

Born a refugee, nothing can stand in Sarah's way

EVkids senior Sarah lives by a simple phrase: Just go for it. This motto has driven her throughout her life, from being born as a refugee to now being on the cusp of her college career.

After Sarah's Kurdish family ran afoul of then-Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and were forced to flee the country, Sarah was born in Turkey, already a refugee. Her parents, wanting a better and safer life for their children outside of the shadow of political turmoil, came to America and eventually found a home in Dorchester.

The 9th of 11 siblings, Sarah also has a younger sister in the program. Growing up with older role models helped Sarah along her journey in school and as she began applying to colleges.

"It's good to be younger 'cause I can see all the things my older siblings did," she said. "Seeing them apply to colleges, go through the process, I realized what I wanted to do."

As a part of EVkids, Sarah has also had the one-on-one support of her tutor Alex Flynn (BC '17) for the last four

years. Matched when they were both freshmen, their relationship began as tutoring, grew into mentoring, and has resulted in friendship.

"Alex has been there the whole time for me. I could send her a question at 12 a.m. and she'll be right there to help me," Sarah said. "We can talk about anything, whether it is school work or something in my life, it just flows. It's the perfect match."

Alex agrees, saying of Sarah, "I really appreciate how hard she works. We've gotten to know each other really well throughout the years. I know we'll definitely

stay in touch too."

So far, Sarah has been accepted to four colleges: Iona College, Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Curry College, Emmanuel College. With her long-term goal of becoming a trauma surgeon, Sarah knows she has a long educational career ahead of her. Thanks to her hard work, she already has several scholarship offers in hand to help finance the journey. She also plans to play

"Don't let anyone else bring you down."



College-bound high school senior Sarah, right, says her tutor Alex Flynn (Boston College '17) is a "perfect match."

volleyball at a collegiate level.

As she reflects on the support that has gotten her to where she is, Sarah says she is ready to be the one helping others. When asked what advice she would give to someone moving to America like she did, she responds:

"Don't get discouraged about anything. If you put your mind to it, no matter what anyone else says, you're gonna be able to do it. Don't let anyone else bring you down. The only person in your way is yourself."

All four EVkids high school seniors are college bound

And the acceptance letters and scholarship offers keep rolling in!



< Antonio was accepted to Newbury College. He plans to use his creativity to pursue a career as either a chef or a filmmaker. Antonio has been an EVkid since 3rd grade.



< Hector was accepted to Wentworth Institute of Technology, where he plans to study Computer Science and learn to develop video games. He has been an EVkid since 4th grade.



< Alvaro was accepted to Lasell College and UMassBoston. What he's really excited about is trying out for the soccer team. He has been an EVkid since 4th grade.

INSIDE: Alumni spotlight on Hector's former tutor, a sneak peek of a day at EVkids Camp, and more!

EVkids Camp expands teens' horizons every summer

Have you ever wondered what EVkids Camp is really like? For youth who are used to concrete and steel, camp is a breath of fresh air -- literally.

Unstructured summers in the city can be a minefield for youth who need productive ways to spend their time. At Camp, teens can let themselves go wild, in the safe and supportive environment of 9 acres in the Green Mountains.

Camp activities are specially crafted to inspire in youth a sense of self, a sense of community, and a sense of the larger world around them. Co-led by the EVkids Chaplain, an EVkids Education Advocate, and a social work professional, campers find themselves in a new sort of family than the one they have back in Boston. Every day begins with breakfast, followed by stretching

and strength exercises. Then the group gets back together on the porch of the Farmhouse for silent meditation,

looking out over the mountains as one of the co-directors offers a reflection about nature, community, or a related topic.

All campers go to counselor-led workshops

for the rest of the morning until lunch. Workshops can be on almost any topic, as long as they teach a skill. Past workshops have ranged from volleyball and soccer, to drawing and arts and crafts, to chess and writing. After lunch, campers read on their own, and then everyone plays a community game like volleyball, ping-pong, or hide and seek.

On field trip days, campers climb one of Vermont's 4,000-foot peaks, or visit The Barn Yard, a local hands-on organic farm. These experiences expand

their horizons and show them just how big the world is.

Each camper is part of a work team that changes daily. Teams prepare meals, serve one another during mealtimes, clean up after meals, and prepare the evening's Gospel reflection. After dinner, the community gathers for evening activities. Together, they sing camp songs, reflect on the highs and lows of the day, and share camper-prepared lessons that focus on how to be better to one another. Everyone sets an intention for the next day, and then says a closing prayer before bed.

Campers turn in for a full night's sleep, then wake up to chirping birds and do it all again the next day!



A DAY AT EVKIDS CAMP

8:00 a.m.	Wake up, breakfast
8:45 a.m.	Physical fitness
9:00 a.m.	Spiritual fitness
9:15 a.m.	Skill-building workshops
11:00 a.m.	Free time
12:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 p.m.	Reading on your own
3:00 p.m.	Swimming at Blueberry Lake
4:30 p.m.	Cooking
6:30 p.m.	Community dinner
7:30 p.m.	Clean up, free time
8:00 p.m.	Community gathering
10:00 p.m.	Camper bedtime

How your support changes the lives of tutors and tutees alike



Alumni Spotlight

Anthony Staccone (Harvard '13) committed himself to becoming a volunteer and educator the moment he graduated high school. Anthony attended Schenectady High School in upstate New York in a class of around 1,000 students. By graduation, his class had dwindled down to about 550 students.

“That’s probably the thing that got me interested in doing EVkids, my experience in high school,” he said.

As a freshman at Harvard, Anthony began what would become a four-year mentoring relationship with Hector, who was in 5th grade when they first met. Each week, they worked on Hector’s homework together and discovered common interests like reading.

After their four years as a tutoring pair, both Anthony and Hector took the next steps in their lives. Hector moved from middle school to high school, and Anthony, following his graduation from Harvard, became a teacher for two years in China. Last year, Anthony returned to

New York to teach at the United Nations International School, where he teaches history to students whose parents are diplomats or staff at the UN.

Anthony’s time with EVkids and with Hector is where he learned the skills necessary to be a teacher.

“Being not only able to hear what someone else is saying, but understand it, respond to them,” he said. “I tried to do that with Hector, and I try to do it now as a teacher.”

This year is an especially proud moment for the two of them. Hector is in his senior year, his final year in the EVkids Tutoring program, and has already gotten into college.

Anthony reflects on his time tutoring Hector and sees how it helped both of them keep moving forward in their lives.

“It was great to feel important to him,” Anthony said. “And certainly he felt important to me.”



Anthony's tutee Hector, shown here in middle school, is now a college-bound senior! The pair shared a love of reading.

YOU'RE INVITED!

April 22: Alumni Reunion in Washington, D.C.

May 27: EVkids at the Harvard Reunion

May 6: Alumni Reunion in New York City

June 8: Harpoon Beer Tasting

May 13: Moving On Ceremony

Nov. 4: Expanding Horizons Gala

Contact jaclynbarbarow@evkids.org for information on any of these events or to RSVP!

Count me in! I want to get more youth through school and into college with EVkids!

Here's my gift of \$_____.

Paid by:

Check enclosed
Payable to EVkids

Credit card

All fields below required

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Card #: _____ Exp. date: ____/____ Security code: _____

With a community of support, EVkids tutees never walk alone

In January, Tutor Director/Chaplain and Camp Co-Director Heather Angell received the "No One Walks Alone" Award from St. John's Prep for her work in the community and at EVkids. Heather accepted the award as she approaches her work -- with humility, thoughtfulness, and passion. Here is an excerpt of the speech she gave that night.



Heather Angell, left, shown here at last year's Moving On Ceremony, received the "No One Walks Alone" Award from St. John's Prep in Danvers, MA.

We are not there to solve everything and we cannot make right in a few hours a week, a system that is broken or wash away the daily struggles our EVkids and their families can face.

But we can show up. We can call each other by name. We can make the distance between Harvard and Dorchester that much smaller. We can break the bubble.

When things are hard, I try to tell the tutors how much it matters that they just show up. Just get on the T, just come and set up your folding table in that church basement.

Just love.

Just break bread.

And we don't have any bread, but we do have bulk pretzels and dollar store apple juice.

And that seems to work just fine.