

2016

COALITION OF REFUGEE SERVICE AGENCIES ANNUAL REPORT



Friends of Refugees



New American Pathways®
HELPING REFUGEES AND GEORGIA THRIVE



Latin American
Association

SOMALI AMERICAN
COMMUNITY CENTER Inc.
WORKING FOR THE COMMUNITY

world
relief®
ATLANTA

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear Georgia Community Member,

Georgia's economy is growing, and refugees are playing a large role in that. **Throughout this report, you will see personal examples of new Americans who are starting their lives anew and investing in their local communities.** The U.S. refugee program offers this chance to the world's most vulnerable people. Families fleeing violence and war from all over the world are finding meaningful employment and becoming self-sufficient within months of their arrival here.

Georgia has a rich history of welcoming refugees and immigrants. I am proud to work beside other members of the Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies (CRSA) as we provide services from entrepreneurial training to after-school tutoring that are all designed to support the new Americans in our state. We partner with faith communities, businesses, and neighbors across Georgia, and we would be happy to share more about our organizations with you. This report is a compilation of facts about refugees and immigrants from 14 member agencies. We are honored to be a resource for you. After reading this report, I hope that you will agree that refugees are good for Georgia, and Georgia is good for refugees!

Best Regards,

Frances McBrayer

Chair, Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies (CRSA)

Sr. Director of Refugee Services, Catholic Charities Atlanta

INVESTING IN GEORGIA'S COMMUNITIES

The refugee program in Georgia builds on our collective history of creating welcoming communities for all people and Georgia's history as the birthplace of the Civil Rights movement. The CRSA and its member agencies are proud to play a vital role in the success of Georgia, its economy, and our thriving volunteer networks.

In fiscal year 2016, CRSA member agencies raised a total of **\$7,307,244** in private and corporate funding as well as **\$671,696** in fees for service. Georgians want to see the program thrive. Over **8,557** volunteers worked with CRSA members in 2016, donating a total of **149,557** hours. While donors and volunteers help make this work possible, staff carry out the critical services of the CRSA members. In 2016, CRSA agencies employed **329** Georgians full-time.

*Volunteer hours valued over **\$3.5 million** in donated time for CRSA agencies in 2016.*



For CRSA agencies, re-investing in the communities we serve is key to a successful public-private partnership. In 2016, agencies spent over **\$2.2 million** on client rent, filling a total of **872** formerly vacant apartments. CRSA agencies also spent over **\$327,602** in utilities for clients, over **\$261,810** on MARTA cards for clients, and over **\$1 million** in general client support – including groceries, furniture, and household goods. The majority of these items were purchased from locally owned or operated businesses.

EXTENDING WELCOME

Johnson Ferry Baptist Church and World Relief welcomed Mohammad, Ebtesam, and their young son Hasan in late 2015 as one of the first



Syrian refugee families in Georgia. Johnson Ferry, a Southern Baptist Church in Marietta with over 8,000 members, received the new family with open arms. Knowing that Mohammad and his family had fled the civil war in Syria, Johnson Ferry members wanted them to feel at home as soon as they arrived. The church

members felt it vital that Mohammad, Ebtesam, and Hasan felt loved and supported so that they could begin to rebuild their lives.

Mohammad and his family were completely surrounded by caring and compassionate volunteers who treated them as if they were their own family members. Hospitality and welcome is very important in Syrian culture. The southern hospitality shown to the family by Johnson Ferry Baptist and World Relief allowed the family to quickly build trust and rapport with their hosts, and church members helped them adapt quickly to their new community. Church volunteers helped Mohammad secure employment with U.S. Cabinetworks within months of arrival so that he could begin supporting his family financially. Johnson Ferry members continue to help the family improve their English, and they have developed a strong friendship and bond. Mohammad and Ebtesam were so successful integrating into their new community that they, along with the dedicated volunteers from Johnson Ferry, have become “cultural brokers” for new Syrian families who have followed, supporting them as they adapt to their new life in America.

SUPPORTING GEORGIA'S VITAL INDUSTRIES

Across CRSA member agencies in 2016, more than **1,000** new Americans found employment, with an **average wage of \$9.63/hour**. Among clients of refugee resettlement agencies, **91% were fully self-sufficient within 180 days of arrival in the U.S.** – among the highest percentages in the nation. CRSA is proud to work with over **630** employer partners in some of Georgia's most vital industries, including poultry processing, hospitality, and manufacturing.



Vocational counseling programs also offer refugees the opportunity to advance their skills and achieve higher education through workshop topics such as college readiness, professional licensing, and training program preparation. These workshops

helped over 400 new Americans hone and improve their abilities to give back to their new communities.

Refugees and immigrants also contribute to Georgia's economy as entrepreneurs. A 2015 report from the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) found that over 60,000 new immigrant business owners in Georgia contributed a **net \$2.9 billion in business income** in 2013 alone. CRSA member agencies

support refugee and immigrant entrepreneurs through small-business training and mentor programs.

CRSA Partners:

150 Faith Partners

140 Business Partners

170 Civic & Corporate Partners

175 School & University Partners



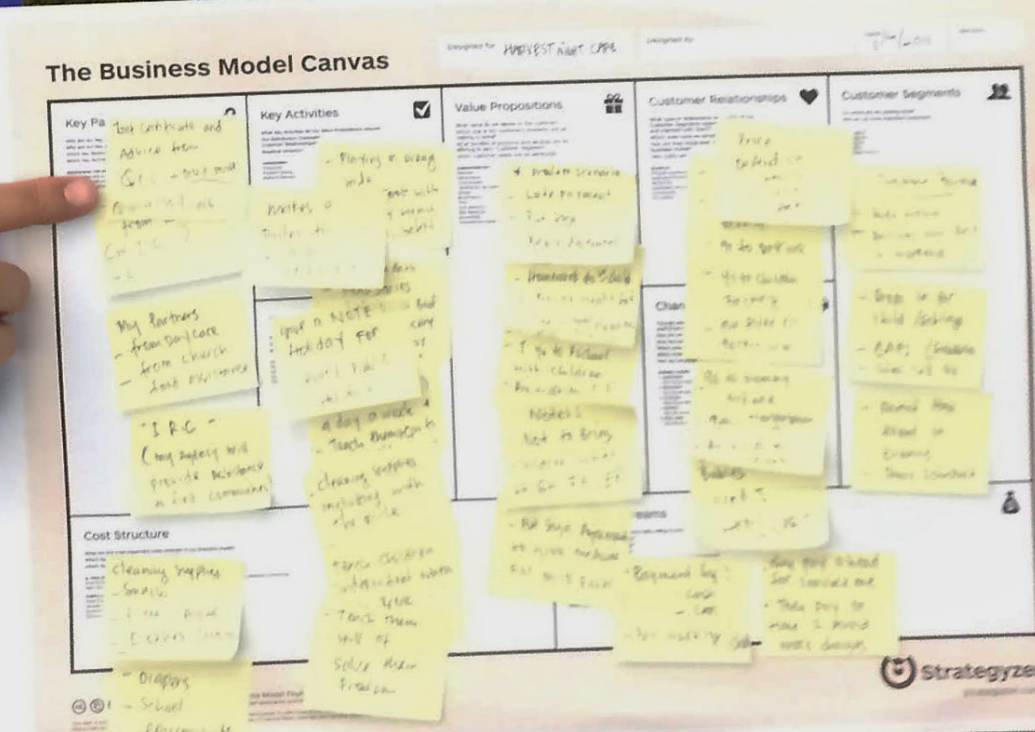
INTRODUCING A NEW ENTREPRENEUR

As a Burmese refugee living in Clarkston, GA, Marta noticed an unmet need in her community: a provider of quality childcare for parents working the night shift. Determined to serve the families and children in her community, Marta knew she could fill that void, and better her own prospects, by opening a small business that catered to the needs of her friends and neighbors. She soon enrolled in the Start:ME Clarkston microenterprise program, coordinated and funded by Friends of Refugees.

Start:ME Clarkston provides promising micro-entrepreneurs in Clarkston the necessary training, mentorship support and early-stage financing needed to develop their businesses. The program uses the Community Based Micro-Business Administration curriculum from Emory's Goizueta Business School, and matches entrepreneurs with experienced business leaders as mentors. The program has overseen the **launch of 61 new local businesses** with a special emphasis on the Clarkston community.

Start: ME Clarkston has helped facilitate the launch of 61 new local businesses.

Thanks to this support, Marta will soon open a childcare business that offers culturally competent care at affordable rates with flexible and non-traditional hours, which is ideal for many refugee parents in the community. "Start:ME," Marta said, "helped me to build self-confidence and taught me that obstacles can be opportunities." She also now has connections to experts whom she can call on for support when she needs it as her business grows.



INVESTING IN PEOPLE: CURREY & COMPANY

Tony, a husband and father of four, was resettled by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Atlanta in 2015 after fleeing the Democratic Republic of Congo with his young family. With a college degree and a high level of English, Tony was the perfect candidate for the IRC in Atlanta's Jobs to Careers program, which provides clients with the knowledge, skills, and tools to move from entry-level work to higher-paying, higher-skilled careers.

After participating in the Jobs to Careers program, Tony was able to secure employment with Currey & Company, a local Atlanta business, manufacturing high-end lighting products, interior and garden furniture, and accessories. **Familiar with the strong work ethic and reliability of the refugee community, Currey & Company is committed to providing broader opportunities to the growing international community in Atlanta.** The company offers hourly wages starting well above the average entry-level wage in manufacturing. Their in-house training program for employees offers instruction including English as a Second Language classes, computer training, GED preparation, citizenship classes, and individual tutoring.

Most notably, Currey & Company offers all employees 100% tuition for post-secondary education, providing employees with the opportunity to earn a four-year college degree in any subject. Tony was thrilled to take advantage of the opportunity to further his education and is currently enrolled in the Database Specialist program for an Associate of Applied Science degree at Georgia Piedmont Technical College.

The CRSA thanks Currey & Company for recognizing the positive impact refugees have on our local economy, and for investing in diverse educational programming that translates to a stronger community for all Georgians.





BECOMING A NEW AMERICAN

On June 2, 2016, Hodan Osman was sworn in as an American citizen in a private naturalization ceremony at the Clarkston Community Center coordinated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Somali American Community Center (SACC). Originally from Somalia, Hodan arrived 15 years ago and has worked hard to serve her community, give back to those who have welcomed her, and impact future generations of Georgians.

As the Afterschool Coordinator at SACC, she provides homework help, ESL tutoring and social support for new American students. Her students shared stories of the impact she has had on their lives during the ceremony. Her journey to citizenship is an inspiration to them to work toward their own goals – and to remain thoughtful, engaged citizens.

ENGAGING IN GEORGIA'S CIVIC PROCESS

Many new Americans come to Georgia from countries where civic engagement is not only discouraged, but violently opposed. New Americans in Georgia often seek to learn as much as they can about civic life in Georgia, so they may quickly become educated, active, and engaged members in their democracy.

In 2016, CRSA agencies **assisted over 470 new Americans apply for citizenship**. Many members also joined the New American Campaign, which in September 2016 began hosting free monthly citizenship workshops across Georgia for new Americans looking to apply for naturalization. Each workshop has helped dozens begin, or complete, applications for citizenship. The CRSA hosted two naturalization ceremonies, including our annual celebration in the State Capitol, where a total of **42 former refugees** became American citizens.

New citizens in 2016 found an important way to raise their voices: voting. CRSA member agencies, along with their community partners, assisted over **5,000** new Americans to register to vote. Members helped educate these new voters through door-to-door canvassing, “get out the vote” calls and mailers, and through providing voter-education materials in over **10 languages**. Civic-minded agencies also hosted dozens of civic education workshops for new Americans on topics such as: voter education, housing concerns, police relations, Georgia ballot measures, the 2016 Presidential election, meeting with elected officials, and more. Member organizations also provided training on issues that impact refugee and immigrant communities like Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals and ICE Raids.

Leadership and education initiatives at the CRSA help ensure that new Americans take part not only in election years, but throughout their lives. The CRSA takes the lead in the annual **New Americans Celebration (NAC)**, which welcomes over **200 new Americans** and supporters to the State Capitol to meet their elected officials and tell their “refugee success story.” This year, nearly 50% of NAC participants were new Americans. Nearly 60% of participants had never visited the Capitol previously, yet over 90% in attendance reported comfort in returning to the Capitol in the future.

SERVING OTHERS

A part of the persecuted Christian minority in Iran, Ehsan never let the turmoil of his home country stop him from a life of service. “My goal is to be useful for humans in my life,” Ehsan said. “When I’m doing something useful, it makes me so happy.” In 2005, he fled to Turkey due to religious persecution, where he worked as a missionary for eight years, making important connections with other missionaries that would be critical to his success after arriving in Georgia.



Ehsan was resettled by New American Pathways in 2014 and immediately re-connected with contacts he made in Turkey from Atlanta’s Mount Paran Church, who worked to help other persecuted Christians fleeing Iran. Ehsan met with church leaders to discuss his professional and personal goals and was quickly hired to work in Mount Paran’s Mission department.

Now, Ehsan works with international students in Atlanta, and assists the church with outreach activities including donation drives and giveaways. In his free time, he continues to work with new arrivals, especially his fellow Iranians, to help them get resettled in Atlanta. He helps them apply for Social Security cards, settle their living arrangements, and find donated furniture so they can save more of their hard-earned money.

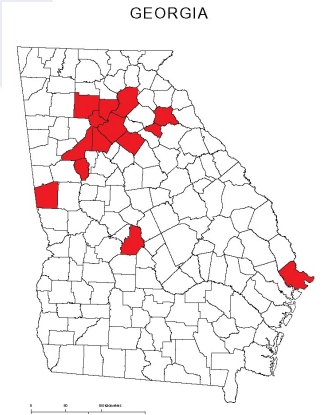
In all his service, Ehsan can see many similarities between serving refugees overseas and working with new arrivals here, with a few key differences. “Both are hard, but here we have more resources, more people who are willing to give,” he said. “We have more financial resources to support refugees [here].”

WELCOMING GEORGIA'S NEWEST NEIGHBORS

The heart of the work of the CRSA is welcoming refugees and immigrants and helping them to become self-sufficient, contributing members of Georgia’s communities. This year, CRSA member agencies welcomed **3,180** refugees to Georgia. While refugees arrived from over **30** different countries across the world, the top countries for arrival in 2016 were: **Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Honduras, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria.**

Refugees find and bring success to the areas where they resettle. Clarkston remains an area where many refugees are initially resettled and choose to remain – buying homes and starting business in the area. Refugees also resettled in: **Atlanta, Avondale Estates, Comer, Commerce, Decatur, East Point, Gainesville, Lawrenceville, Lilburn, Loganville, Marietta, Norcross, Peachtree City, Roswell, Savannah, Scottdale, Stone Mountain, Tucker, Woodstock, and Houston County and Troup Counties.**

To achieve success, new Americans must find jobs and integrate into the school systems quickly. These goals are easier to reach when they have a better understanding of the English language and the communities in which they will live. CRSA agencies served **2,855** new Americans through English as a Second Language services in 2016, and provided critical workshops for clients in topics such as health care open enrollment, MARTA usage, and cultural orientation to facilitate better integration in their new communities.





INSPIRING GEORGIA'S NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

While new American adults seek to bring economic and commercial success to their communities, refugee and immigrant youth are leading the way for bright futures for Georgia. CRSA programs served **842** new Americans in innovative, award-winning afterschool programs in 2016. These programs bring homework help, English language instruction, STEM and art education, and more to newly arrived students. Programs saw an average **95% attendance rate** in afterschool, and on average **92% of students** met their goals in areas such as homework completion, English language proficiency, and academic performance in math and reading. Programs serving seniors at two schools saw **100% graduation rates**. Youth leadership programs at Latin American Association (LAA), New American Pathways, and SACC allowed older students not only to focus on college and career readiness, but also to learn about other cultures and develop skills to work alongside students from various cultures.

For many refugee parents, navigating the American school systems can be complicated. While afterschool programs provide parents with the resources they need to work regular hours away from home, the ability to learn a wholly new education system can take time. School liaison programs help new American parents better interact with local schools, administrators, and educators and to take a more active role in their children's education. In 2016, over **150 parents were served in these programs** – which help facilitate student-teacher meetings and workshops, host school orientations, and translate take-home materials such as permission forms or grade reports.

To ensure new American children have a bright start from the beginning, the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program works with parents of young children to help them notice, and achieve, educational milestones. The New American Pathways PAT program visits parents of young children in their home to help parents to better understand their children and the milestones they are reaching. In 2016, 63 new American parents were assisted with home visits, and the program – the first in the U.S. to focus solely on refugee families – was **awarded the National PAT Losos Prize for Impact**.

CRSA programs served **842** new Americans in innovative, award-winning afterschool programs in 2016.



BUILDING A BRIGHT FUTURE

Meh Sod, a Karen refugee from Burma, was born in Mea La Refugee Camp in Thailand. Seven years ago, she came to the United States with her family. She spoke no English. At first, Meh Sod felt lost in the United States: “I didn’t want to tell my parents about my troubles because I felt sorry for them for having to stand up all day at their jobs in the chicken factory.”

The summer after she arrived, a family friend told her about Global Village Project, a school where people were “willing to help me with my new beginning.” Meh Sod said, “Our teachers showed us so much love and caring. They believed in us and supported us and we had volunteer tutors to give us one-on-one help.”

Meh Sod went on to become a senior honors student at Clarkston High School (CHS) and was one of two students in her AP English class who was not a native English speaker. **This year, she was one of only 90 Georgia graduates to receive a full college scholarship through the Gates Millennium Scholars program.**

“Our teachers showed us so much love and caring.”

Throughout her time at CHS, she was involved in service and leadership, as the Vice President of the Beta Club, an active member of the Clarkston Community Toastmasters and the New American Pathways Young Women’s Leadership Program, and a volunteer with the CPACS afterschool program.

Meh Sod was accepted to Agnes Scott College in February. Her dream is to become a teacher, and, eventually, to build a school in Burma: “I want to help those children who were not able to cross the bridge away from persecution in their homeland. In my mind, I can picture a small bamboo school in Burma, where children are no longer toiling in fields or cities, but learning, and laughing, and grateful.”



FLOWERS FOR REINA

Reina's flower shop has gone through many ups and downs since she acquired it in 2008. During a period of slow sales last year, Reina, who studied business administration in her native Venezuela, considered closing the shop. But then a friend told her about the Latin American Association's "Mujeres y Negocios" course for Latina entrepreneurs.

Reina enrolled in the course and felt empowered to transform her business. She became aware of resources at her disposal, including chambers of commerce and credit counseling agencies. She added new software to track her business, and she improved her time management skills so she could focus more on social media and email marketing.



Most importantly, Reina concedes, the course made her feel better about herself, giving her the motivation to keep her shop open. "The class gave me self-

confidence," Reina said. "My self-esteem was very low when I started. I realized that I was not alone; I felt that other women were going through the same struggles I was going through. The class gave me the strength to keep going with my business."

Reina's store, The Flower Garden, is still open at its original location at Peachtree Center in downtown Atlanta. Her shop mostly sells and delivers arrangements for birthdays and holidays, catering to the offices and corporations in the area. Reina's new vision for the business is to expand her scope by teaching groups of women to make flower arrangements in casual and fun workshop-like settings. She has tried the idea successfully twice and is planning on doing more.

CREATING UNIQUE PROGRAMS TO SERVE NEW GEORGIANS

The refugee program continues to be on the forefront of nonprofit leadership and innovation, serving new Americans – and all Georgians – with programs tailored to meet the needs and celebrate the successes of Georgia's communities.

Health services and referral programs are common among agencies, who assist all new arrivals in obtaining health screenings through Georgia's Department of Public Health. Additional programs have been organized with local health providers to offer women's health, mental health and specialty health screenings, and services for new arrivals in need. The CPACS **Cosmo Health Center** is a Federally Qualified Health Center that provides medical care and prevention services for underinsured or uninsured individuals, expanding the range of health care options for new Americans. In a trend-setting program, Friends of Refugees' **Embrace Refugee Birth Support** program served **71** refugee women through pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum in 2016.

Other programs focused on needs not otherwise met in the greater service community. JF&CS continued to lead through their one-of-a-kind **services for older refugees** program—focusing on specialized classes, case management, and activities. CPACS provides **daily on demand and fixed route transportation** for eligible refugees and immigrants from Clarkston to their medical appointments, employment-related appointments, and to Chamblee for social services – a growing need as Atlanta continues to work on public transportation improvements. The Friends of Refugees **Jolly Avenue Garden** is a community-building initiative that brings together refugees in a garden with **95 family garden plots**, common growing areas, community gathering space, and educational programming. These programs help new Americans improve on their skills while having a greater reach into their new communities.



CRSA MEMBERS

Catholic Charities Atlanta
CDF: Action
Center for Pan Asian Community Services
Friends of Refugees
Global Village Project
International Rescue Committee in Atlanta
Jewish Family and Career Services
The Lantern Project
Latin American Association
Lutheran Services of Georgia
New American Pathways
Somali American Community Center
World Relief Atlanta

JOIN THE CONVERSATION



Facebook.com/CoalitionOfRefugeeServiceAgencies



@CRSA_Georgia

Mission: to engage a broad coalition to highlight the cultural, social and economic contributions of refugees and immigrants in Georgia.

Vision: we envision a future where every person who calls Georgia home is valued, respected, and able to build a successful life.

Contact Us: If you would like to learn more about CRSA or any of our partners, please contact Stephanie Jackson Ali at New American Pathways: s.ali@newamericanpathways.org

CREDITS

Design: Key Design Strategies

Layout: Ai-Lien D. Vuong

Text and Formatting: Stephanie Ali, Fiona Freeman, Anna Gray

Photos: Catholic Charities Atlanta, CPACS, Friends of Refugees, Global Village Project, International Rescue Committee Atlanta, Latin American Association, Lutheran Services of Georgia, New American Pathways, Pat Powers, Somali American Community Center