

Beyond90 is a non-profit organization located in Jacksonville, Florida, with a heart for helping and working with refugees. Its specific niche is aimed at helping the refugees after their initial 90 days of government support is over. Considering that some refugees have been in camps for years, having had no real job, and even coming in with some disabilities and post-traumatic stress disorders, Beyond90 fully understands that the 90 days of housing support and funding that is provided to the refugees is not long enough for them to be self-sufficient. This is compounded by the lack of language and knowledge of the US culture. Beyond90 has made it its mission to bridge the gap to self-sufficiency by providing ongoing training and support towards personal development and a safe living environment so refugees can have an ample opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to be independent enough to work, live and integrate into American society. The founders of Beyond90, Barton and Lori Chelf, believe in their mission so much so that they sold their condo on the St. Johns River and moved into a low-end apartment complex to live among the refugee community. This move enabled them to provide support, facilitate the learning of life skills, and build lasting friendships with refugees from all over the world. They continue to work and support the refugees by providing programs and services that help them achieve self-sufficiency.

Their newest program offered is the ESL, Civics, and Citizenship program, which was started to prepare specific groups of refugees for their final step into integrating with the American society- their citizenship. This need came about when Lori and Barton realized that many refugees are already eligible for citizenship; they just didn't know how to prepare for it. With hopes of growing, the program currently offers two classes for two separate groups of adult students – one for the Congolese and Burundi community and the other for the Ethiopian and Eritrean community. The classes follow the ethnic community-based model, in which a member of the community with a better mastery of the English language and culture teaches the class. This allows for translations and support in the native language and allows the students to relate to someone. The generous funding received from the Tina B. Carver grant went specifically towards this program. The money was used to purchase a second-hand laptop that can be used in the classroom to engage students in visuals, audio, and games needed to reinforce their learning of the concepts and make them comprehensible. The students in the classes vary in linguistic proficiency, and having a laptop that the teachers can use for visual scaffolding alone was a huge help. However, with the teachers also being members of the refugee community, it was crucial that the students had an audio source of the civics questions and the reading and writing sentences in authentic English that they can listen to. This better prepares them for the interview and citizenship test, which natives of English would give.

Furthermore, considering that most students have no access to a computer at home, providing one in the classroom to engage them in interactive learning has been tremendous, making it easier to scaffold the various linguistic proficiencies. The rest of the funds were used towards purchasing necessary basic materials for students' learning, such as pencils, scissors, and notecards used to create flashcards that they can use in the classroom and at home. Not just does this engage them in their learning, but it also allows students to practice what they've learned outside of the classroom and on their own time. The students have really enjoyed the classes and have been excited about what they are learning. As one student said, "I need help because I am older, don't speak much English, and didn't go to school in my home country. I'm happy to get help in class for citizenship test".