



## The Howley Foundation Grantee Spotlight: Fugees Family

**Mission:** Fugees Family is devoted to working with child survivors of war. The organization empowers refugees to integrate successfully into their new country by providing them the support and structure they need to realize their vast potential.

**What is the Need:** Refugee children who come to the United States face a unique set of challenges. Most have been forced to flee their home countries, have lived through traumatic experiences and spent time in refugee camps where education is neither a priority nor an option. Once settled in the U.S., these children are behind their peers, both academically and socio-economically, and are often left behind in a traditional public school system.

### Proud Program Moment:

In May 2016, Fugees Academy graduated its first high school class – 100% of our graduates have been accepted into college.

### What The Howley Foundation Funded:

Fugees Academy, the most ambitious of the Fugees Family programs, is a private, zero-tuition school for refugee children grades six to 12 with campuses in Atlanta, Georgia and Columbus, Ohio. The third Fugees Academy was opened in 2020 in Cleveland with a multi-year grant.

### Why The Howley Foundation Funded This Work:

The Fugees Academy model is exactly the type of school The Howley Foundation likes to support. They emphasize strong academics, along with character development and personal touch. It's a very mission-driven program and they're accustomed to monitoring and measuring milestones. The teachers and staff at the Fugees Academy are really looking out for their students in a one-on-one way.

### About Fugees CEO and Founder Luma Mufleh:

- The daughter and granddaughter of Syrian refugees, Luma grew up in Jordan and came to the United States when she was 18.
- The inspiration behind the Fugees Family came from meeting a group of boys playing a pickup soccer game in Clarkston, Georgia. That chance meeting grew into forming one soccer team. Then two. Then three. And the organization grew from there.
- She knew more intervention was needed for these students and if she could have sent them to a program or school that focused on these efforts, she would have. However, it turned out being cheaper to start a school.

### A Unique Approach to Education:

- Sports is a key to the success of the students, and the organization's programming includes year-round soccer for students at all three campuses.
- A typical school day runs from 7:30 AM to 7:00 PM, so by the time kids get home, they're done with all their schoolwork.
- Classes are small, with a maximum of 16 kids in each class. All Fugees teachers are committed to teaching their students English.
- To make it easier to break down cultural barriers, the staff consists of representation from the different countries from which the students are from.
- School personnel actively engage parents and caregivers and often work with families to manage other challenges they're facing while adapting to life in the U.S. (e.g., the immigration process, job seeking, accessing medical care, etc.).