

Supervisor Spotlight

Name: Marissa Graff

Position: Citizenship Instructor

How does your program utilize volunteers?

We study American history, US Naturalization questions, and the Citizenship exam. Volunteers work with students to improve the clients' skills in writing, reading, and interviewing. Volunteers play a key role in the program and are very much appreciated! Because of our helpful volunteers the students are that much more successful in passing their US Citizenship Interviews.

What are some highlights from your experience managing volunteers?

First, seeing the students and volunteers connect is wonderful. Having someone else in the room means all the students get the attention they need and we can adapt to their learning style. Secondly, it feels amazing when volunteers go on to teaching jobs, college or internships because of the experience and references they gained while working with my program. Knowing you helped someone explore their passion and achieve their goals is fantastic.

What has been challenging about managing volunteers?

Managing so many volunteers at once is sometimes tricky, because it is hard to remember who said what. If they email me, I have it down and remember. If they say it in the classroom, I sometimes forget.

How has the presence of volunteers impacted clients or community members?

I have volunteers who have worked directly with clients who were struggling with writing or speaking and due to the dedication and hard work of those volunteers, the students are now citizens. After spending several months tutoring our immigrant and refugee population, volunteers often say "it is so fun" and "one of the best experiences of [their lives]". In addition, I have volunteers who have gone on to study political science, interned in Washington, D.C., and gone to teach abroad. Even after leaving the program, the volunteers continue to give back to the refugee and immigrant community.

