

MS/HS average in-person attendance per session:

19.28 Students → 34.03 Students — 76.5% increase

150 Students served in 2022 → 183 Students served in 2025-26 — 22% increase

We Restarted Our Art Program!

"For many SDRT kids who come to the art room, these 20 minutes are the only time during their week to experience making art. Knowing that some of these kids just can't wait for the art session makes leading the art room very rewarding for me, too!"

– Olga, SDRT Art Instructor



Tutoring and Mentoring

Tutoring and Mentoring is the most robust program at SDRT. It is a twice weekly, 1:1 program that relies on 75-90 community members each and every night! From learning to read to completing college applications, kids arrive at tutoring to have snacks, learn in a calm setting, and build relationships with their tutors.

During the 2025-2026 school year, SDRT had:

157
Students Served at Tutoring (ages 4-19)

6,153
Hours of Volunteer Support Provided

55
90-Minute Tutoring Sessions

426
Total Volunteers at SDRT

SDRT also provided:

125 Pairs of Shoes

700 Books

175 Backpacks

4,000 lbs of Fresh Groceries

Look At Our Kids' Growth!

Overall, 85% of SDRT students (K-12) made progress in reading.

Overall, 72.3% of SDRT students (K-12) made progress in math.

On average, SDRT students (K-12) increased their reading level by more than one grade level over the 2025-2026 school year.

On average, K-5 SDRT students grew 1.24 grade levels in math over the 2025-2026 school year.

"It is the highlight of my week! I have learned a lot from the students myself and hope they've learned a few things from me."

- Nadine, Middle/High School Tutor

Jodi Maroney Memorial Scholarships

During the pandemic, the Jodi Maroney Memorial Scholarship was created in loving memory of one of our incredible tutors. Though it started with just $5,000 in awards, it has grown exponentially over the years. We have awarded 55 scholarships to SDRT graduates worth almost $60,000 since 2020.

Fabiola's Story

Fabiola arrived in the United States from Burundi at eight years old. She didn't know a word of English when she was placed into a third grade classroom and was expected to keep pace with her peers. Fabiola enrolled in San Diego Refugee Tutoring in fourth grade where she started by learning the alphabet. In time, she developed her English skills and continued to receive support all the way through high school. Fabiola now attends UC San Diego and intends to pursue a career in Nursing. San Diego Refugee Tutoring is proud to continue to support her education through the Jodi Maroney Memorial Scholarship.



"It was through this program that I learned how to read, write, and speak English. SDRT does an amazing job connecting students and building a sense of community. I can attribute much of my academic success to SDRT."

- Fabiola

2026 Scholarships

14
2026 recipients

$15,000
awarded in 2026

$58,450
awarded since 2020

Parent Empowerment Workshops

Thanks to the extraordinary support of our Family Academic Liaisons, we have had record breaking turnouts to our Parent Empowerment Workshops this year. With all the material being translated into six languages in one room, all parents are able to understand, connect and ask questions about the topics at hand.

Most Common Languages

Swahili Arabic Haitian Creole

Pashto Sango French Somali

Parents Supporting Parents

It isn't easy to explain through translation (and an entirely different culture) to a parent that their child would benefit from special needs support. Parents are often in denial and have a lot of misconceptions about what will happen to their child if they receive special services.

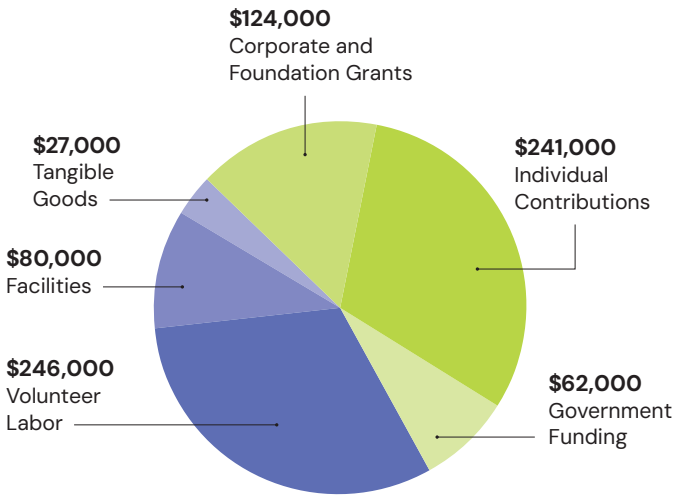
However, what we witnessed at our parent workshop this spring was true beauty. We had one Somali mother, who has a child with mild special needs share, in Somali, with another Somali mother just how helpful the supports have been for her child. Despite many attempts from administration and teachers, this mother had extreme reservations about this label. But, with the trust and confidence of a peer, she believed her! She has agreed to get more support for her fourth grade son! This is a victory that has taken over a decade to accomplish and we do not take it lightly. The longevity and trust that has been built over the last 17 years at SDRT is powerful—and is changing the course for students, one at a time.



Your support is valuable and greatly appreciated.

Financials

Revenue

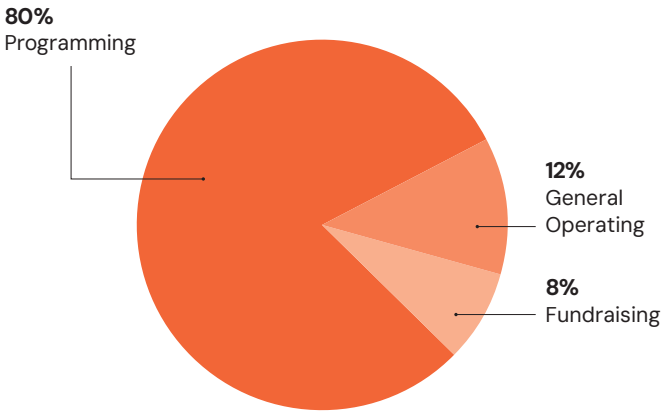


$427,000 Monetary

$352,000 In-Kind

$779,000 Total

Expense



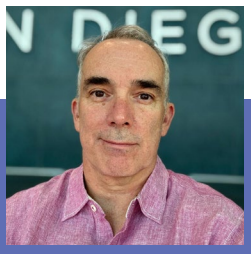
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We cannot do it without you.

Thank you for supporting the education of refugee children and young people so they can learn, dream, achieve and succeed in life.

$25
One tutoring session for one student

$50
One week of tutoring for one student

$200
Snacks for all students for one week

$500
One classroom of tutoring for one week

$5,000
Tutoring for all students for one week



"I love SDRT because it gives me all the help I need."

- SDRT student

Sponsor

- Join our Sustaining Partners Circle by making a **monthly contribution** in any amount.
- Workplace Giving: Check with your employer about **employer matching programs** to support SDRT.

Donate

- Sponsor a student's education after high school by donating to our **Jodi Maroney Scholarship Fund**.
- Sponsor a SDRT student event by donating to our **"Special Events"** fund in our dropdown menu.

Participate

- Become a **Regular Tutor** on Tuesday or Thursday nights.
- Volunteer at a one-time event.
- Hold a **fundraising event of your choice** where the proceeds are donated to SDRT. Have fun with friends while supporting a good cause.

Ready to make an impact?

Scan QR code to give now!

Learn more about us | SDRefugeeTutoring.com

Thank You to Our 2025–2026 Partners

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