

TRR 2022

ANNUAL REPORT



Corner65 kids showing off skirts they designed in our sewing program

2022 BY THE

Measuring our impact

NUMBERS

750

Clients received services from The Refugee Response in 2022.



331

Volunteers pitched in to distribute CSA shares, tutor kids, teens and adults, coach soccer, staff our annual benefit, and more.

\$280,760

Awarded in first-time grant support across our organization and programs.



6,000

Boxes of fresh produce were sold through Ohio City Farm Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

258

Youth clients were served by the Youth Mentoring, Teen Response, and Corner65 Programs.



125

Athletic programming days were hosted by Corner65 consisting of soccer, Kung Fu, 5k training, dancing, basketball, and flag football.

7

New full- and part-time team members joined our organization.



5

Families received donated cars from our partner organization Wheels to Work.

26

Schools across the county have youth participating in our programs.



100%

High school seniors in the Teen Response Program graduated on time.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Since our founding in 2010, The Refugee Response (TRR) has provided services to newcomer families so this new place - Cleveland - can become a new home. While much attention is rightfully placed on the causes of displacement and the numbers of new arrivals, our work is focused on what allows families to remain and thrive in our region. Newcomers to Cleveland and Cuyahoga County engage with all of the same civic and social systems as anyone else. However, newcomers face barriers because of differences in culture and language. This means that our work must be broad and it must address the systems that will allow families to thrive.

Our programs that work with youth reached hundreds of newcomers through partnerships with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Parma City School District, and the City of Cleveland. In 2022, TRR also launched the Newcomer Navigators program with seven different communities of newcomers. This program is funded by Cuyahoga County and works with partners such as the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio Means Jobs - it is nationally unique and the first-of-its-kind. We believe this program is a blueprint for broadening inclusion and removing barriers.

As we address, build, and strengthen systems, the heart of our work lies in the myriad personal interactions our staff have with the families and communities we serve. Each day we see TRR staff and volunteers working with clients to solve routine and urgent problems ranging from uploading paperwork to complete a FAFSA application or enrolling in drivers' education to aiding families after gun violence and advocating for safer streets for our youth.

When the war started in Ukraine, TRR did not put out a call for support. We focused on where we could have an impact - building partnerships and program infrastructure. Our Newcomer Navigators program expanded to include Ukrainian team members and in March 2022 TRR signed an MOU with Parma City Schools, where we would see a majority of Ukrainian youth enroll. At the close of 2022, our Teen Response program was working with over 60 Ukrainian teenagers, in turn providing our school district partners with critical language and cultural support to best serve these newcomers, and our Newcomer Navigators program has aided dozens of families.

Over the last 13 years TRR has responded to the changing dynamics of resettlement. As we look forward, it is clear that this region will continue to welcome newcomers from across the world. However, the process for arrival is different now and many of these newcomers will fall outside of the traditional resettlement system; they will arrive through humanitarian parole, or family and community sponsorship. We will continue to build and refine systems working with all newcomers who face barriers to access and opportunity, while always centering our efforts on the inherent dignity and humanity of each person we are fortunate enough to work alongside.

Please enjoy our 2022 annual report and thank you to the thousands of supporters, volunteers, friends and community members who have helped make this work a reality.

All the best,



Patrick Kearns
Executive Director



Ann Zoller
Board Chair



NEWCOMER NAVIGATORS



Connecting the refugee and immigrant communities to the support and services they need to thrive in Cuyahoga County.



With the support of Cuyahoga County, the Newcomer Navigators program was launched to connect refugee and immigrant communities to the support and services they need to thrive. Newcomer Navigators facilitate a direct connection between international newcomers and the social, health, and economic services that already exist in our county. By empowering our communities, we create a resilient and sustainable ecosystem that serves the newcomer community today and for years to come.



The Newcomer Navigators Program proudly supports the following communities: Afghan, Arab, Congolese, Somali, Karen (Burmese), Ukrainian, and Spanish-speaking. The program was created and is managed by a unique collaboration between The Refugee Response, Rise Together, Smart Development, Inc, The Somali Bantu Community Corporation of Cleveland, USCRI Cleveland, Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center, and Advocates for Peace and Change.



Officially launched in November of 2022, this program has already served over 100 families in Cuyahoga County. In just a few months, Newcomer Navigators have helped families thrive in our community by:

- Helping secure public benefits
- Assisting with housing and utilities challenges
- Connecting individuals to living wage employment
- Providing access to winter clothing, including children's coats
- Directing those in need to resources for free or low-cost food

In addition to the general support, the Newcomer Navigators have gone above and beyond to provide unique support to each and every client. This includes, but is not limited to, advocating for the reunification of a Ukrainian family and helping a client undergoing cancer treatment receive a \$12,000 grant.

ONE STOP SHOP PILOT | UKRAINIAN DAY

In addition to supporting clients one-on-one, the Newcomer Navigators program aims to create systems-level change through one-stop-shop events – these events bring together public, private, and nonprofit organizations to give newcomers direct access to all of the resources and services they need. The first one-stop-shop will be piloted on January 20, 2023 at The Refugee Response. Ten partner organizations will be present to inform and support Ukrainian families:

- Cleveland Builds
- Cuyahoga County Job and Family Services
- Huntington Bank
- The Legal Aid Society of Greater Cleveland
- The Literacy Cooperative (Imagination Library)
- Neighborhood Family Practice
- Ohio Means Jobs
- Partnership for Good Health
- USCRI Cleveland
- Smart Development

In one day, we aim to serve over two dozen families and individuals, helping them to access a wide range of support services and empowering them to thrive in Cuyahoga County.



CORNER65

Corner65 had a busy 2022 that was filled with new programs for newcomer youth across art, athletics and entrepreneurship. These new programs included Girls on the Run 5k, Kung Fu, photography and sewing workshops, Girls in the Game, improv club, lemonade stands, and soccer. All this growth was highlighted by the launch of our youth advisory council that informs programming and facilitates critical discussion times for clients that focus on personal safety and boundary-setting, self-esteem, and goal-setting. Corner65 also helped families access resources for housing, transportation, benefits, employment for parents, food assistance, and clothing.



Corner65 Lemonade Stand at Ohio City Farm

42

ART SESSIONS



Art sessions like photography, hair braiding, sewing and painting, allow the kids to explore their creative talents and build self-confidence. These sessions were specifically designed to assist newcomer youth as they adjust to their new home in Cleveland, and the results have been outstanding. These lessons not only provide a fun and engaging experience but also a valuable tool for youth to share their voices, learn, and feel at home in a new community.

139

ATHLETIC SESSIONS



We provided 139 athletic sessions for newcomer youth in Cleveland, including Kung Fu, soccer, Girls in the Game, and Girls on the Run. These sessions were specifically designed to help youth feel at home in their new community and promote physical activity and healthy living. Sports and athletics fill an important role in the lives of the newcomer youth we work with and we have seen great results as we have expanded our offerings.

143

STUDENTS SERVED



We served 143 Corner65 kids through drop-in programming. Our approach is to meet kids where they are, making our program highly accessible and flexible for the community's needs, allowing us to serve an ever-growing number of students. The program has had a significant impact on students' growth in academics as well as social-emotional wellness. Corner65's programs have become an integral place to support the needs of the community.



Corner65 soccer players after playing a halftime exhibition game at a City of Ohio match



Girls on the Run training for their annual 5k

YOUTH MENTORING



Safa, Elaf and Zara in a Photography Workshop with Christian Amuli

The Youth Mentoring program helps refugee-background youth in grades 4-8 cultivate a lifelong love of learning and pursue their learning goals through consistent, individualized mentoring within a supportive community. Our mentoring approach is bolstered by proactive engagement with students, parents, mentors, and with educational and partner institutions.

Students are paired one-on-one with a mentor whom they meet with for two hours a week over a two-year period, either over a webcam from their homes or on-site at our Learning Lab. Mentors help students navigate school assignments, strengthen core competencies in the English language, with reading and math, and develop routines and attitudes that support meaningful learning. They also engage students in activities that support social emotional learning, creative self-expression, and personal wellness. Program staff check in regularly with parents to address educational access barriers, bridge communication gaps, and connect them to resources.

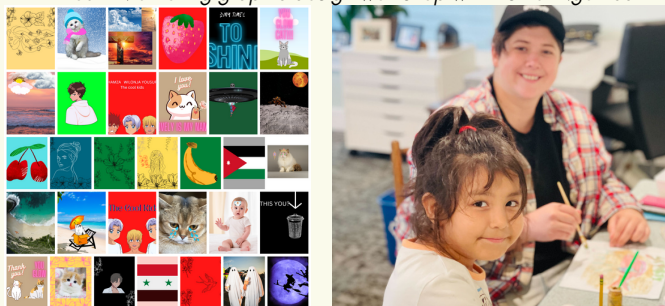
In the fall of 2022, we were pleased to offer the youth we work with at the Learning Lab an additional mentoring day per week, which focused on youth-centered group activities. Our youth clients especially enjoyed workshops hosted by artists from refugee backgrounds, including Christian Amuli (photography), Esther Ngemba (graphic design), Jonathan Chikuru (Afrobeat Dance), Kubra Abass (Painting), and Neema Bal (Theater).



A Youth Mentoring student's comic



Youth Mentoring graphic design workshop with Esther Ngemba



Youth Mentoring graphic designs and a student working with a mentor

Q&A IN THE LEARNING LAB

A conversation with Youth Mentoring Program student, Heritier, and his mentor, Jim.

Q: How long have you been working with each other at the Learning Lab?

Heritier: I think 2 years?

Jim: Yeah, this is our second year together.

Q: What is one thing you've learned about each other?

Heritier: I know not everything, I only know two things about Jim, like I know that his family were refugees and he has a dog, yeah.

Jim: I've learned about his country, his culture, a little bit about his languages. I learned he has a kitty-cat named Little Buddy and I know about his brothers and sisters and his hard-working mom. It makes me very happy he has a strong support network at home as well as a strong support network here with The Refugee Response.

Q: What is one thing you like about working with each other?

Heritier: I mean, he's a nice friend and he always helps me with my homework and yeah.

Jim: I like that he's very curious, he's inquisitive. That's a great thing to have for someone who's a lifelong learner.

Q: Tell me about some of your favorite Learning Lab activities so far.

Heritier: I've enjoyed being here, it's so fun here and you can make friends, and you can get to know a lot of people, like new people from here, and there's like any game you can choose, like basketball or soccer, giving snacks. When we have some guests coming here and meeting us [e.g. CJ the Afrobeats dance instructor].

Jim: We are really looking forward to the next spelling bee and the topic is going to be the world cup, so spelling the positions of all of the different players as well as the countries involved like France and Morocco and Argentina, I think is going to be really fun.

Q: How does coming to the Learning Lab make you feel?

Heritier: It makes me feel like safe and happy. Like I can get to see all of my friends here, and my mentor, Jim. And like seeing everybody here being happy, yeah.

Jim: I like the fact that we are literally looking at our future with people like Heritier and all the kids here.

Q: Do you have any good Learning Lab stories you would like to share?

Heritier: The first time when I got here I was kind of nervous, but now I am not nervous anymore because I think here there's like some funny people... Being with my friends makes me feel not nervous anymore.

Jim: Two things, last year and this year Heritier tied for first place in the Spelling Bees. And last year when we had our end-of-season program picnic we saw some animals coming out of the woods. We saw a cute raccoon come up! It was the first time for some of the kids.

Q: If you could share some advice to a new student or mentor joining the Learning Lab, what would you tell them?

Heritier: I would tell them that this is a great place for you to come here because you can learn English by the people like that are here, and you can know like everybody here, and the people from here - they're so nice.

Jim: I would tell them they are going to learn more from their mentee than they are going to share with their mentee. I've learned a lot from Heritier, and learning about his experience and hearing from other people anecdotally, it's humbling, it really is. But I see so much potential in these students.

Q: What do you think you will remember the most about your time in the Learning Lab program?

Heritier: Um, the most thing that I will remember like from here is like being with the whole community and with my friends, and some other people that are coming here.

Jim: I will remember, you know, an extended family that's going to be here for Heritier.

Q: What do you think you will take with you from the Learning Lab as you go on to your next step in life?

Heritier: I will take everything! Yeah, because everything is like a family to me and that's why.

Jim: I will take away that this is a great place to help shape young people, get them ready for the future and let them know that they should never let go of their cultural heritage, but that they can continue to explore that as they grow older.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to share about the Learning Lab, or what it's like to be a kid at the Learning Lab?

Heritier: I mean, what it's like to be a kid [in the Learning Lab], it's fun and you can get like anything you want, and you can get helped by some other people that you don't know. And like it would be wonderful for new kids to come here because this is a great place for them, and they might learn something new from here that can change their future.



TEEN RESPONSE

Teen Response (TR) has grown dramatically in 2022, tripling the number of high school refugee students receiving tutoring, college and career guidance, academic case management and wraparound services for their families. As the refugee population has grown in Northeast Ohio, TR responded to the needs of high school students by expanding the original program at John Marshall High School and opening two new sites.

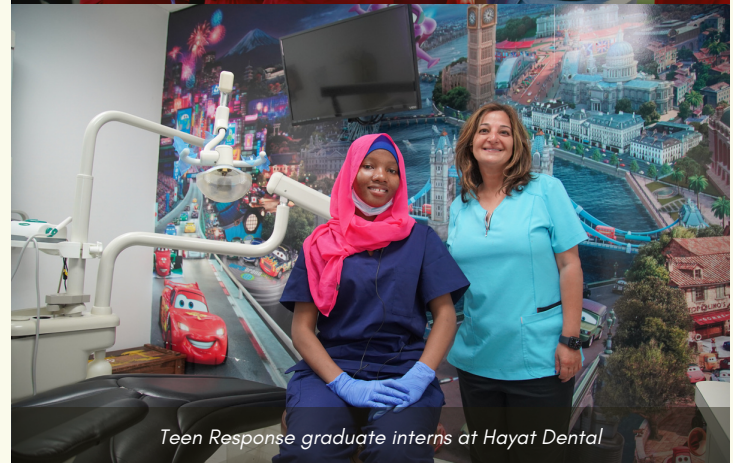
Opening in 2018, John Marshall High School was the first Teen Response site for refugee high school students. Our program at John Marshall continues to have a 100% graduation rate! In 2022 we expanded the program from 35 refugee students to 65 by adding drop-in tutoring sessions during the school day as well as after school. This increased access and reduced barriers for students unable to stay after school because of jobs or family responsibilities.

In 2022 Northeast Ohio continued to see an influx of Afghan families fleeing the Taliban and then more recently Ukrainian families escaping the war in their country. To address the needs of these newcomer students, a second Teen Response site opened at the International Newcomers Academy in early October for Afghan students. Since October we have provided in-school and after-school tutoring and English language lessons for 40 Afghan students.

In late October, a third site was opened at Valley Forge High School in Parma for Afghan and Ukrainian students. We had 8 Afghan students and a dozen Ukrainian students participating. It has been a year of tremendous growth for the Teen Response program but most importantly, growth for the students.



John Marshall High School soccer team after winning the CMSD Senator's League championship



Teen Response graduate interns at Hayat Dental



Teen Response goes bowling for the first time

65

**STUDENTS RECEIVING
ACADEMIC SERVICES AT
JOHN MARSHALL HIGH
SCHOOL**

50

**AFGHAN STUDENTS
RECEIVING ACADEMIC
TUTORING AND ENGLISH
INSTRUCTION**

339

**DROP-IN TUTORING VISITS
AT JOHN MARSHALL HIGH
SCHOOL IN FALL 2022**

BUILDING BRIDGES TO HIGH SCHOOL

Transitioning to high school is hard for most teenagers, but imagine if you were in a new country, learning a new language, and in a high school where you didn't know anyone. Our Teen Response students remember what that was like on their first day of high school in Cleveland.

"My first year I struggled with understanding American schools. How did the class schedule work, school food and bus transportation, but over time I got used to it," remembered Daniel Maombi, a junior at John Marshall High School. This is not uncommon for our refugee students in Teen Response, and that's why Teen Response launched a leadership program called "Bridge Builders."

Current Teen Response students applied to join the leadership program and shared why they wanted to help welcome new 9th grade students to John Marshall High School. Boche Fadoul, one of 10 Bridge Builders at John Marshall says: "Friendship and introductions for me are the most important, because I know what it's like to be alone. When I first arrived and went to school, I didn't have any friends. No one made me feel welcome. I was very sad. But now I can help those who face the same situation as me."

Before the school year started, our 10 Bridge Builders were matched with new students starting the 9th grade at John Marshall. The Bridge Builders invited the new refugee students for a special tour of the building and a pizza party. Nearly 20 newcomer students participated in the tour and met their Bridge Builder mentor. The Bridge Builders included male and female students who spoke Swahili, Pashto, Dari, and Arabic and were matched with students who shared the same language. "I can help them understand that it is going to be okay even if they don't speak that much English, because I didn't speak much English, but I learned," said senior Yesaya Nfitumukiza.



On the first day of the 2022-2023 school year the Bridge Builders looked for the new students that were matched with them to make sure they did not get lost and to answer any questions they had. The new students walked into their new school and were met by the Bridge Builders, first thing.

One new Congolese student did get lost looking for her classes and was very upset. As she became more upset, her Bridge Builder, Tilisa Nasende, found her. Tilisa put her arm around her and said, "I'm here. I was looking for you. It's okay, I will get you to class, don't worry." They walked away arm in arm.

In 2023, the Bridge Builders program will be expanded to Valley Forge High School in Parma and International Newcomers Academy in Cleveland.

ADULT TUTORING

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, The Refugee Response relaunched its Adult Tutoring Program in August 2022 under the management of an experienced ESL teacher. The program began with a focus on Afghan women, bringing online classes into their homes with the support of in-person volunteer tutors. Because most women face transportation barriers which prevent them from participating in other ESL programs, the in-home option helps overcome that hurdle. Classes expanded to welcome interested husbands and range from one to four learners in each class.

Classes began as weekly two-hour sessions: one hour with an online class, followed by one hour with tutor-supported practice. Shortly thereafter, it became apparent that the online format was not appropriate for the community due to cultural norms and gendered spaces. In order to respect those norms and to adjust to the varying needs and starting points of the individual learners, classes were then shortened to 1.5 hours and the online instruction component removed in favor of more individually tailored lessons.



Amber Sellers meets learners from the Faqiri family

28 ADULT TUTORING LEARNERS

17 VOLUNTEER TUTORS

16 LAPTOPS PROVIDED TO LEARNERS

A curriculum was purchased from Literacy Minnesota, as it was developed with direct input from immigrant communities and focuses on practical English skills. The curriculum is supplemented by a shared folder full of additional activities and presentation material. The ESL teacher works with each tutor to plan classes for each individual learner and attends classes periodically to assess development and provide extra support.

Learners in the program bring varying degrees of educational experiences into the classroom. Some have had little to no experience with any kind of formal education, while others have had the equivalent of a grade-school education, and few have even been to college. Tutors have worked hard to adjust to the varying needs of their learners: some are pre-literate in their own language and are learning to hold a pencil, while others are keen to improve their speaking skills. We are excited to see this program expand to 50 learners in 2023!

Over the last few months, tutors have helped learners with basic conversational skills and have become a personal connection in an unfamiliar society. Some tutors have gone beyond the original expectations of the classes, from helping learners navigate benefits and public transportation to using their connections to help find donated furniture and even showing up to the hospital to welcome a new baby. Our tutors come from all walks of life and widely range in ages and experiences. We are deeply grateful for their commitment to the program and our learners.

CLIENT ADMIN SUPPORT SERVICES

The Client Administrative Support Services (CASS) program spent 2022 in a period of transition. With The Refugee Response officially getting back to in-person programming in our new office in May after over a year of working from home during the height of the pandemic, and the exciting development of the Newcomer Navigators program, the CASS program has been able to connect more deeply with our clients while refining our processes and looking ahead to wider and more efficient methods of support for our newcomer neighbors. Through these transitions, the CASS team was honored to continue to provide essential support to community members and families participating in TRR's other programming; helping these individuals navigate the complicated benefits system so they can keep food on their tables, access healthcare for their families, and find affordable childcare. CASS also assists clients with their job searches, responds to emergency support requests through generous funds by individual donors, and collaborates with community partner organizations to find housing for families displaced by increased rent or the termination of their leases. In 2023, the CASS team is excited to roll these services into the Newcomer Navigators program, harnessing the power of collaborative advocacy at the city, county, and state levels, while accessing the wealth of experience and expertise of our Newcomer Navigators to help our neighbors thrive in Cleveland.

23

**FAMILIES SUPPORTED THROUGH
THE CASS PROGRAM**

26

**BENEFITS APPLICATIONS OR
RENEWALS SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED**

\$2,209

**IN EMERGENCY FUNDING
DISPERSED TO FAMILIES**

HOUSING THE COMMUNITY

During the summer months of 2022, seven families enrolled in our Teen Response and Corner65 programs were facing imminent housing displacement due to either increased rent, or the termination of their leases after their landlords decided to sell the properties. Finding affordable homes for a single family in Cleveland can be difficult, let alone seven at the same time. However, Community Advisory Board (CAB) member Melaak Rashid's work with community partner organization Smart Development allowed our CASS team members to help these families by fielding referrals and coordinating with families as Melaak identified available homes. In one instance, an additional month was secured for a family so they could have some extra time to find a new place to live, and in

another instance a reduced deposit was negotiated so a family of nine could move into one of the very few available rental homes within their budget. Through Melaak's hard work with TRR family liaisons and CASS team members, all of these families were placed in new homes, avoiding eviction proceedings and most importantly, ensuring that none of these community members went without a roof over their head. 2022 was a year of collaboration, as we helped facilitate nine TRR students' enrollment in drivers' education, and provided healthcare supplies for families through a partnership with MedWish. Next year promises more opportunities for collaboration, and team members look forward to harnessing these opportunities to continue to provide wraparound support for TRR clients and the greater newcomer community through the Newcomer Navigators program.



SMART DEVELOPMENT INC



Melaak Rashid of Smart Development

OHIO CITY FARM



Ohio City Farm team in 2022



Ramat Wiley of Adun Spice Co.

Ohio City Farm, one of the largest contiguous urban farms in the United States at nearly six acres, grows fresh produce for Cleveland residents, boosts the local food economy, and educates the community about the importance of a complete food system. In 2022, our team of six full-time farmers (all former refugees from Burma, Bhutan, and the Congo) and two part-time support staff had another very successful growing season. Our Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program expanded to 270 members for our regular 20-week season and to 100 members for our 6-week fall season, and we are extremely proud that we were able to increase our minimum wage to \$15/hour with a team average wage of \$16.69/hr.

In 2022 we began two new partnerships for the distribution of CSA shares at Room Service Boutique and Adun Spice Company on the east side of the city. We also created a fun shirt design with local artist Nikki Mokrzycki and launched online sales of printed sweatshirts and tees.

In looking ahead, we completed a USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production planning grant project which allowed us to lay the groundwork for future development of the farm's infrastructure as well as integration with the much anticipated future Irishtown Bend Park development project. In anticipation of the farm stand closing for renovations in 2023, we have secured a grant from KeyBank to distribute no-cost produce shares to the local refugee community in collaboration with the Somali Bantu Community Association of Cleveland for the duration of our next season.

Last fall, in early October, we hosted TRR's annual REAP The Benefit on the farm with over 600 attendees for a beautiful night of community, food, music, pictures, and fundraising for the newcomer community. In 2023, we look forward to growing these partnerships through another season of fresh produce, refugee employment, and community engagement.



Michael wearing Ohio City Farm merch at the farm stand



5,400

SUMMER FARM SHARES



600

FALL FARM SHARES



6

**FULL-TIME JOBS FOR
FORMER REFUGEES FROM
BURMA, BHUTAN, DRC**

MULTILINGUAL CONTENT CREATION

The Multilingual Content Creation program was established to provide educational information to resettled families in their own languages. Our creation process has grown to include community and partner agency feedback. Our content has expanded over 2022 and we have been distributing to a wide, global audience. The Refugee Response's Content program is responsible for managing the organization's marketing, website, social media, and brand design.

In 2022, the program introduced a fee-for-service contract structure for national agencies that work with resettled populations. While the program creates content with and for our internal programs at The Refugee Response and our established external partners, our immediate response to the crisis in Ukraine generated national interest in our program's work.

By the end of 2022, the Multilingual Content Creation program had secured several contracts with regional and national agencies to produce translated videos focused on topics such as health care access and family reunification. These contracts have been secured for 2023 and will provide a model for the future work and expansion of this program alongside our continued work in the local community.



FEATURED LOCAL PARTNERS

Keeping an eye on our immediate community, we worked locally, partnering with CLASH to create an educational video about lead poisoning as well as a series of videos with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Multilingual Multicultural Department. We also created a series of videos for our Cleveland newcomer communities focused on auto insurance and smoke detectors.



45

TRANSLATED EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS PRODUCED



4

FEE-FOR-SERVICE VIDEO CONTRACTS WITH LOCAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS



88,870

GLOBAL IMPRESSIONS ON OUR YOUTUBE PAGE

REAP THE BENEFIT



Da Land Brass Band at REAP The Benefit 2022



Guests gathered under the big tent at REAP The Benefit 2022



Ohio City Farm on the night of REAP The Benefit 2022

Every year we host our annual benefit to celebrate and help welcome newcomers to our community, raise much needed financial support for our programs and operations, and have one of the best parties in Cleveland. As is our tradition, REAP The Benefit 2022 “Taking Root” was held on the grounds of the Ohio City Farm as summer turned to fall. On October 1st we brought together close to 650 attendees for our largest event ever. As our city and broader community emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, our supporters were clearly eager to get together and celebrate in person. While the week leading up to REAP was full of weather- and grounds-related challenges that included epic multi-day rain and a mysterious water main break under the big tent, the weather cooperated and brought us a beautiful and clear – albeit windy and a little damp – early fall evening.

October 1st was a fabulous night punctuated by food from over a dozen chefs, caterers, and restaurateurs from many of Cleveland’s immigrant communities. Celebrating the diversity of our community through food is at the heart of much of what we do at The Refugee Response, and of course this practice is at the core of REAP; this year was no different, as food was served from Afghanistan, Burma, China, Eastern Europe, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Mediterranean. Karen Small of Juneberry Table – one of our most ardent supporters – catered our VIP reception. Our long running partner, Great Lakes Brewing Company, brought an awesome selection of local beers and hard seltzers for our guests, which paired nicely with excellent offerings from Market Garden Brewery and Graham+Fisk’s Wine-In-A-Can. Time and again guests tell us that they love the food, and we are proud to bring together such an amazing menu.

While we brought back many tried-and-true favorite activities and offerings – live music, the raffle, and a bonfire – we added a few new things too. This year featured what turned out to be a very successful Silent Auction. We saw generously donated private dinners, one-of-a-kind experiences and services, exceptional art from both Cleveland-based and international artists, and a host of other offerings go home with excited winners. Mark your calendar for next year’s benefit to be held on September 30, 2023.

REAP THE BENEFIT



Mayele Degaule Ngemba receives the Key to Ohio City Farm at REAP The Benefit 2022

THE KEY TO THE FARM

Every year The Refugee Response has the honor of presenting the Key to Ohio City Farm to an outstanding individual in our community. This year we were thrilled to recognize all of the amazing work of Mayele Degaule Ngemba.

Mayele works in service of the immigrant and refugee communities of Greater Cleveland across a number of roles and capacities. He is the President of the Congolese Community of Greater Cleveland and the Founder and President of Advocates for Peace and Change, a non-profit that works broadly to advocate for, and ensure that, refugee youth and families have access to the services, education, and opportunities that they need and deserve. Mayele is the head soccer coach at John Marshall High School, where he is also a bilingual educator in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Mayele has been a key part of our newly launched Newcomer Navigators program and will serve in a supporting role for the Swahili-speaking community of Greater Cleveland.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD

This year we proudly presented the Youth Leadership Award to Mayada Zakaria, one of our most outstanding youth clients. Mayada, a 13-year-old student from Sudan, started in Corner65 in 2017 as one of the original 30 students in the program and has been an integral part of the Corner65 community from the start. Mayada has demonstrated leadership and inclusiveness by bringing many of her friends into the program and has long shown compassion and dedication beyond her years. She takes an active role in Corner65's Youth Advisory Council and is an outstanding artist - she has truly made the most of her time in Corner65 preparing for her future and encouraging her peers to do their best, be responsible, and treat one another with kindness. We can't wait to continue working with Mayada to see how her bright future unfolds.



Mayada Zakaria receives the Youth Leadership Award from Corner65 Director, Becky Trout-Ashenfelter

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

WHEELS TO WORK

In Cleveland, a car is a basic necessity for building a life. Public transportation is messy, unreliable, and indirect. Newcomers are building lives in the U.S., and access to a car is essential. Cars facilitate employment and education, and the meeting of basic needs. A car offers a faster way to get to and from work or appointments and creates access to a wide range of employment opportunities.

Wheels to Work is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to seek out car donations and put them fully and directly into the hands of those in need. Wheels to Work ensures that cars are safe and in good condition before placement and that recipients are prepared to acquire insurance and maintain their new car. In 2022, 5 cars were donated through Wheels to Work to TRR clients in need. In the year ahead we will be working in closer partnership with Wheels to Work to boost car donations and placement to newcomers.

Learn more at www.wheelstoworkcleveland.org and spread the word! A donated car can make an enormous impact in the life of one of Cleveland's newest residents.



Fourth donated vehicle to Ramzia

HOW A CAR CAN CHANGE A LIFE

Abdullah talked about how his family would walk far to the local grocery store, and how he, his wife, and his children would carry their groceries back to their home. Before the car, they had to do that in the rain and snow.

Obaid wrote, "We would walk everywhere in cold weather, didn't know how to request a taxi, and always relied on other people to provide us transportation, but when we got the car everything changed to good (sic). When you've your own car, then you're on your own set schedule and time and not relying on others. Getting my kids to school everyday, going to work, all kinds of appointments, and shopping for my family."

Muhammad was living alone when he received his car. His immediate family was to meet him in a few weeks, and he talked about how, with the car, he could visit extended family and friends on the weekends. Without the car, he and his family would be stuck with rare visits. He wrote, "Without the car life was challenging for me, for example, I was walking to work and not getting there on time, getting to appointments and doing shopping was challenging. So far I've used my car for going to work, shopping, and visiting friends and family."

Ramzia summarized, "Being a car owner means that you can really rely on yourself, follow your own schedule, and get to a point (sic) on time and whenever it's needed."

The primary focus for finding car recipients is to support them in finding and maintaining employment, slashing commute times, and widening their opportunities for jobs. A car brings huge improvements to lifestyle with everything from grocery shopping to keeping in touch with family scattered across the city and region.



Seventh donated vehicle to Abdullah

Fifth donated vehicle to Obaid

FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2022, The Refugee Response responded to new challenges and seized important opportunities to continue providing world-class services for our growing newcomer community. In May, we moved into our new office on the Urban Community School campus debt-free - an important step towards long-term stability. It is wonderful to bring clients, community members, partners, and our supporters into our space, and in doing so, it has begun to feel like home.

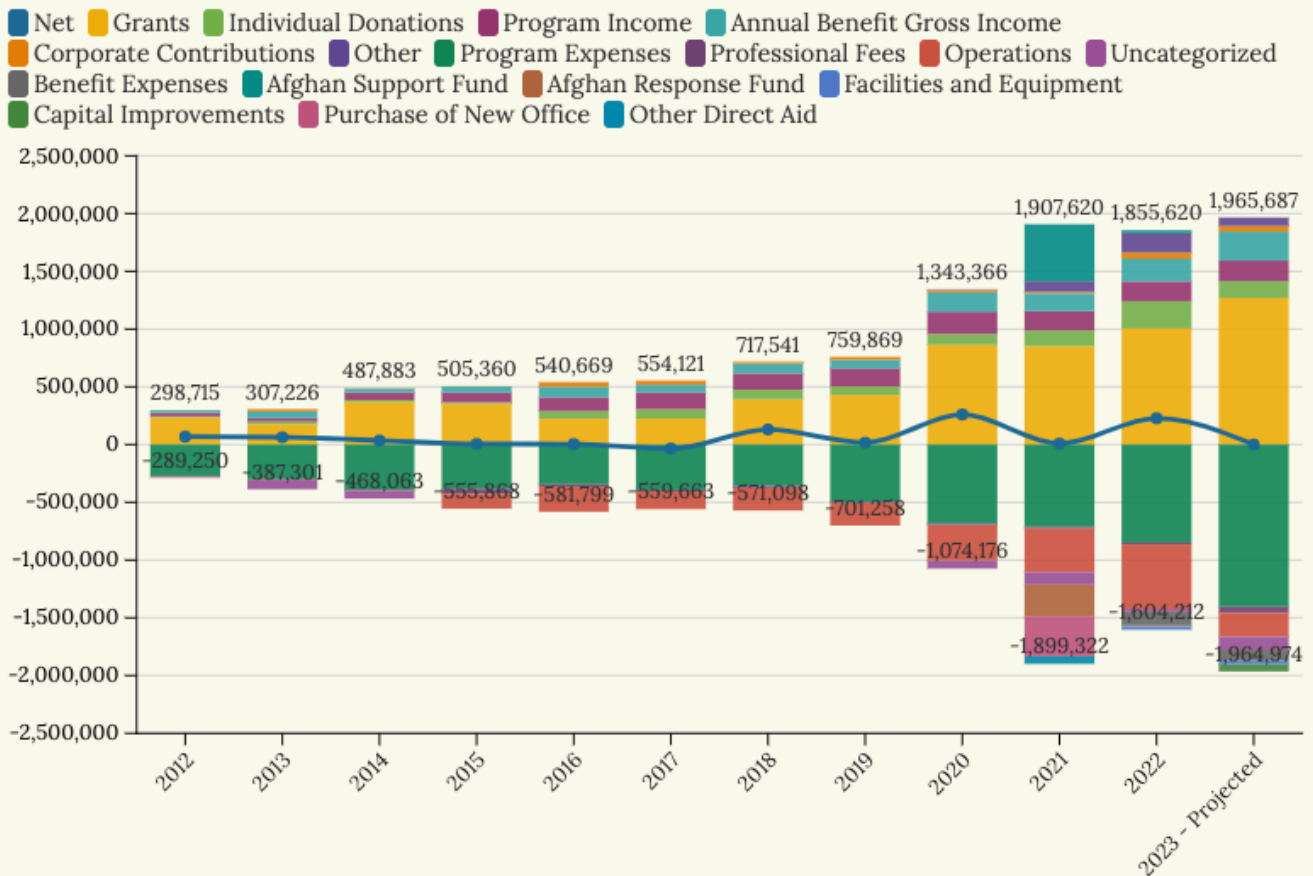
Once again, we received remarkable support from our growing community of donors, partners, and friends; we exceeded our fundraising goals for 2022 by 32%. Over the last three years, we have shown healthy and sustainable growth in the number of individual donors and the number of individual donations we have received. While 2021 was an outlier due to the collapse of the Afghan government and the American withdrawal, which led to a huge outpouring of time-sensitive support, from 2020 to 2022 we have increased our number of individual donors by 63% and our total donations by 77%.

Having diverse sources of income is an important part of building a resilient and flexible organization. In 2022 we brought in over \$800,000 from new foundations, county funding, and corporations that is allocated over the next three years. Multi-year grants give our entire team more time to serve our clients directly while looking ahead and planning for the future.

Like 2022, we start the new year in a strong financial position, entering 2023 with an unrestricted cash reserve of just over \$600,000 - an amount that would keep The Refugee Response operational for roughly 6 months. The financial stability we continued building in 2022 allowed us to close our decade-old farm stand in order to embark on re-imagining a new upgraded facility at Ohio City Farm, hire 9 new team members, and launch our Newcomer Navigators program, which will dramatically increase access to support services for many newcomers.

We continue to make our new office an ideal space for our programming, and thanks to some of our most ardent and generous supporters, we have successfully raised a substantial amount to equip and build out our basement and on-site learning lab with amazing equipment and materials, turning them into spaces where our clients can find a place to feel safe and at home - and most importantly, to thrive.

The Refugee Response Financial Overview



COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) is one example of a partnership that links The Refugee Response and the immigrant and resettled communities to facilitate connections, leverage resources in creative ways, and advance the goals of resettled community members. The CAB meets monthly to share updates, check in with TRR happenings and determine initiatives and projects accordingly.

CAB 2022 PROJECTS



Agnes Igodan, Ikenna Ogwuegbu, Marie Gill and Sne Gasa launched a CAB college scholarship and gifted five students a one-time scholarship of \$1,000.



Khwater Nayef gifted 45 students with bicycles at Natividad Pagan International Newcomers Academy in partnership with Ohio City Bike Co-op.



Ikenna Ogwuegbu leveraged his position at IKON to partner with Abdinoor Abdullahi and Paul Sevelo to host healthcare clinics for the Somali-Bantu and Congolese communities.



The CAB team pooled resources, especially thanks to Melaak Rashid, to host a culturally responsive Thanksgiving food distribution event.



Paul Sevelo purchased and installed two air conditioning units at his church, Amour du Christ Church.



Melaak Rashid arranged lawn care services for seven refugee-background families who needed assistance over the growing season.



Abdinoor Abdullahi



Agnes Igodan



Ikenna Ogwuegbu



Joel Mucheke



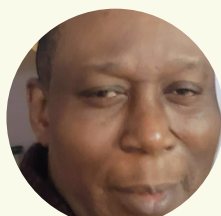
Khwater Nayef



Marie Gill



Melaak Rashid



Paul Sevelo



Sabzina Muhibzada



Sakhi Faiz



Sne Gasa



Sonya Nudel



Sidney Im
(CAB Intern)



Kate Nickley
(Partner + Co-Facilitator)



Patrick Kearns
(Partner + Co-Facilitator)

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TRR Staff at our new office in 2022

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