



2023 *Impact Report*

At the Refugee Education Center, it's our honor to serve children who come to us with multiple obstacles to overcome. Imagine starting school where everything is new — culture, food, geography, language. We do everything we can to provide academic, social, and emotional support for our students.

Refugee Education Center staff also prepare and educate the schools that our learners are enrolled in, providing professional development to school staff. And, of course, we walk alongside refugee students' families, assisting them with their most essential needs so that kids can thrive in school.



1,000+
INDIVIDUALS
SERVED

More than 1,000 refugee students, family members, and school personnel served across all programs.

90%
DEVELOPMENTALLY
ON-TRACK

90% of participating students in our 0-3 year-old program are assessed to be developmentally on-track.

98%
IMPROVEMENT
IN SCHOOL
READINESS

98% of BRIDGES students showed improved understanding of school expectations.



Dear Friends,

Let me introduce you to one of my favorite people. Shukuru arrived in Grand Rapids with her family when she was 10 years old. She knew no English, no other kids, and was frightened to begin school. Refugee Education Center welcomed Shukuru and her siblings to our summer school prep program where she connected with volunteers, met friends, and learned a bit of English.



All things that gave her confidence to begin school that fall. Shukuru continued to receive Refugee Education Center services at our after-school program, where volunteers supported her socio-emotional and academic journey. Shukuru is now a thriving 8th grader in Grand Rapids Public Schools. She hopes to become a teacher someday so that she can create a welcoming and nurturing environment for kids like her.

Shukuru is just one example of the many students we served this past year. In 2023 we welcomed a record number of refugee families to West Michigan – from the 700 kids we enrolled in school this past fall to the 183 children we supported in our early childhood center, BRIDGES, Project Faulu, and high school navigation programs combined – we grew like never before!

This full continuum of care is available to every refugee family who arrives in our community at no cost and with no end date. We believe in an empowered community where refugees flourish.

And we can't do our critical work without partners like the State of Michigan, numerous local foundations, and committed individuals who give generously. ***We are so grateful!***

Warmly,

Meg

Meg Derrer
Executive Director



Programmatic Strategy

EDUCATION: We seek to provide primary and supplemental education programs designed to coincide with traditional education so that students and children may excel. We also provide cultural education to communities at-large so they may fully support and engage their new American neighbors, students, and co-workers.

ECONOMIC STABILITY: We seek to help develop economic opportunities and guide refugees in career opportunities, as well as prepare people for engaging with and using financial systems.

HEALTH: Because health systems can be complex to navigate, we seek to break down barriers and build bridges to make necessary healthcare and mental healthcare more accessible.

CULTURAL + LINGUAL: For many, the United States poses multiple cultural and linguistically challenging situations that differ from birth countries. We seek to prepare refugees for engagement with new cultures while retaining their identity.



Program Services



PROJECT FAULU

Refugee children are provided language, reading, and school support, including a trauma-informed approach for socio-emotional well-being to strengthen academic engagement.



BRIDGES

Newly arriving refugee children are introduced to topics, themes, and cultures they will encounter in school, so every child is prepared to start school on the right foot.



HANDS CONNECTED

A one-of-a-kind program for pre-K children, Hands Connected is taught by refugee educators and provides culturally responsive, multi-lingual early childhood programming.



REFUGEE NAVIGATORS

As trusted partners for refugees in West Michigan, navigators provide guidance through the maze of public and private support systems.

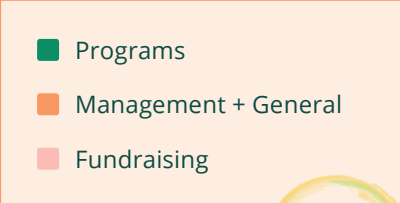
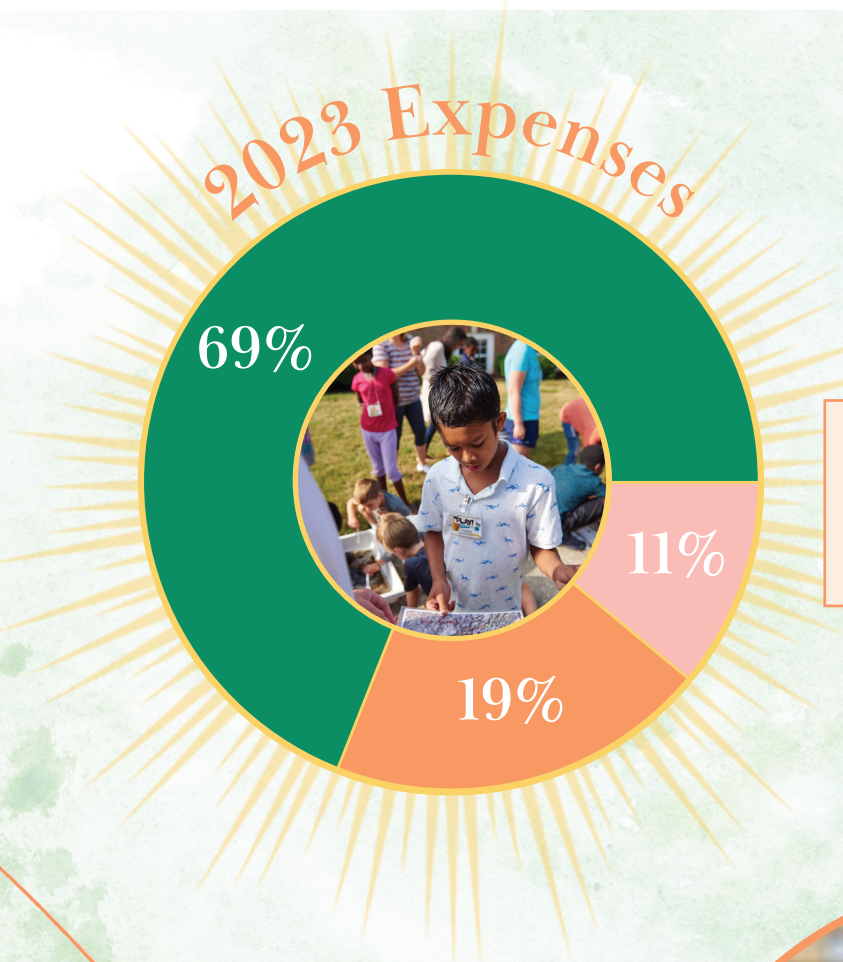
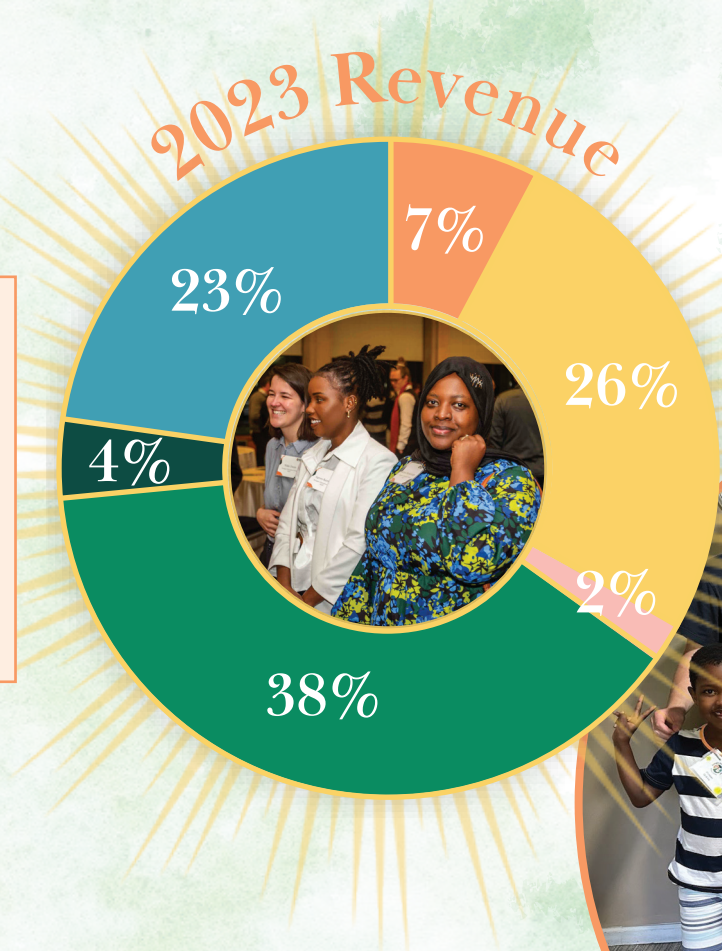
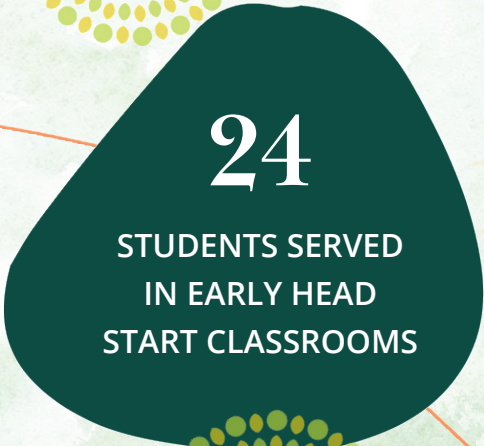


GRADUATE & GROW

High school students are provided personalized support as they work toward high school graduation and successful transition into a college, trade school, and/or career.

REFUGEE EDUCATION CENTER

Impact



The Refugee Education Center supports refugees in their journey to become fully participating members of the West Michigan community. We envision a thriving, multicultural West Michigan community where all have an opportunity to pursue a better future.



Mission Moment



Mudaser is a ball of energy, with a sweet heart. He always looks forward to playing baseball or soccer during outdoor time. During program activities, Mudaser loves to draw and practice math problems.

As the youngest child of a big, close-knit family from Afghanistan, Mudaser has six brothers, two sisters, and his parents. Along with all of his siblings, Mudaser participated in our summer BRIDGES programs, and three of the children returned in January for the Refugee Education Center's Project Faulu afterschool program.

Mudaser has truly blossomed in the months since his participation in BRIDGES. Last summer, he was timid about creating new friendships and resisted following the directions of the lead teacher or volunteers. Slowly he began to open up and understand the routine and expectations of school.

Seeing him again after a few months in school at Challenger Elementary, he has grown to love learning and is more attentive to his academic work. His teacher says that he is excelling at a high rate due to his positive attitude and the support he has received from Refugee Education Center along the way.



The Refugee Education Center was formed in 2006 by a group of Somali Bantu refugees. Fundamental to the Refugee Education Center is the sharing of knowledge from a first-person perspective of how to navigate refugee services while learning to join a new community.

Though the Refugee Education Center has expanded to include expert social service navigators and leaders, we will always view the first-hand lived refugee experience as critical to the success of those we serve.

The Refugee Education Center engages newly resettled refugees, and the refugee community at-large, in two ways: direct services and referral partnerships with local social service agencies and programs. We walk alongside refugees in the post-settlement education phase of their journey, removing barriers and providing support to become fully participating members in the community — ***continuing services for however long it takes.***

Current Refugee Education Center Leadership + Staff

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 Mamie Hai - People + Culture Coordinator

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 Hannah Werth - Program Coordinator, School Engagement
 Sandra Mitchell - Communication

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Jenny Nielsen - Navigation Services Program Manager
 Cassie Veach - Refugee Navigator Coordinator
 Noël Rathnaw - Program Coordinator, Graduate & Grow
 Salima Bamurange - Refugee Navigator
 Krishna Bista - Refugee Navigator
 Huda Dyke - Refugee Navigator
 San Hpound - Refugee Navigator
 Agnes Kamanzi - Refugee Navigator
 Yeshiamba Kidanemariam - Refugee Navigator
 Rahma Madnur - Refugee Navigator
 Abu Mohammed - Refugee Navigator
 Nahid Murphy - Refugee Navigator
 Taiba Noori - Refugee Navigator
 Florence Umutoni - Refugee Navigator

K-8 PROGRAMS

Lindsey Hall - K-8 Program Manager
 Fayo Feto - Programs Coordinator, Project Faulu/BRIDGES

HANDS CONNECTED

Kathie Hoffmann - Program Manager
 Penny Chamberlain - Center Director
 Safaa Abas - Associate Director, Lead Teacher
 Zawadi Muhorakeye - Lead Teacher
 Jeannette Dusengimana - Associate Teacher
 Esther Gasengayire - Associate Teacher
 Mimi Umwali - Associate Teacher
 Fabiola Nduwimana - Floater Teacher



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Join the Refugee Education Center and thousands of other donors and volunteers who support refugees in their journey.

Supporting a refugee from the beginning to the end of their time with the Refugee Education Center requires approximately \$1,400 per refugee. Support may include translation services, school registration assistance, guidance through government and other support systems, mentorship, and more.

Refugee Education Center is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation



MAKE THE **BETTER TOGETHER** PLEDGE

By pledging a recurring donation, you can put your money where your heart is.

MAKE AN ONLINE DONATION

Support West Michigan refugees by making an online gift through the Refugee Education Center's website.

ALTERNATIVE GIVING OPTIONS

The Refugee Education Center is supported by a variety of donations as well as non-cash and alternative forms of giving.

VOLUNTEER

Create a more welcoming West Michigan and have a positive impact on the lives of local refugee students by dedicating your valuable resource of time.

learn more here

www.refugeeGR.org

