



## 2018 English Language Learning Graduate

Zinah grew up in Iraq, completed high school, and married another Iraqi citizen in 2002. Her husband worked and eventually served as a translator for the U.S. Government for 10 years. During this tenure, he performed other duties, which brought increased tensions, anxiety, and outright fear into the household. These duties brought threats to him, Zinah, and their children. These scary and difficult circumstances were even more frightening because Zinah and her children were alone for 25 days each month as her husband worked in his own life-threatening realities.

During his travel, Zinah and their children remained unsafe at home. Their home featured cameras so her husband and other family members could watch for terrorists. The family members took turns staying awake each night peering into the darkness. Zinah often could not even stay in her own home and moved frequently from house to house: her husband's family home, her mother's home, or coming back to the home she shared with her husband. Each month Zinah's husband returned home for five precious days on leave. In 2016, the US Government determined it was no longer safe for Zinah and her family to remain in Baghdad. The threats and danger escalated too high.

Within one short month, they left their family, friends, and way of life behind. In one short month, her husband had a special immigration visa, green card, social security card, and a new home. They now lived alone in Tennessee. However, Zinah's courage and strength came with her to Franklin. Within just five months, Zinah heard from neighbors about Begin Anew.

In January 2017, Zinah enrolled at the Williamson County site and began studying ELL Level 1. She graduated in June 2018 from Level 2! During this time, she started volunteering at her daughter's school, Franklin Elementary. Knowing she studied at Begin Anew, they allowed her to apply for a teacher's assistant position working with special education children. Zinah earned this position and began working with the YWCA in childcare. Her dream remains -- to contribute to her household and work. She wants to go on to college and become a teacher. Zinah's Program Director at Begin Anew says, "Zinah has a welcoming soul and an encouraging spirit. Other students look up to her." She credits Begin Anew for helping her find her way to achieving not only an education but realizing the dreams born in Baghdad.