



President's Message

Dear VoRTCS tutors

As 2010 draws to a close I hope you've experienced a satisfying year of tutoring with both your tutoring partners and with the families you are working with.

I'd like to tell you about what's been happening with the running of the VoRTCS program over the last few months. The program is at a turning point.

Many of you may have seen VoRTCS moving into a more professional approach, for example with refresher training for existing tutors and the start of monthly reporting. This is set to grow over the next year, as we build up these new practices and also introduce tutor mentoring, and improved family and tutor selection processes.

Behind these improvements has not only been our strategic plan which I mentioned earlier in the year, but also increased staffing (both paid and volunteer) for the program. We are finally emerging from the effects of the GFC and restricted funding, and we've secured a second staff position again. So the Tutoring Program will again be run by a dedicated Tutoring Coordinator supported by a dedicated Admin Officer. This should really help the program pick up again and also support our tutors.

I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome Julian Evans as our new Tutoring Coordinator. Julian comes from working with Volunteering Queensland and we're looking forward to his experience and energy. Also we are welcoming Bianca Nisbett as the new Admin Officer. Bianca has recently been on work experience at Vinnies, and replaces Natasha who has been temporarily covering this position through the year. Many of you have told me how much you've appreciated Natasha's work through the year and I'd personally like to thank her and wish her our very best as she moves into a full-time career in the migrants and refugees sector.

> Contact us

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In this edition:

- President's Message
- Welcome to new staff
- VoRTCS Family Day
- New L&D initiatives
- Reading Packs for migrants available in Public Libraries
- Getting into the Christmas spirit with free events around Brisbane

- VoRTCS is a non-profit, volunteer run program that provides free in-home tutoring for refugee families in the Brisbane area.
- VoRTCS is a special works of St Vincent de Paul.
- Tutors assist refugee families with primary, secondary and tertiary school work, literacy, conversation practice and life skills

Also joining the volunteer committee in recent months is Becky Upton as our new Vice President. Becky is a post-grad student who will be working part-time as a volunteer with Julian in a special role to develop up our governance and to restart our evaluation program.

Finally I'd like to tell you about special events which have occurred over the last two months. In October, we held our first Tutor Meeting by Webinar. We had about 20 tutors participate and a guest speaker – all online. We've had pretty positive feedback and plan to go further with this approach next year. Thanks to Marion and the Learning Development team for all their great work.

We finished the year with a great picnic in the park on Sunday November 20. There were tutors, family members, good food and it was great to see so many refugee children and tutors playing cricket, soccer and other games or just talking and catching up – and the Botanic Gardens were perfect. Again something we plan to repeat. Thanks to Marion, Jeremy, Melinda, Meta and the rest of the organizing team.

With the holidays approaching, there's an opportunity with your tutoring to enjoy a change of pace with your families, or take a holiday break and refresh for the year ahead. We appreciate the time you've contributed every week to helping the many refugee families in the program to connect better with our community. On behalf of the volunteer committee and staff, please accept our best wishes and we look forward to working with you again in 2011.

Ian Tanner
President VoRTCS



Welcome to the newest members of the VoRTCS team!

Julian Evans Tutoring Coordinator

“Hi, my name is Julian Evans but most people call me Jules. I moved to Australia from the UK since January 2010 as my wife was head hunted for a post at a local university. I love to travel and have travelled around the world first with the British Army and then on my own steam.

My hobbies include canoeing and I organised and led an expedition to South America to canoe remote and untouched rivers which was great fun!

I am excited about my role as Tutoring Coordinator with VoRTCS - I think the tutoring program is a great way for communities to learn about each other and help people newly arrived in this great country to settle in.

Please feel free to contact me with questions, concerns or suggestions about how to improve the program for our tutors and families. My email is julian.evans@svdpqld.org.au.”



Bianca Nisbet Administration Assistant

“Hi, my name is Bianca. I am currently studying at QUT, majoring in Marketing, Public Relations and International Business.

I've always dreamt of working for an organisation like St Vincent de Paul Society and VoRTCS, which are making a difference in people's lives and encouraging them to reach for the stars no matter what their goals in life are.



• Please refer to the VoRTCS website for further information

www.refugeetutoring.org

• If you are interested in volunteering with VoRTCS contact us on:

refugeetutoring@refugeetutoring.org

• To submit an idea for the newsletter contact the Publications Officer:

publications@refugeetutoring.org

DON'T forget to let us know if:

- You change your contact details
- You stop visiting your family (even temporarily)
- You need another tutor to assist your group
- You need more resources
- You need advice
- You are having problems tutoring
- Your family changes their contact details

I'm an active gym junkie but can't ever say no to sweets and chocolate! I love going to the beach, cooking and also the occasional fishing adventure. I've only been in this job for a few weeks, but I already love working with the wonderful people in our office and the amazing volunteers who contribute so much to the VoRTCS Program.

I can be contacted on bianca.nisbet@svdpqld.org.au. Remember to let me know straight away if your contact details or tutoring arrangements change!"

Becky Upton Vice President

"I am thrilled to be a new member of VoRTCS and an active part of such a vital organisation in our community.

I have always had a passion for learning about foreign cultures, communities, traditions and languages; an interest which has led me to travel, volunteer, study and work in various parts of North and South East Asia, India, and Europe.

I have previously studied international relations, diplomacy, and global governance. After a few years of working in a foreign governmental policy role, I returned to Australia to complete my Masters in Development Practice, currently specialising in Community Development.

I hope to contribute the skills I have learnt over the years to assist in the future development, and support the continued success, of this program. I am looking forward to meeting everyone associated with VoRTCS and know that together we can continue to offer invaluable assistance to refugee families' in need."



VoRTCS Family Day

21 November 2010

VoRTCS had its 5th birthday this year and to celebrate we decided to gather together our wonderful tutors, past and present, and our fantastic families for a day of fun, games and good food in the Queensland sunshine.

The VoRTCS "Family Day" was held on Sunday, 21 November, in the City Botanic Gardens. We had a great turn out of tutors and families with over 50 people joining us. Kids and adults worked up an appetite with soccer, cricket, frisbee, tennis and lots more! People also enjoyed relaxing in the beautiful gardens and getting to know each other.

The sausage sizzle was a huge success and was enjoyed along with the many plates of delicious food contributed by tutors, families and Committee members.

The Family Day was a great opportunity for everyone to relax, get to know each other and enjoy the outdoors. For those who attended, we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did. If you missed out this year stay tuned as we may repeat the event next year!

In the meantime, here are a few photos from the day.





TUTOR MENTORING PROGRAM

VoRTCS aims to assist and encourage refugee families to take up the opportunities available to all Australians, whether they are educational, social or vocational. We recognise that it is our tutors that make this goal possible by offering their skills and time to help.

However, we also know that our tutors need a good support network and on-going engagement with the VoRTCS program after tutoring begins.

To meet this need, VoRTCS is looking at implementing a **Tutor Mentor Program**.

Under this program, small groups of tutors will be allocated a mentor. This mentor will meet regularly with tutors and be available to answer questions and provide advice and support. Mentors may be experienced past or present tutors or others with the appropriate skills/experience.

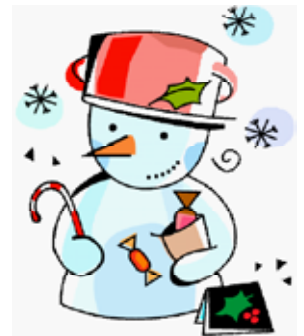
In turn, new mentors will be given training and support from VoRTCS.

We hope mentoring will provide tutors with the support that they need and also be a way for VoRTCS to get important feedback on how the program is working and areas for improvement.

Mentoring is a great way to continue to contribute to the work of VoRTCS and give something back to the community, perhaps after your family has retired from the program.

We are very excited about this new initiative and are looking for expressions of interests from potential mentors for a pilot program next year!

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or would like more information, please contact Marion on learningdevelopment@refugeetutoring.org.





New initiatives in Learning and Development

Traditionally VoRTCS has used regular Tutor Meetings to provide on-going learning and development opportunities for tutors. However, feedback has suggested that this forum may not be effective in reaching the maximum number of tutors due to the time commitment, travel and timing.

As a result, our L&D team led by Marion Norton has been exploring new initiatives to provide learning & development opportunities that are more flexible and that tutors can easily access - without even leaving home!

On 20 October we had our first Webinar Tutor Meeting with over 20 tutors and an external speaker logging in for the on-line seminar. Here is some of the positive feedback from tutors who participated:

"I sat in on the webinar tonight and really enjoyed the format. I'm working in Townsville this week and had to connect in via a work laptop - unfortunately I couldn't get the mic working. Regardless of that minor issue I think the webinar format is excellent and hopefully there will be more sessions to follow.

Also, I like where the vortcs team is heading with the tutoring support - reporting, mentoring, refresher training etc...

I really hope you do continue with the webinar format because I think the sessions are so convenient it's almost impossible to come up with a valid excuse for not joining in."

"I thought the Webinar went very well and is a great idea for future training, information giving for tutors etc. Hope the word spreads so that more people can see the benefits of staying at home instead of having to travel to meetings and training..."

Congratulations to all concerned. I don't know when you sleep!"

We plan to continue with Webinars next year so stay tuned for details about how to connect



New Arrivals Reading Packs

Available from Public Libraries

The Little Big Book Club in partnership with Vegemite is pleased to introduce ***The New Arrivals Family Reading Pack*** program for every migrant family that enters Australia.

The packs have been designed to support migrant families in reading and playing together as a family unit whilst encouraging children's emergent literacy skills which are transferable across familial and English language.

Research indicates that children develop emergent literacy skills that are transferable across languages so whether parents read aloud in their familial language or in English, the benefits remain the same.

However, the concern is that if parents cannot read English and they are not engaged or encouraged to read to their children, these children are placed at a disadvantage and risk having lower emergent literacy levels.

One of the major roadblocks in providing age appropriate reading materials for young families in a multilingual format is the prohibitive cost associated with translation. However with the generous support of Kraft Foods Australia/New Zealand, The Little Big Book Club has been able to develop a picture book called Wilbur and have it translated into twelve languages, with English as the common language throughout. Three versions of the book will be available and include:

Version 1: Somali/Tamil/Burmese/Farsi/English
Version 2: Dinka/Hindi/Khmer/Nuer/English
Version 3: Amharic/Chinese/Arabic/French/English

The Activity Packs also include a Play Dough Activity Set and Drawing Activity Pad (both of which encourage the concept of play between parent and child) and a copy of the It's Rhyme Time booklet and DVD featuring traditional rhymes, counting and action songs as well as modelling reading techniques for parents and or/ carers.

For more information, visit <http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au>.



Enjoy the Festive Season

Christmas is a great time of year to enjoy with family and friends. Here are just a few of the great FREE activities happening in and around Brisbane this holiday season. There are plenty of great ideas to share with your refugee family. For more information visit www.ourbrisbane.com.

- **Myer Christmas Window Displays** - The Queen Street Mall is alive with Christmas cheer as families gather wide-eyed to celebrate the annual Myer Christmas window display. Myer has unveiled the 55th Myer windows theme for Christmas 2010, a beautifully animated tribute to the classic Christmas tale, The Nutcracker.

Sat 6 November 2010 - Fri 24 December 2010
Queen Street Mall, Brisbane City

- **South Bank Christmas Lights** - you can be sure to find some of the most spectacular Christmas lights and decorations in Brisbane at South Bank. Expect plenty of colour and festive cheer when the Parklands, Little Stanley and Grey Street light up this Christmas.

Wed 1 December 2010 - Sat 25 December 2010
Throughout the Parklands, Little Stanley and Grey Sts, South Bank

- **Little Christmas Stars Kids Workshops** - Join the 'Little Christmas Stars' in their pop-up storybook land of creating and giving at the Queen Street Mall Stage. Make wrapping paper, books, masks and more. Create decorations and add them to the display hung high above the stage and lit up at night. Enjoy the fun of kid's rappers as they perform throughout the day and bring the Christmas storybook to life. Or why not dress up in one of our costumes and take your photo at the photo booth.

Sat 11 December 2010 - Fri 24 December 2010, 10am-2pm
Queen Street Mall, Brisbane City

- **Plant a Christmas Tree** - A fantastic kids gardening activity, with a Christmas twist! Come along and plant your very own Christmas tree in a pot to take home and care for!

Mon 13 December 2010 - Fri 24 December 2010, 10am-2pm
Westfield Garden City, Crn Logan & Kessels Rd, Upper Mt Gravatt

