



Center for New Americans

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

Welcoming & Serving Immigrants
Since 1992



2023
ANNUAL REPORT

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 2023 ANNUAL REPORT SHARES PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE 12 MONTHS FROM SEPTEMBER 1, 2022 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2023.

This year, it became clear how much our mission to serve the underserved immigrant community is about fostering access. Our classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages, our immigration legal services, our connection of students to technology and the internet opens doors to community resources and opportunities.

As we continued our transition back to in-person classes, we recognized that for some students—those with very young children and those who rely on buses that may run infrequently, online learning was a boon. Applying our access lens, we welcomed in-person and online students into blended classrooms. Teachers bravely learned how to use OWL cameras and created new rituals to foster community. On those occasions when online students met teachers, advisors, tech associates, and other students in person, such as at our joyous June celebrations, there were a lot of hugs. It was a treat to return to our pre-pandemic tradition of potlucks for these celebrations.

As our Afghan and Ukrainian students adjusted to life in their new community, as students from Cape Verde, China, Guatemala, Moldova, and Mexico have done before them, Haitian newcomers began arriving. Once again, we created new classes, held immigration legal clinics, and expanded our volunteer and staff capacity to welcome the newest arrivals. We note proudly that former students continue to join our staff, expanding our language capacity as well as our perspectives. Our immigration legal team pivoted to provide assistance with an increasing number of applications for humanitarian parole and won asylum for quite a few clients.

As always, our community rallied. Catholic Charities Agency reinforced their partnership, referring an increasing number of students and clients for services. Public school colleagues



went above and beyond to support our students who are parents of their students. Local legislators visited students in class and then welcomed them for Immigrants Day at the State House. Volunteers interpreted at asylum clinics, helped complete forms at citizenship clinics, met with students as tutors, wrote and raised for *30 Poems in November!*, set up chairs even when we were indoors for this year's July 4th naturalization ceremony. Our staff poured heart and soul into supporting students and clients in achieving their goals, and celebrated each victory. Our board of directors provided ongoing guidance and stewardship, and embarked on a strategic planning process to explore how Center for New Americans might evolve as the immigration landscape continues to evolve. Our community of public, private, and individual donors supported our efforts.

This report honors this amazing collective effort with heartfelt gratitude.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie Millman".

Laurie Millman

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



THE RESILIENCE AND COMPASSION OF OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE BEYOND COMPARISON. As we stand on the other side of some difficult years, we realize that it is because of this that we have been able not only to survive but flourish. These next few years will bring growth, and while that is an exciting prospect, the board is well aware that Center for New Americans must grow with intention. We are mindful of our students and citizenship clients as well as the staff and volunteers, as they are a significant part of the whole who enriches our organization.

Our ability to collaborate and work with other organizations was highlighted many times throughout the pandemic. We are excited to have broadened our reach to Springfield. We look forward to partnering with other non-profit organizations and local businesses to expand our services and foster possibility in Hampden County. This will take time and effort, but we have our toes in the water, and I foresee that we will be swimming in the future.

The board of directors remains small but effective. Two board members, Roger Webb and Victoria Maillo, stepped down this year. Their contributions and dedication to the Center for New Americans during their tenure were exceptional. Victoria showed her talent with words at *Immigrant Voices* as well as *30 Poems in November!* while also harnessing those talents for community outreach. Roger, himself successful in business, played a major role in assuring our financial solvency. Two community members have stepped up, one of whom we also first knew as a student some years ago. As CNA adapts and grows, so too should the board. We are fortunate to have a board that represents varied cultures, paths to citizenship, and expertise.

We look forward to walking the path ahead together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Vaughn".

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

This page honors the board members who guided our program in 2023.



WELCOMING & SERVING IMMIGRANTS IN 2023

Providing access... opening doors...

Classes in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

“ I can say that CNA has been the beacon that has illuminated my path as a migrant in the USA.”

Although it is not usually possible to be all things to all people, few organizations attempt access as passionately—and compassionately—as Center for New Americans. We encouraged students to return to in-person classes, offered childcare and bus passes to make this more possible, and continued to offer an online option for those who were not yet able to return in-person. We challenged teachers and advisors to build community across this hybrid environment, and tasked tech associates, all former students, with smoothing out the tech hurdles.

We continued to welcome refugees referred to us by Catholic Charities Agency, learning with our students how best to support newcomers whose interrupted education required us to teach them English as well as how to reach and write. Even though progress may happen a little more gradually at beginner levels, we witnessed and celebrated students’ growth at all levels. Our June celebration, graciously hosted by our partners at the Forbes Library, once again featured our hallmark international potluck.

Our education and career advisors introduced students to MassHire career centers, accompanied students to job fairs, and connected some with Transitions to College programs. Savvy employers, such as Comprehensive Home Care and River Valley Co-op, actively recruited our students.

We joined the Digital Equity Partnership, an innovative coalition dedicated to bridging the digital divide with devices and internet access, and enrolled students in the Affordable Connectivity Program before Congress opted to not renew the program’s funding.

Each season brought a joyous return to pre-pandemic traditions. Legislators visited classes in person. Students from all our program sites were thrilled by a field trip to the State House in Boston to attend the MIRA Coalition’s *Immigrants Day at the State House*. We visited our legislators in their offices and enjoyed a tour which culminated in a visit to the House Chamber!



Nursing Assistant and ServSafe Trainings

“ Just know you are all great caregivers! Would want any one of you (all of you) taking care of me or a family member.”

An amazing group of students, teachers, and volunteers embarked on a challenging 17-week journey. They spent seven hours every Saturday in the health technology suite at Smith Vocational High School learning technical vocabulary and protocols, and practicing skills that were familiar to several who had been caregivers in their home countries. They reviewed homework and quizzes in mid-week evening classes while continuing in their English classes. They improved their skills practicing on mannequins, each other, and eventually with residents in a long-term care facility. They all passed the course and were immediately hired by home health agencies. Nevertheless, just one student passed the state certifying exam. After six years offering this course, Center for New Americans declared the spring 2023 class our last. We support our students' advocacy for a more accessible certifying exam and appreciate the efforts of Senator Joanne Comerford and her team who co-sponsored legislation to this effect.

An equally persistent group of students participated in our second ServSafe training. This class was also team taught by a technical instructor and an ESOL teacher and supported by a dedicated volunteer. All of the students passed the exam and several launched businesses.

Our Artistic Side

The practical side of our program was complemented by rich artistic traditions. Inspired by Sarah Sullivan, Event Chair for the fifth consecutive year, more than 80 writers turned *30 Poems in November!*, our annual literary fundraiser, into a pop-up writing community. The tradition of sharing prompts, exploring new vehicles in writing workshops, and posting poems on social media created a poetry season which permeated classes. Teachers wrote “*I Am From*” poems and students experimented with this additional form of expression in English and their home languages. In May, a couple of students who wrote poetry joined students who shared dances and songs on stage in *Immigrant Voices: A Celebration of the Arts*, creating a joyous showcase of our region's remarkable diversity.



(continued from page 5)

Citizenship and Immigration Legal Services

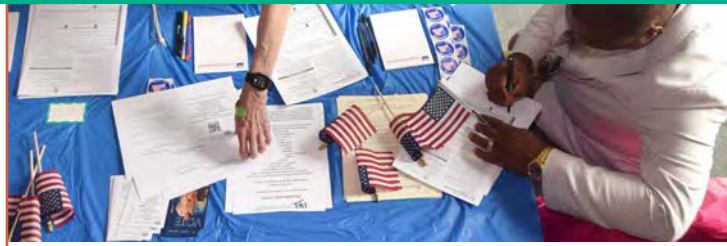
“On behalf of my wife and myself, we would like to thank you all at Center for New Americans for your help and kindness in her quest for citizenship. She passed with flying colors in a short period of preparation time.”

The new U.S. citizen whose experience is described above started her relationship with Center for New Americans as a student. Learning to speak English gave her one kind of access; becoming a U.S. citizen opens additional doors. Dedicated volunteers—both her experienced tutor and the volunteer who helped to complete her application at one of our monthly clinics—complemented staff efforts.

On July 4th, we held our 15th annual naturalization ceremony in Northampton. The event, which usually takes place on the Courthouse lawn and is attended by hundreds of community members, was moved into the Courthouse this year due to rain. The rain did not dampen the spirits of the jubilant new citizens, the respectful Boy Scout troop who served as Color Guard, Federal Magistrate Katherine A. Robertson whose warm welcome is legendary, nor that of the spectators and media who bore witness. The ceremony was a palpable reminder of how much U.S. citizenship means to immigrants who name it as their goal and then work and study diligently to achieve it.

While less visible publicly, the other immigration legal assistance provided by our small, hardworking legal team is equally life-altering. Led by Immigration Attorney Alex Kaezem and supported by two paralegals and two administrative staff members, our team maintained our ongoing practice of assisting people seeking family petitions, employment authorization, green card renewals while also addressing the urgent need for Temporary Protected Status and asylum. The team enjoyed an astonishing level of success, winning approval for just about every application. An affirmative asylum notice represents a new chapter for the applicant as well as their close family members back home.

Center for New Americans' achievements this past year were made possible by the generous support of our hardworking staff members and caring community of donors, volunteers, friends, and board members. We hope all of you celebrate our collaborative breakthroughs.



VOLUNTEERS

Our citizenship clinics and coaching, English instruction, childcare, employment support all benefit from the dedication, time, and caring of volunteers. From college students to former Center for New Americans students to retired professionals, volunteers contribute to our welcoming effort and make it more effective. In addition, our literary fundraising event, *30 Poems in November!* takes place because of volunteers. They are acknowledged later in this report.

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CENTER FOR NEW AMERICANS ACKNOWLEDGES THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDERS. They sustained our efforts to welcome the immigrants, refugees, evacuees, migrants who counted on Center for New Americans to help them build new lives in our community.

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Immigrants, migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers—all newcomers—need a web of welcome, a many-sided safety net. We are fortunate to collaborate with public schools, libraries, community health centers, survival centers, faith-based organizations, including Catholic Charities Agency, MassHire career centers, community colleges, legal service providers, municipal governments, Community Action, local employers, our hard-working W. Mass legislative delegation, including D.A. Dave Sullivan, and many others who join us in weaving the welcoming web, the safety net that supports newcomers as they acclimate to their new community. We have never had any doubts that we could not do this work without robust partnerships with other community organizations.

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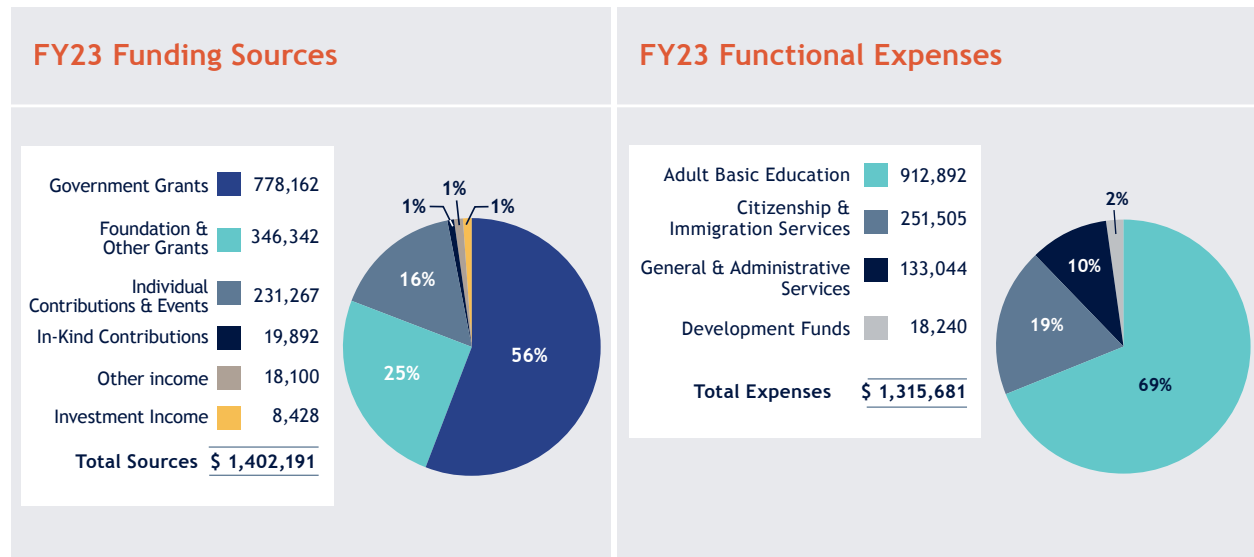
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2023 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

As Afghans, Ukrainians, and Haitians joined other immigrants in resettling in W. Mass, Center for New Americans expanded our services and our budget grew. Fortunately, government and private funders appreciated the need and expanded their support. This past year, as in the past couple of years, revenue increased more than expenses, creating another year of surplus.



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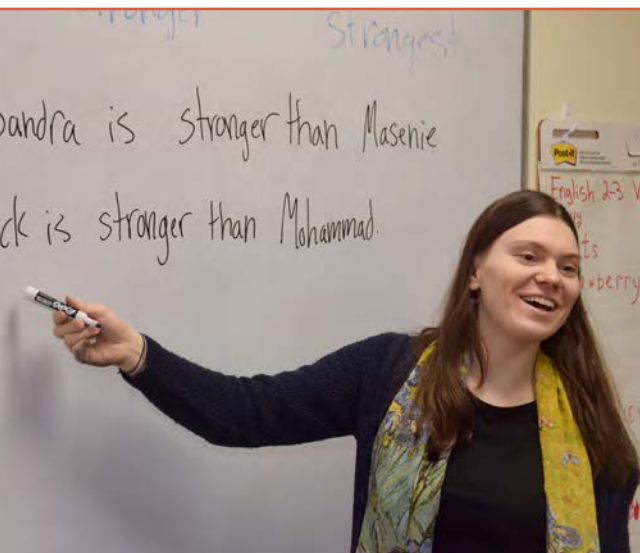
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30 Poems in November!

Sarah Sullivan chaired our 14th annual *30 Poems in November!* literary fundraiser in the fall of 2022. More than 80 writers, including a high school poetry club, Center for New Americans teachers, circle of care volunteers, well-known published authors, and first-time poets signed up to harness their literary talents to raise awareness of immigrants and funds to support them. Sarah fostered a warm writing community, inspiring writers with daily prompts and modeling and encouraging bold fundraising outreach.



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Patricia Crosby
Anita Gallers
Madlynn Haber
Becky Jones
Mary Ellen Kelly

Jennifer Ladd
Patricia Lee Lewis
Shoshana Marchand
Alexandra C. Risley Schroeder
Sarah Rossmassler
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Sarah Sullivan
Lanette Sweeney
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Joannah Whitney
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\$500–\$999

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\$100–\$499

AHRS Poetry Club
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Carole Anzovin
María Luisa Arroyo Cruzado
Robin Barber
Alice Barrett
Hilary Cartwright
Julie Cavacco
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