

Center for New Americans

A Community-Based Education and Resource Center for Immigrants and Refugees in Western Massachusetts

Welcoming & Serving Immigrants
Since 1992



OUR MISSION

Center for New Americans (CNA) is a community-based, non-profit adult education center that provides the underserved immigrant, refugee and migrant communities of Massachusetts' Pioneer Valley with education and resources to learn English, become involved community members and obtain tools necessary to maintain economic independence and stability.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

OUR 2022 ANNUAL REPORT captures program highlights for the 12 months from September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022.

This was a year when it became abundantly clear how interconnected we are, how significantly global events manifest in our local community. In the chaotic aftermath of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Afghans sought refuge in the U.S. They arrived as nuclear families abruptly separated from extended families, siblings separated from parents, one parent with children separated from the other parent. They carried the trauma that accompanies such a violent separation, and the resilience that makes learning a new language and adapting to a different culture possible.

In communities throughout the country, refugee resettlement agencies stepped forward to welcome the newcomers, assisted enthusiastically by dedicated volunteers. At Center for New Americans, we were pleased to build on our partnership with Catholic Charities Agency to welcome Afghan newcomers into our classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages. Since we were already teaching and serving immigrants from Venezuela, Ecuador, China, Cape Verde, Thailand, India, among many countries, we needed to expand the number of classes we offer and the times and ways we offer them, as well as all the accompanying support services, such as connections to community resources, job assistance, technology support. This required hiring and training new teachers, advisors, technology associates, purchasing new ipads and hotspots, and coordinating all these efforts. It also meant piloting an expansion of our immigration legal services to offer asylum application assistance since the Afghans arrived as humanitarian parolees, not refugees with all of the attendant protections and pathways to legal status.



No sooner did the Afghans settle into classes, than the war in Ukraine drove the next wave of newcomers to seek refuge in the U.S.

The outpouring of caring and support from our W. Mass community resulted in the most wildly successful 30 Poems in November! fundraising event we have held in 14 years, one of the most enthusiastically-attended naturalization ceremonies, and generous donations of time and funds by volunteers and donors.

The classes, services, and support we offer at Center for New Americans represent the outstretched hand, the stepping stone that newcomers need to make a successful leap to a new life in a new culture and community. We could not do this work without the efforts of our dedicated colleagues, volunteers, board of directors, donors, engaged and accessible local leaders. We are blessed to live and work in a caring community. Please accept this report with our gratitude for your participation,

ami Mer.

Laurie Millman

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



THROUGHOUT THESE PAST FEW YEARS, THE DEDICATION AND HARD WORK OF THE CNA STAFF HAS LED US THROUGH, and we can see options that exceed basic survival. Thanks to our donors, volunteers, teachers, and staff, we have been able to go above and beyond for the people we serve. Our resilience has brought us to the threshold of opportunity, and we are looking ahead to possibilities. We are on this path together, and there is an opportunity to explore what is possible for this organization.

The importance of becoming involved community members is highlighted in our mission statement. Truly, engaged community members, which includes every name on the following pages, are why Center for New Americans can provide education and resources to more students and help so many on the path to citizenship.

Our annual Citizenship Bee may not have directly influenced the current administration's proposed switch to multiple-choice questions on the citizenship test. But it is through similar acts of awareness and advocacy, engaging the community and our legislators, we intend to influence change for the better.

We are proud that alumni have joined our staff and board of directors, and many more continue to volunteer and advocate. The board is committed to working with staff, students, and volunteers to forge the path ahead. We stand poised for growth because of those who have invested and shown their support through donations, time, and talent.

Sincerely,

J Vaughn Board Chair

Center for New Americans

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CENTER FOR NEW AMERICANS IS FORTUNATE TO BE GUIDED BY DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS who meet regularly, join staff at meetings and celebrations, participate in and support Center for New Americans' events, and provide careful stewardship.



From left to right:
J Vaughn *Chair*, Roger Webb *Treasurer*, Antonio Pagán



From left to right: Aleksandra Peryeva, Shardool Parmar, Victoria Maillo de Aguilera

WELCOMING & SERVING IMMIGRANTS IN 2022

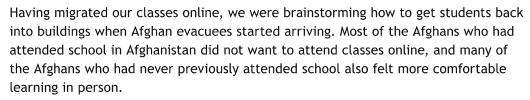
When the global becomes local...adapting, stretching, and applying a lens of diversity, equity, inclusion.

Classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)



I think CNA is the best center in America for new immigrants because absolutely everybody - advisors and teachers - are very kind and friendly. They are always helpful. The center helps immigrants not only to study English, but also with socialization in our new country."

TETIANA, STUDENT FROM UKRAINE



As is our custom, Center for New Americans adapted to accommodate student requests. Teachers taught where students were, at a retreat center in Holyoke and a group home in Amherst, until students were re-settled in permanent housing, and we could facilitate their attendance in our classrooms, often with the provision of free childcare.

As public school teachers returned to in-person instruction, relieved to abandon hybrid classes, we embraced hybrid classes, investing in OWL cameras for our Amherst, Northampton, and Greenfield program sites. Our impetus: to keep classes accessible to students whose childcare, transportation and/or family challenges make in-person participation impossible, while opening our doors to students who could join in person.

Even with a steady stream of newcomers and constantly evolving platforms, teachers engaged students at every level in reading and writing English, making civics real, expressing themselves through poetry, navigating the internet. Advisors taught job search and interviewing skills, and connected students with eager employers. Tech associates went to students' homes to deliver ipads, model how to access the zoom platform, and connect them to loaned hotspots. Teachers and students welcomed our responsive legislative leaders into classes, asked questions about affordable housing and higher education, and shared frustration over hurdles to re-credentialing as professionals, notwithstanding rigorous home country training.

Students volunteered to perform, along with immigrant community members, in our annual artistic showcase, *Immigrant Voices*. They invited Victoria Maillo de Aguilera, a board member whose moving poem about the immigrant experience, "No me siento de aquí y ya no soy de allá" resonated powerfully, to visit classes to discuss the poem. Students also bravely read their own poems at this year's 30 Poems in November! Reading. The event recognized the more than 100 writers who wrote with Event Chair, Sarah Sullivan, and raised a record \$125,000 in a palpable and poignant outpouring of community support for newcomers.





In June, we rejoiced at students' progress at our first in-person school-wide celebration in three years hosted graciously by Northampton's Forbes Library.

Nursing Assistant Training

I want to say to all the staff of Center of New Americans "Thank you very much for all your efforts and hard work towards me showing a new track of my life as a CNA! My prayers are always with you."

NAMGYAL, FORMER STUDENT, CURRENT CERTIFIED NURSE AIDE

Citizenship and Immigration Legal Services

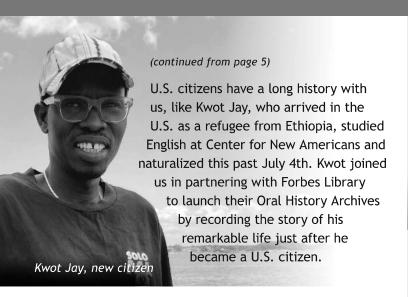


I want to warmly thank you for your help with the US naturalization process. I was sworn in today with a beautiful ceremony. I admire your work and support for many others that like me have gone through this once-in-a-lifetime process."

ANDREA, NEW U.S. CITIZEN

We accompanied more than 60 applicants on their journeys to become U.S. citizens. The journey begins with a phone call from an immigrant expressing interest in becoming a U.S. citizen, continues through an eligibility screening, moves on to a monthly clinic, made possible by volunteers who help complete the application, may involve a pairing with a volunteer coach for interview preparation, and culminates with the interview at U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services. We are always delighted when applicants whom we have prepared are scheduled to naturalize at the annual July naturalization ceremony that we organize in Northampton. It is especially gratifying when the new

(continued on page 6)



In addition to offering citizenship application assistance, we helped close to 200 immigrants with such other applications as employment authorization, legal permanent residence, family petitions and renewal of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). A successful outcome is transformative, opening doors to workplace protections, educational opportunities, and reunited families. As we cautiously embarked on asylum applications for Afghans, we were drawn immediately into the chaos and trauma of separated families and the threat of violent reprisals against family members left behind. With funding support from Catholic Charities Agency, we expanded our staffing capacity, relying initially on volunteers and then on current staff members who have been trained by our immigration attorney to participate in this effort. Compiling the myriad required documents and documenting the reasons for asylum claims complete the stories of people impacted by geopolitical events beyond their control. Fortunately, immigrants in our community are warmly welcomed and generously supported, as is our program.





VOLUNTEERS

Center for New Americans' small staff is joined in our welcoming efforts by a large and diverse community of dedicated volunteers. Volunteers contribute their time and talents as tutors, classroom assistants, citizenship clinic volunteers, drivers, graphic artists, and event chairs. Our efforts are amplified by theirs and our program is more impactful through our collaboration.

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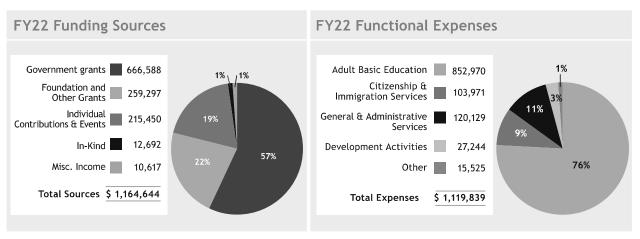
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2022 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

As indicated earlier, Center for New Americans collaborated with Catholic Charities Agency to welcome Afghans and Ukrainians. Our community generously supported our efforts, with the result that we enjoyed a surplus in revenue over expenses. The meteoric success of this year's 30 Poems in November! event was a major contributor. Generous support from our government supporters, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education and the Office for Refugees & Immigrants, encouraged by our dedicated W. Mass legislative delegation, also had a significant impact on our ability to serve so many newcomers.



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30 Poems in November!

In our 13th year of hosting our literary fundraiser, we enjoyed our most successful year ever. Sarah Sullivan chaired the event for her fourth year, sending creative poetry prompts daily, reminding writers about the importance and impact of fundraising, and fostering community. Our writing community expanded to 105 writers from W. Mass to the Midwest to the West Coast. Writers tapped into their anguish over the global conditions that drove so many refugees and evacuees to our shores and channeled their empathy, compassion, quest for justice, and need to welcome into this event, raising over \$125,000. This following list acknowledges writers for the contributions they inspired.

\$1,000+

Robin Barber
Elsa Phillippi Cline
Patricia Crosby
Howie Faerstein
Madlynn Haber
Katherine Jamieson
Jennifer Ladd
Patricia Lee Lewis
Kyra Millich

Laurie Millman
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