

**NAME:**  
Lauren Neely

**OCCUPATION:**  
Resident Services  
Coordinator

**RESIDENCE:**  
Hazel Hill Apartments  
Fredericksburg, VA  
147 Homes

**AFFORDABILITY:**  
100% Project-Based  
Section 8

\*Last updated in 2019

# VOICES OUT LOUD

Lauren

NEELY



**It's not for nothing. They're working jobs, they're supporting their families and they need this.**

Lauren Neely is originally from Orange County, Virginia. She graduated from the James Madison University in the Spring of 2017, majoring in English and

secondary education. Initially, she wanted to pursue a five-year Master's degree to get her teaching license but thought it might be best to get some work experience before committing to graduate school. Hunting for jobs after college she found herself working at Hazel Hill Apartments as a Resident Services Coordinator.

Lauren explains her role at Hazel Hill as a combination of teaching, social work, and event planning. Her main task is to run the after-school learning program for the community children. She facilitates the volunteers that come in and help – most who are from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg. Lauren also helps run the English as a Second Language class for about 10 Afghani women. She's enjoyed the diversity of the community and the challenges it brings when creating lesson plans and learning goals for both the children and adults who come from different backgrounds.

Lauren shares that having this experience has strengthened her desire to go back to school so she can be a teacher. She says that her experience of working with lower-income families has taught her that people do want to learn. By providing them with the right tools, including stable housing, they can thrive scholastically.

The most important takeaway for Lauren has been the acceptance of so many cultures in one small property. About 25% of Hazel Hill residents are Afghani or Pakistani, most who are refugees. Seeing all the residents celebrate their diverse festivals and religious customs and have the whole community join in regardless, makes all those social bonds even stronger for this tight-knit community.

**I would have never expected a housing property to...be so invested in the lives of all the residents that live here. I think [it] is really special and unique.**