

2017

COALITION OF REFUGEE SERVICE AGENCIES

ANNUAL REPORT





SOMALI AMERICAN
COMMUNITY CENTER Inc.
WORKING FOR THE COMMUNITY



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the work of the Coalition of Refugee Service Agencies (CRSA) and the incredible people we welcome and serve. The CRSA is a group of 18 nonprofit organizations who work with the refugee and immigrant communities in Georgia. **We provide resettlement services, employment counselling and placement, education and after school programs, civic engagement, and many more unique initiatives to over 61,000 new Americans each year.**

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has welcomed refugees to our country for over 35 years, and while the political environment this past year has been challenging, we are encouraged by the unwavering support of our fellow Georgians. Our state's history and tradition of welcoming refugees is filled with inspirational stories of new Americans finding success in their new homes, and we continue to partner with many businesses, faith communities, civic groups, and individuals who join us in this work.

I invite you to explore this report to learn more about the positive contributions that refugees and immigrants bring to Georgia. Here we present our collective data from the fiscal year 2017 (October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017) and highlight the economic, social and cultural benefits of creating welcoming communities. But while numbers can illustrate success, it is the stories in this report that are truly powerful. Take a few moments to get to know the resilient and hardworking new Americans that my colleagues and I are privileged to work with every day.

We know that Georgia loves refugees, and we invite you to join us in keeping Georgia a welcoming state for all who call it home.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Laney".

Emily Laney, 2017-18 CRSA Chair
Director of Disaster Response,
Refugee and Immigration Services
Lutheran Services of Georgia

REFLECTING ON HARDSHIP, AND SUCCESS, IN 2017

2017 has seen dramatic changes in U.S. immigration policy that have significantly impacted Georgia's communities. **The Trump Administration issued a series of Executive Orders including three versions of a "travel ban" that barred entry to people from specific, predominately Muslim countries, and paused refugee arrivals. In October 2017, the presidential determination set refugee arrivals for 2018 at just 45,000 – the lowest ceiling ever in the almost 40-year history of the resettlement program.** The administration also ended the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) Program, cancelled Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for several countries, and ended the Central American Minors Affidavit of Relationship Program (CAM AOR). Under the new administration, we have also seen a significant increase in deportations for individuals who do not have a criminal record.

What does this mean for refugees and immigrants, our programs, and the state of Georgia? This year, the U.S. welcomed just 53,716 refugees fleeing persecution. Georgia welcomed a third fewer refugees in 2017 than in 2016. Fewer arrivals means fewer refugee families are brought to safety and reunited with loved ones in the U.S. It also means less money for our state and our nation – by decreasing our work force, our tax base, and the contributions of nonprofits like the members of the CRSA.

Despite these challenges, we celebrated many successes in 2017. CRSA grew from 14 members to 18 this year and held our largest-ever advocacy day at the Georgia State Capitol on March 6. New Americans in Georgia have shown an increased interest in participating in the civic process. We will continue to work alongside those we serve to ensure that the voices of all Georgia's residents are heard.

CRSA has 4 priorities in 2018:

- 1. Increase the national refugee ceiling to at least 75,000*
- 2. Support a legislative fix for DACA that does not put other immigrant communities at risk*
- 3. Support a legislative agenda in Georgia that is inclusive and promotes success for all*
- 4. Increase the number of official Welcoming Communities in Georgia*

ENGAGING IN GEORGIA'S CIVIC PROCESS

Citizenship and participation in civic life have long been an important hallmark of immigrant integration in the U.S. In the current policy climate, it is more important than ever that new Americans have a voice in their communities. In 2017 our members, **Center for Pan-Asian Community Services (CPACS)** and **New American Pathways (New AP)**, worked with dozens of agencies to conduct get out the vote (GOTV) efforts in immigrant communities, resulting in **record turnout among Asian American and Latino populations**. Throughout the year, these organizations also **registered over 5,500 new Americans to vote**, primarily as part of a program to register newly naturalized citizens after their citizenship ceremonies. **CPACS** and **New AP** also partnered to educate over 100 newly-registered voters on "Voter 101" so that they could better understand the voting process ahead of the 2016 Presidential election.

CRSA held our annual advocacy day, the **New Americans Celebration**, on March 6, 2017. The passion and support of the welcoming community was fully evident, as over **400 individuals joined the New Americans Celebration** to advocate to keep Georgia a welcoming place for refugees and immigrants. The day ended on a high note, as 16 new Americans were sworn in as citizens under the Gold Dome.

Ensuring that immigrants have access to accurate information and affordable immigration services promotes safety and stability in Georgia's communities. This year, CRSA member agencies **supported over 2,400 community members with immigration applications, including over 900 for permanent residency and over 1,500 for citizenship**, ensuring these individuals can further integrate and contribute to their communities.

In 2017, CRSA organizations partnered to host Know Your Rights trainings for hundreds of community members. **Latin American Association (LAA)** and **Catholic Charities Atlanta (CCA)** offered programs such as legal orientation to those detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), representation for clients in immigration court proceedings, and ongoing support to families managing the unknowns of deportation. **Somali American Community Center (SACC)** worked to help their community, who saw deportation raids this year, through hosting a town hall with Congressman Hank Johnson and ICE representatives. At the Town Hall, discussions were held on how ICE can better work with the community and how community members can utilize resources - like the Congressman's office.

CELEBRATING CITIZENSHIP

For Welcoming Week 2017, CRSA, in partnership with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and BB&T Bank, hosted a naturalization ceremony at Clarkston City Hall. Recognized every September across the nation, **Welcoming Week brings together immigrants, refugees, and native-born Americans to raise awareness and celebrate the benefits of building welcoming communities**.



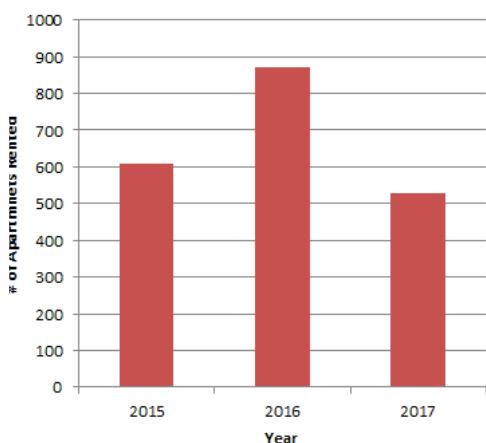
20 candidates representing 16 countries, filled the courtroom, each one prepared and excited to be sworn in as U.S. citizens in front of their friends and loved ones. The candidates presented their name and country of origin in turn, before taking the Oath of Allegiance and completing their naturalization to a room full of applause. Keynote speaker Tulu Kaifee, Mortgage Multicultural Manager and Senior Vice President of BB&T Bank, took the podium to address the new citizens. Originally from Pakistan, Tulu offered insight into her personal journey to success as an American citizen, and emphasized the importance of community and small business.

Clarkston Mayor Ted Terry closed the ceremony, stating: "We believe that it's not just the diversity of our cultures, our religions, and our languages, but also of our ideas that makes us a strong community." **All of the new citizens had the opportunity to register to vote after the ceremony, with the support of CRSA member agencies.** CRSA congratulates these 20 new Americans, who we know will add to Georgia's rich diversity.

INVESTING IN GEORGIA'S COMMUNITIES

The refugee and immigrant service industry is important for Georgia. **CRSA organizations this year brought over \$21.8 million in private and federal grants to Georgia and raised another \$1.79 million through fees for service.**

of Apartments Rented To Refugees Per Year



fell dramatically from 872 apartments in 2016 to only 527 in 2017, leaving more apartments vacant in locations across the state – especially in DeKalb County.

CRSA organizations employ highly qualified staff and are supported by many dedicated volunteers. **This year, CRSA agencies employed 204 Georgians full time and 90 part time.** 7,225 volunteers donated over 123,000 hours of service to our organizations – a value of over \$2.97 million. However, CRSA members saw a dramatic reduction in staff and volunteer hours in 2017, losing 65 paid positions and seeing a decrease in volunteer hours valuing more than \$500,000 from 2016.

More Georgia jobs will be lost in 2018 without a legislative fix to permanently protect DACA recipients. Over 24,000 Dreamers in Georgia will be affected, losing the ability to legally work, study, and live in the only country they know as home. According to a report from FWD.us, without a new, clean DREAM Act, Georgia alone will see an annual GDP loss of \$1 billion.

In 2017, CRSA agencies partnered with over:

- 200 faith partners
- 140 schools
- 200 businesses
- 200 community and civic groups

SUPPORTING GEORGIA'S VITAL INDUSTRIES

New Americans are not only our neighbors and our co-workers, but their labor helps to keep many of Georgia's most important industries afloat. A recent study by the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (GBPI) found that **23% of Georgia's doctors, 26% of software developers, 28% of skilled construction tradespeople such as carpenters and plumbers, and 42% of farm laborers are immigrants.**

In 2017, CRSA agencies worked with 426 companies to hire over 2,344 refugees for jobs across Georgia's industries.

Refugees also contribute to vital industries, especially tourism, manufacturing, and food processing. Entry level jobs allow refugees and other immigrants to maintain an income to support their families while building new skills and gaining a better grasp of the English language. **In 2017, 85.8% of refugee families were self-sufficient within 180 days of their arrival in Georgia.**

New Americans arrive with high goals and aspirations and quickly move on beyond their first jobs. The vocational counseling program at **New AP** offered specialized workshops and assistance to 124 clients seeking advanced skill development, including matching clients to 18 advanced job placements, five internships, 37 school and university enrollments, and 24 job counseling matches. **Refugee Coffee Co.** offers their staff an intensive year-long training program to not only become baristas but to improve skills like English-language, budgeting, interviewing, and resume building. **CPACS** offers training and programs so that community members can continue to reach educational, career and personal goals – such as a first-time homebuyer's class, tax fraud training, and financial aid workshops for college. **Friends of Refugees** has long-hosted **Refugee Career Hub** (formerly Café Clarkston), where this year, 123 students completed specialized training courses for professional skills including coding and web development and solar installation.



Immigrants are also business owners and entrepreneurs – and CRSA programs help them to achieve their dreams. **LAA's ¡Avanzando Juntas! Latinas' Economic Empowerment** program offers Latinas the opportunity to start their own micro-enterprises while they build their business acumen. **Friends of Refugees** partners with Emory University's Goizueta Business School to provide the **Start: ME Clarkston** program to offer training, mentorship, and early-stage financing to promising micro-entrepreneurs in Clarkston. Since it began, the program has launched 64 new local businesses, 98% of which are female and/or minority owned.

FINDING SUCCESS IN A NEW HOME

Forced to flee violence and atrocities in their home country of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Olga, her husband, and four children were finally brought to safety in Atlanta in August 2015. A few months after their arrival, Olga's husband secured employment as a general laborer at Standard Concrete and has held the job ever since, gradually moving up within the company. While her husband's job allowed the family to quickly become self-sufficient, **Olga was determined to find meaningful work for herself.**

Back in the Congo, Olga obtained a Bachelor's degree in project management and worked for several years as a behavioral counselor, helping victims of conflict and violence rebuild their lives. This intrinsic desire to care for others motivated her to seek employment in the medical field after arriving in the U.S. **"My dream is to help people with many medical difficulties,"** said Olga. **"Even if I can just help someone a little bit, it will be worth it because, for some people in need, that's all they have."**

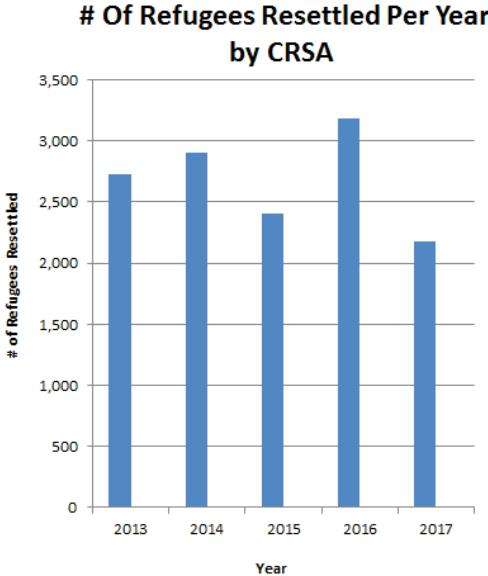
Olga enrolled in the **International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Atlanta's Jobs to Careers (J2C)** program, a career development program designed for refugees and immigrants who want to pursue more advanced career paths. She participated in J2C's Advanced Work Readiness Training (AWRT) where she worked on interview preparation, developed specific goals and timelines, participated in resume building sessions, and professionally networked.

Olga's J2C coordinator worked diligently with WorkSource DeKalb to acquire a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant so that Olga could enroll in a medical training program at Woodruff Medical Testing and Training Center. **Olga will graduate in February 2018 as a Certified Nursing Assistant and Patient Care Technician and just recently found out that she has made this semester's Dean's List!** Soon, Olga will continue her passion for serving others and helping the most vulnerable.



WELCOMING GEORGIA'S NEWEST NEIGHBORS

The refugee program is built around welcoming those who have fled persecution to a new home, and a new life, in America. While arrival numbers were far below the projected ceiling of 110,000 nationally in 2017 and are already slated to be even less than the record-low ceiling of 45,000 in 2018, CRSA member agencies and our partners across the country are dedicated to serving all who arrive to the highest standards. In 2017, we welcomed 2,179 refugees to Georgia – a sharp decline from 2016 numbers and from the expected amount of arrivals at the year's beginning.



Once arrived, refugees resettled across the state – in 17 different counties. Over 60% of refugees resettled in DeKalb, predominantly in Clarkston or the surrounding areas. While many refugees stay in Clarkston, others eventually move to other areas to purchase homes, live closer to family, or to have a shorter commute – just like many native-born Americans.

Refugees arrived to Georgia from 30 different countries in 2017, predominately Bhutan, Burma, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria.

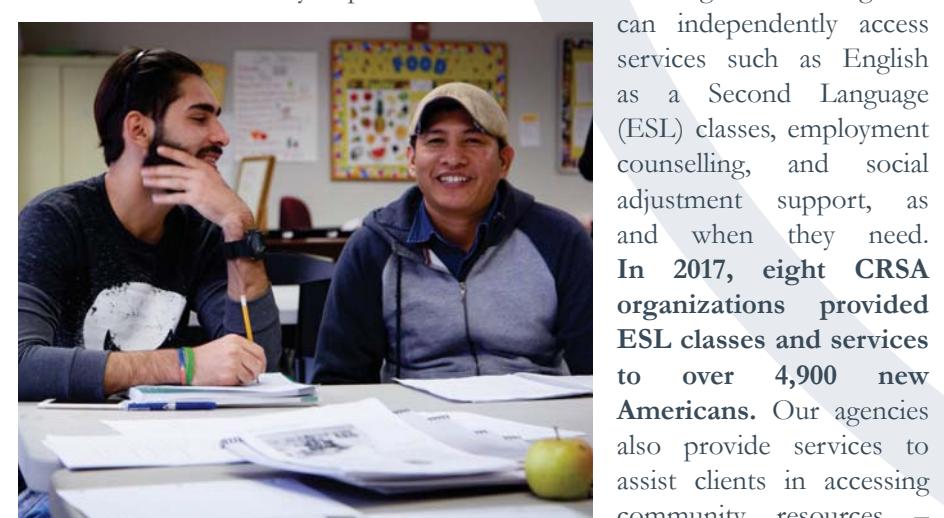


Clarkston and DeKalb County remain an excellent place for refugee resettlement for multiple reasons.

Clarkston and DeKalb County remain an excellent place for refugee resettlement for multiple reasons. Here are a few:

- The welcoming community supports resettlement.
- Clarkston, and much of DeKalb, has affordable, safe housing.
- Clarkston and neighboring Decatur and Tucker have reliable public transit.
- Clarkston is close to English language education programs and immigrant service organizations.
- Historic refugee communities have called the area home for 20 years, and they help welcome new immigrants and support newcomers' challenging early days after arrival.

DeKalb County – Clarkston specifically – is home to most CRSA member agencies due to the wide availability of public transit and to ensure refugees and immigrants can independently access services such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, employment counselling, and social adjustment support, as and when they need.



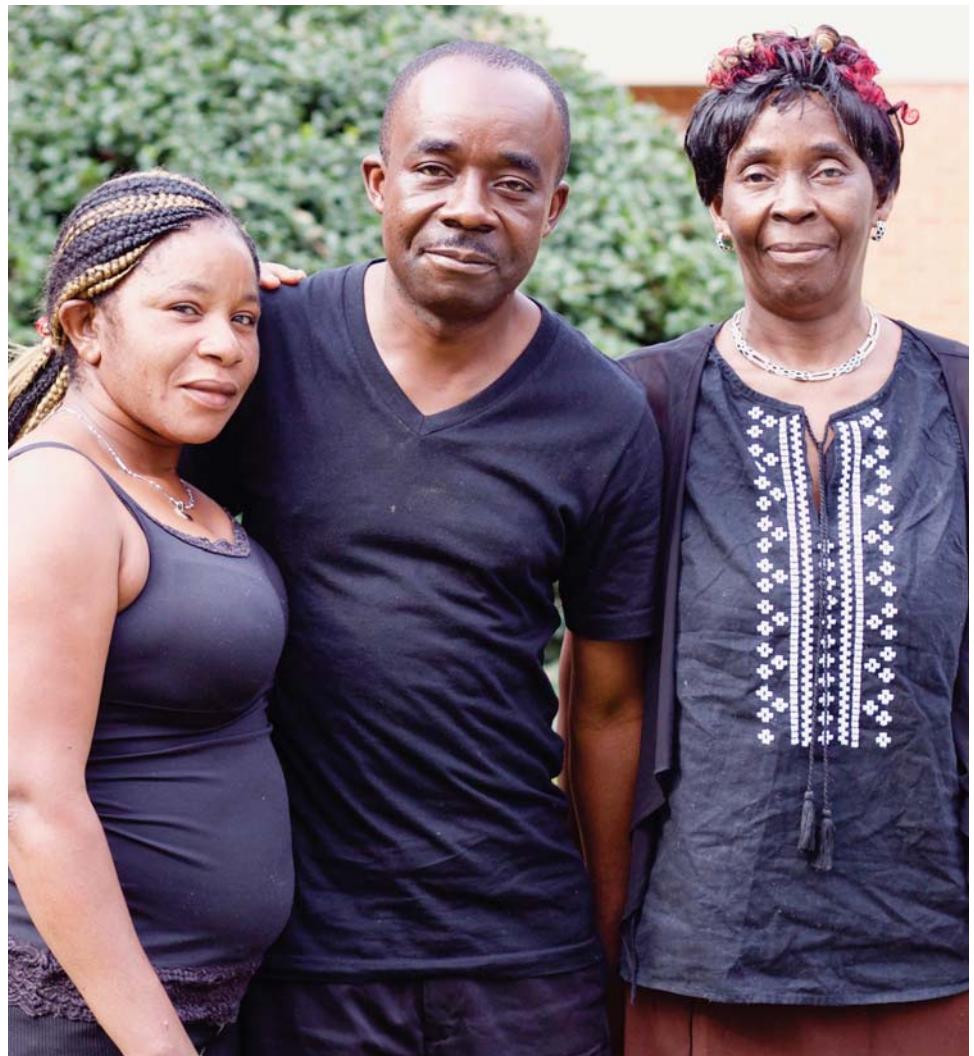
In 2017, eight CRSA organizations provided ESL classes and services to over 4,900 new Americans. Our agencies also provide services to assist clients in accessing community resources – everything from food assistance to social security cards and library cards. In total, CRSA members provided over 1,700 of these services in 2017, as well as an additional 900 services to help new Americans access healthcare.

CREATING NEW FUTURES

Augustine and his family arrived in Georgia through the refugee resettlement program in February 2017, but their journey was far from smooth. After fleeing ongoing violence and unrest in their home in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the family spent a number of years living as refugees in Zimbabwe. **Identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a vulnerable case in need of resettlement**, Augustine and his family began the extensive refugee screening process in early 2015. After a long and arduous two years of interviews, biometric checks, and health screenings, they were finally cleared to travel to the U.S., with flights scheduled for February 2017.

Preparing for their imminent departure, Augustine left his job, withdrew his children from school, and sold his few possessions. Two weeks before they were scheduled to travel, the family watched the Presidential Inauguration on CNN. **Soon after came the first “travel ban” executive order, which sought to stop all refugees from entering the U.S., and as a result, the family’s flights were abruptly cancelled.** In a state of complete shock and disbelief, all they could do was wait and attempt to follow the news that was reverberating all over the world.

After a few stressful and anxiety-filled days, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) informed Augustine that the executive order had been temporarily halted by the court system, and the family’s flights were rescheduled. With feelings of elation and hope, Augustine and his family boarded a plane for their new home and arrived in Atlanta, Georgia on February 10, 2017. With the support of **Lutheran Services of Georgia (LSG)** and a local church sponsor team, Augustine and his wife secured **full-time employment within just two months of their arrival, and their children were promptly enrolled in school.** Recently, the family were able to purchase their first car, and Augustine, with the support of the church sponsor team, is now helping his oldest daughter Aline prepare to enroll in college. **Augustine and his family are now happy and thriving as they work to build their own American dream.**



INSPIRING GEORGIA'S NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

Immigrant youth make special contributions to Georgia's schools, communities, and economy. Refugee students often have incomplete or interrupted formal education, leaving them behind their peers when first entering American schools.



CRSA programs bring refugee and immigrant youth targeted homework help, English language instruction, STEM and art education, and more, to ensure students are able to quickly join their peers for grade-level education and graduate on time.

In 2017, our programs assisted 1,359 students in afterschool and summer school programs in partnership with

DeKalb County School District (DCSD). Refugee students in these programs are quickly put on a path to success. At the **IRC in Atlanta**, 100% of high school seniors in the **Youth Futures** afterschool program have graduated since 2009. **Global Village Project (GVP)**'s specialized program saw students gain an average 1.8 years of growth in reading and math.

Welcoming community members also make a huge difference in helping refugee and immigrant students achieve their goals. Youth mentorship programs at **CCA, New AP, and GVP** helped 80 students, predominantly young women, better prepare for high school and college as well as build positive self-image. **CCA's** program focuses especially on "at risk" youth to help them find a better path for their future.

It's not just youth who benefit from education and leadership initiatives. School liaison programs at many CRSA member agencies help parents to better understand the American school system and to take an active role in their children's education. In 2017, **over 300 parents were served in these programs**. At **New AP**, school liaisons assisted with 254 parent-teacher conferences for refugee parents. Leadership programs at **Refugee Women's Network (RWN), SACC, CDF, and LAA** reached over 1,800 new Americans – primarily women – to teach them everything from home finance to self-care and advocacy.



SEEKING A BRIGHT FUTURE

When she was just eight years old, Niza and her family fled their home in Burma to escape the poverty and persecution they faced as members of the ethnic Chin minority. After almost two years living as refugees in Malaysia, Niza and her family were selected for resettlement in the U.S. and were welcomed into the diverse community of Clarkston, Georgia. Niza attended **GVP**, an innovative special purpose school for refugee girls and young women with interrupted education, where, **despite several years of lost schooling, she showed incredible diligence and commitment to her academics**.

It was these qualities that recently helped Niza, now 17, to achieve a new honor, as she was named "Student of the Month" at Meadowcreek High School in Norcross where she is currently a junior. She doesn't know who recommended her for this award, but thinks she's done well in school because: "I'm the kind of kid who picks things up very quickly. I learn fast!" Niza's dad, who had to drop out of school at age 11 to support his family, now works at a factory, starting at 6 am each day. Her mother made it to 10th grade before she had to leave school. She now works 12-hour overnight shifts in a Georgia poultry processing plant that employs many refugees. **Despite their grueling work schedules, Niza's parents are immensely grateful for the opportunities that have been made available to their children**, and her mother in particular motivates her towards academic success: "She's so strict with me! She's very glad that I get to go to a better school here than in Burma."



Niza is already looking ahead to college, probably Georgia State University or Kennesaw State University, and hopes to pursue a career as a nurse practitioner, believing her linguistic skills will help. She can speak Burmese, two different Chin dialects, and English, can understand Malaysian and Korean, and is studying Spanish at Meadowcreek, where she's a member of the "Translation Nation" who visit other schools and libraries to interpret!

Niza has had her share of struggles but offers inspiring advice to other refugees and immigrants: **"It can be hard at first but don't let that affect you. Just keep marching forward, knowing you are going to get there someday. Just give it your best, and have confidence in yourself."**

SERVING THE MOST VULNERABLE

In 2017, CRSA saw our membership grow from 14 members to 18. Of our new members, many serve immigrant women and girls and protect some of Georgia's most vulnerable populations – survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, and asylum seekers.

Atlanta is constantly growing as an international city for business and travel, but with that comes a sad realization that Atlanta is also a growing hub for human trafficking. New member **Tapestri** serves approximately 100 human trafficking survivors each year with comprehensive case management and connection to resources. **Tapestri** and another new member, **Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network (GAIN)**, both worked to educate hundreds of Georgians about human trafficking in the state and to guide Georgia's legal community in best practices in working with survivors. In Savannah, **LSG** added capacity to serve human trafficking survivors through a partnership with **Tapestri**, expanding the availability of services across the state.



Atlanta legal community and **served over 500 men, women, and children**.

Many CRSA member agencies have programs for survivors of domestic violence. **Jewish Family & Career Services (JF&CS)** help to provide emergency assistance to violence survivors, while **CPACS** and other CRSA agencies work directly with survivors to help them find safety in a new home. **Tapestri** specializes in working with immigrant domestic violence survivors and educating the greater community about working with foreign-born survivors. In 2017, **Tapestri** served 180 refugees at community education sessions, hosted 16 women's support groups, and served 23 refugees through case management. Additionally, **Tapestri** worked with 15 men in a state-certified Family Violence Intervention Program, offering 50 classes throughout the year to help stop the cycle of violence from continuing further.

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF ALL GEORGIANS

Like many native-born Americans, refugees and immigrants often rely on community organizations to supplement their access to health care as costs for care rise. The largest program in Metro Atlanta is **CPACS' Cosmo Health Center**, where over 550 new American community members accessed dozens of health programs in 2017, including health screenings and mammograms. **CPACS** additionally offers a Senior Wellness program to over 100 Bhutanese and Burmese seniors to ensure they live healthy and active lives. **CPACS** and Cosmo Health Center also offer numerous health education workshops for immigrant community members.



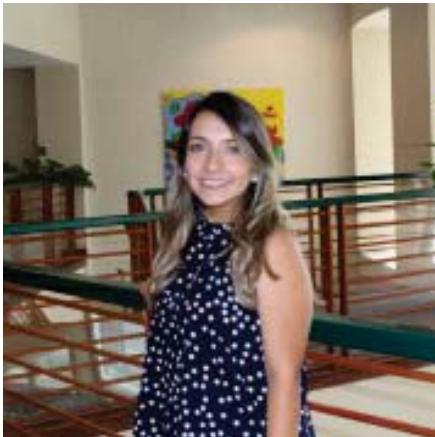
In 2017, these workshops reached over 400 individuals on topics from diabetes awareness to family planning and Affordable Care Act enrollment.

Resettlement programs also offer clients support when medical needs arise. At **New AP, LSG, and the IRC in Atlanta**, intensive medical case management served 321 clients in 2017, including connecting clients to medical specialists, navigating the American healthcare system, and gaining self-sufficiency following medical crises.

The **Friends of Refugees Embrace Refugee Birth Support program** guides refugee mothers through pregnancy, birth, and postpartum experiences. In 2017, 140 new mothers were assisted in navigating the medical system, making appointments, and finding interpretation to ensure healthy delivery. **Friends of Refugees** also organizes the **Jolly Avenue Garden**, where 104 individual family plots allow refugees and other community members to grow healthy food, share knowledge, and address food insecurity. In partnership with Global Growers Network, the **IRC in Atlanta's New Roots** program, facilitates the **Clarkston Food Initiative**, a collaborative effort to ensure everyone in Clarkston has opportunities to access, grow, eat, and share nutritious, culturally appropriate food.



TELLING THE STORIES OF ALL GEORGIANS



Marie Andrea Cruzado is a 23-year-old youth program coordinator from Lima, Peru. She recently graduated from Oglethorpe University and wants to pursue a Master's in public affairs. **"I'm a product of Gwinnett County. I'm a product of Georgia. Georgia gave me all the resources for me to grow into who I am today.** It's only reasonable that I keep working in this community so I can give back to the state. It

is my turn to give back to the community that also helped me. My passion aligns with the needs of the Latino population."



Jaime Rangel is a 26-year-old part-time college student majoring in finance from Hidalgo, Mexico. He currently works for a governmental affairs and public policy firm while going to college in Dalton. "Georgia is my home. I really care about my state. I want to help push law and ordinances that make our state the number one to do business. I want to help bring good jobs and expand health care to rural areas. I want to go to law

school and work in government affairs and public policy. **I just want to help my state grow and prosper."**



Yehimi Adriana Cambrón is a 25-year-old high school art teacher from Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. She is an Agnes Scott College graduate who served for two years as an elementary school educator through Teach for America. "The narrative has long been that undocumented people are those who clean and build and contribute through manual labor. Because of DACA, America has gotten an opportunity to see

other narratives... that we are capable of becoming doctors, teachers and professionals, in addition to the contributions we've made to this country historically. I'm an art teacher at the high school I graduated from seven years ago, and I'm teaching what I love. **I'm emotionally and professionally invested within and beyond the classroom.** This is my service to my community and my country, and that service is now being challenged by the threat of DACA being terminated."



Leo López is a 22-year-old business development consultant from Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. He recently graduated from Oglethorpe University. "I came to this country when I was a toddler and have no recollection of Mexico. All I've known is Atlanta and growing up here. I know 100% that my roots are Mexican, but my heart is also in ATL. **I want to be an entrepreneur and would like a future here."**

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: s.ali@newamericanpathways.org.

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CRSA MEMBERS

Catholic Charities Atlanta

CDF: Action

Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS)

Clarkston Community Center

Friends of Refugees

Georgia Asylum and Immigration Network (GAIN)

Global Village Project

International Rescue Committee Atlanta

Jewish Family and Career Services (JF&CS)

The Lantern Project

Latin American Association

Lutheran Services of Georgia

New American Pathways

Refugee Coffee Co.

Refugee Women's Network

Somali American Community Center

Tapestri

World Relief Atlanta



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