A Word from Our
Board Chair and Executive Director

In 2018-2019, Journey’s End Refugee Services continued to experience changes in our programming and how we serve refugees and immigrants throughout Western New York. Some of those changes were forced upon us, due to continued anti-immigrant policies coming out of Washington D.C., and some of them were made consciously and strategically to ensure we continue to meet our clients’ needs. What remains unchanged is Journey’s commitment to our newest neighbors – to welcome them, help them integrate in ways that they feel are meaningful, and assist in providing tools that allow them to thrive.

Journey’s End has long been known as a leading resettlement agency here in Buffalo. Our resettlement services, job placement and vocational training, and English language acquisition and high school equivalency programs continue to be recognized across New York State, as well as the country, as best-practice, and continue to receive government contracts, attesting to our quality of service and administration. These welcoming and integrative services continue to be the backbone of our agency, despite severe decreases in the number of newly arrived refugees. There are many unknowns when it comes to refugee resettlement in the coming year, and we will do as we always have, and fight alongside you, our supporters, to keep WNY a welcoming community.

A decrease in arrivals does correlate to a decrease in funding, but more importantly, it reduces our capacity to positively impact our WNY community. The expertise Journey’s End has cultivated in its staff throughout the years in cultural competency, subject matter, and service delivery has been purposeful. We pride ourselves on our ability to serve as community members, allies, connectors, advocates, and mentors, all while being driven by our mission and keeping a philanthropic culture. Our ability to maintain this type of staff is threatened each time anti-immigrant policies are put into place.

The good news is that Journey’s End has remained nimble and committed to meeting the needs of our community. This report will emphasize some of the expanded and new programming we have introduced this past year. We will be highlighting some of the refugee stories that continue to show the fortitude and drive that each of our clients possesses. The following pages will illustrate the optimism we have for the future, despite anticipated challenges.

We know that we are not alone in our optimism. We are thankful every day to work alongside you to ensure our WNY community is the type of community that values diversity in many forms. Your sense of service and what is right bolsters our own, and lifts our spirits as we battle ahead. We thank you and look forward to your continued support in advocating and serving refugees from around the world.

Esther Quartarone, Esq. Board Chair
Journey’s End Refugee Services

Karen M. Andolina Scott, Esq. Executive Director
Journey’s End Refugee Services

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Western New York Refugee Film Festival:
Reel Refugees

When Journey’s End moved into our new offices in 2017, the agency inherited a modern, intimate theater space with state-of-the-art A/V. Given that Journey’s End is known for its innovative programs for refugees, why not do something out of the box to raise funds for the agency’s programs and clients, educate and entertain the community, while also keeping our supporters engaged all year long? Our eyes turned to our new theater and the WNY Refugee Film Festival (WNYRFF), the only festival of its kind in the U.S., was born!

WNYRFF kicked off in September 2018 and included special appearances by the film directors, a free community screening, a special screening at Albright-Knox Art Gallery, and featured award-winning films from Kenya, Lebanon, the U.S., and Finland. A Global VIP reception with lots of delicious food, drink, and interactive entertainment that got the crowd dancing concluded the festival in June 2019!

The second season began in the fall of 2019, and includes Buffalo premieres of acclaimed films from Bulgaria, Kenya, Canada, Turkey, and a Grand Finale in June 2020 that will highlight the stories of Syrian refugees, the world’s largest refugee population.

Our third season promises to be even more exciting, so see you at the movies!

For more information on attending or sponsoring WNYRFF, visit our website: www.wnyrff.org

We can bring WNYRFF to you! Interested in hosting a film at your school, faith community or business, while also supporting our programs? Visit: https://www.wnyrff.org/contact

“I Am Rohingya: A Genocide in Four Acts” will be presented in January 2020 at Shea’s Performing Art Center’s Smith Theatre along with a director-led talkback.

Thanks to our 2019-2020 WNYRFF Sponsors!

Presenting Sponsors:

Sponsors:

SOTERIA IT

Former Journey’s End Executive Director Pat Townsend and her husband Bill joined current Executive Director Karen Andolina Scott at the second annual WNYRFF premiere.
The Making A Connection Program: Achievement in Education

Burhan Bashir was born in Sudan, but he and his family fled to neighboring Egypt when Burhan was just five years old, leaving behind a long-running civil war. “Sudan has always had troubles because of the government, so we didn’t really live there for a long time,” he says.

After graduating from high school in Egypt, Burhan applied to college, but his plans were put on hold when his family took the chance to relocate to the United States. They liked Egypt, but the United States offered the opportunity of permanent resettlement. “We felt like we would have better chances when it came to education and work – and just to have a better life,” he says.

In October 2016, when Burhan was 16 years old, he and his family were resettled in Buffalo with the help of their Journey’s End case manager. Five months later, Burhan enrolled in the Making a Connection (MAC) program at Journey’s End. The MAC program (which has been reenvisioned in 2019 as the RAMP program by the NYS Bureau of Refugee Services) was a full-day educational and employment readiness program designed to address the unique needs of refugee students.

For Burhan, MAC was a means of improving his English and preparing for the high school equivalency exam. “I wanted to learn some more English because, actually, I learned my English from [the rapper] Eminem,” he says with a laugh. “American pop culture – music and movies – are famous over there.”

Burhan graduated from the MAC program in April 2019 and passed the TASC, which made him eligible to attend college in the United States. A Journey’s End partnership with SUNY Erie Pathways to Success helped him transition to the next stage of his education. Now enrolled in General Studies at SUNY Erie, Burhan is realizing his longtime goal of attending college.

It’s a big achievement for Burhan’s family, too. “No one in my family went to college,” he says. “My brother started, but he had to stop because he had responsibilities, and my sister never had a chance to go. When I came here, my mom told me I had to continue to study, and not to think about a job or anything.”

Burhan is exploring his career options, with an eye toward “anything that involves the medical field … pharmacist, doctor, surgeon, dentist,” he says.

He is adjusting well to life in Buffalo and even served as captain of the Journey’s End soccer team for World Refugee Day. When asked what he likes best about living here, Burhan responds as many Buffalonians would: “The summer is good. And the people here are very nice.”

“I never would have passed the TASC exam without the help of my MAC teacher Ian Lapp.”

Burhan Bashir
MAC program graduate and current SUNY Erie student

Ian Lapp
The All New
Refugee Asylee Mentoring Program

In 2019, Journey’s End was awarded funding to establish a Refugee Asylee Mentoring Program (RAMP) by the NYS Bureau of Refugee Services.

RAMP launched in December 2019, and will match participants ages 18-24 with an adult mentor who can offer friendship and guidance in the areas of community integration, academic support, career development, and health and financial literacy.

Mentors and mentees will meet weekly at one of the two weekly facilitated group activities. Programming will take place at the JERS offices on Tuesdays from 12:00-1:00 or at West Side Community Services on Wednesdays from 5:30-6:30. Interpretation will be available.

Program activities will include workshops and seminars on a variety of topics, such as, banking, resume writing, furthering education, career exploration, and mental health, as well as other educational and social activities including sports, arts, and field trips.

Refer a participant!
Do you know an 18 to 24 year old refugee or asylee who might be interested in the program? Please refer them to Program Manager Paige Kelschenbach at pkelschenbach@jersbuffalo.org to coordinate an informational meeting or intake. Interpretation can be provided.

Mentees will receive a one-year family membership to West Side Community Services, which includes access to facilities and their vast array of programming, as well as a free laptop after participating in the program for nine months.

Become a mentor!
We are seeking passionate adult mentors from both within the refugee community and the local professional community.

To become a mentor please fill out an application using this link: http://bit.ly/jersmentor

Want to contribute in another way?
We are seeking organizations to host career exploration field trips to give students a chance to see a broad range of industry sectors and meet the professionals in these fields, or professionals to host informational sessions on a variety of topics, including financial literacy, job preparation, and more.
Have you tried Top Seedz, the energizing roasted seed crackers? You may be surprised to know that Top Seedz employs women from the JERS Employment Program.

Owner Rebecca Brady recently shared a few reasons why she chooses to hire through Journey’s End.

“First of all, I love an international community,” she says. “It keeps things fun.”

For Brady, employing a diverse group of women is not just a way to make life more interesting. It’s also a smart business decision. “It avoids a monoculture of everyone thinking the same way, doing the same thing,” she says. “If we have input from everyone all around the world, we’re going to get the best result.”

Brady, who moved to Buffalo from New Zealand in 2015, understands what it’s like to be new in town. “I also got a good start when I came to Buffalo,” she says. “I was very welcomed, and I love the city, so I want to welcome other people here and show them what a cool place it is to live!”


Combining the Classroom and Employment Prepares Refugees for Manufacturing Jobs

The Gainful Employment Training (GET) Program

Beginning in April 2019, the JERS Education Department partnered with the Diversified Labor Solutions to provide vocational, math, and English language training, along with part-time employment and hands-on training at Diversified Labor Solutions, to unemployed and underemployed immigrant and refugee workers. Students have the option of working in the mornings for DLS, and then participate in classes four days per week in the afternoons in preparation for entry into the manufacturing sector following successful completion of the program.
The Brewster Street Farm will continue to offer nutritious, locally grown produce at low cost to community members and Journey’s End clients through 2022, thanks to the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

During 2019, Brewster Street Farm continued its partnership with Grassroots Gardens of Western New York, which provided materials for eight raised beds in the new Market Garden space. The Market Garden space gave farmers the opportunity to create their own crop plans, plant and maintain the beds, and then harvest and sell produce to local grocery stores and markets.

During the 2019 season, the Brewster Street Farm raised $10,800 from sales of 20 CSA shares, seedlings, and a weekly farm stand in the Tri-Main Center lobby. Program income is used to provide a stipend to participating farmers.

When the farmers were asked why they chose to sign up for the Brewster Street Farm refugee agriculture program, most of them responded with a similar story; they were farmers in their home countries, then in their refugee camps, and now they get to farm in their new country. Many stated they are grateful for the community that has grown at the Brewster Street Farm.

New friends and the vibrant colors from the vegetables and flowers are two reasons Suha Taha continues to work with the program!

Bir Rai has been working on the Brewster Street Farm refugee agriculture program since it began in 2015. Like many of the program participants, Bir Rai was a subsistence farmer in his home country, Bhutan, where he raised goats and cows, and grew rice and vegetables to feed his family. In 1992, Bir Rai fled his village due to ethnic conflict and found himself in a refugee camp in Nepal. During the 22 years that Bir Rai lived in the refugee camp, he managed to find a very small piece of land to grow vegetables on to provide for his family and other families living at the camp. Bir Rai was resettled in Buffalo with his family in 2014 and soon heard of the opportunity to work on the Brewster Street Farm. He knew he wanted to work and share his skills as a farmer, so he applied to be a program participant. In April 2019, Bir Rai was promoted to Agricultural Business Apprentice for the Brewster Street Farm. He has been working diligently all season, and provides great leadership to the rest of the program participants.

Habibullah Mohsin has been a program participant for two seasons, and says he enjoys working on the Brewster Street Farm because he is happy to learn new things and be aware of his health and nutrition.
Church World Services (CWS) is our Voluntary Agency, located in New York City. CWS is the fifth largest national office with 22 affiliates in the US. In 2019, CWS was forced by the federal government to close down some affiliate offices if there were multiple affiliates in one city. An exception was made for a few cities, including Buffalo, to keep multiple agencies operating. This was due to strong collaborative advocacy on the part of the four refugee resettlement agencies in Buffalo.

The Preferred Communities program provides intensive case management services to refugees who need more assistance within and beyond the 90-day resettlement period and required Core Services. The cases have special medical needs, mental health needs, and/or require additional support in daily living tasks.

Program participant and single mother Farishta describes how PC Program Manager Safa Fontain helped her get on her feet after arriving in Buffalo with her young son and daughter as secondary migrants. When she first arrived in Buffalo, a friend brought her to Journey’s End and she was connected with the PC program. Safa and other Journey’s End staff helped Farishta enroll her children in school, find affordable housing when she was on the street and didn’t have a place to live, and even facilitated a Home Again project with the support of Journey’s End volunteers to ensure she had the necessities to support her family. Farishta described how much she loves Journey’s End staff and appreciates all the work that Safa has done for her. Safa says, “The goal of the PC program is to help vulnerable cases. When Farishta came to us from another state as a single mom she didn’t know anything or the community, or how to access any of the services she needed to get on her feet. When we met we started planning what we needed to do to help her out. The good thing about Farishta is that she wanted to change her life, she was willing to learn and achieve the goals that we set for her.”

Journey’s End served 67 clients this year through the PC program.
HOME AGAIN

The Journey’s End Home Again program is many things: our most popular group volunteer project; our special way of giving a newly arriving family a soft landing in their new community; and definitely one of our agency’s creative signature programs that we are known for in the resettlement community.

The concept is simple: a group – church, school, college, business or just a group of committed family and friends – gathers together furniture and household items, and then delivers the items, cleans, and sets up the apartment for a family due to arrive in Buffalo.

The result is priceless: a clean, decorated, fully stocked apartment for a new refugee family!

We interviewed one of our long-time Home Again teams, Kathy and Patrick “Seki” Furlong, who have done multiple Home Agains over the years.

What made you decide to do a Home Again and then do so many more?

Seki: Kathy and I retired at roughly the same time, and were looking for a new activity to keep us engaged.

Kathy: Fortunately, we have a large circle of friends and family. We shared our enthusiasm about helping new refugee families, and have been very fortunate to get people interested in helping. It has always been a positive experience filled with laughter and a sense of accomplishment.

What does it take for you to organize a Home Again & how long does it take?

Seki: We collect furniture and household items from March through October. Additionally, some people donate money to cover items that we couldn’t collect. When we get a date to do a Home Again, Kathy goes into overdrive and organizes all items that are going to a specific home. At the same time, she puts out feelers through phone calls and social media to see who is available to help that particular date. Each time we have completed an apartment, we feel deeply satisfied that a refugee family coming to Buffalo has a fully-furnished home, and that people got together to make that happen.

Most Home Again teams are an organized group, but yours is always just family and friends. How do you recruit them, and do they enjoy their experience?

Kathy: To create a warm, welcoming apartment for a refugee family that has been through so much is the most worthwhile part for Seki and me. The staff at Journey’s End has always been very supportive, and we are thankful for the opportunity to help refugees begin their new life in our great city of Buffalo!

What’s the best part of completing a Home Again, and how would you rate the helpfulness of Journey’s End staff in assisting and communicating with you in this group volunteer project?

To learn more about our Home Again program, email: volunteer@jersbuffalo.org

A heartfelt Journey’s End thanks to all of the 2019 Home Again teams!
JERS Immigration Legal Services Program Expands to Two New Offices through Office for New Americans and the Liberty Defense Project

In its ninth year of operation, the Immigration Legal Services Program continues to offer full-scale immigration legal services before both USCIS and Immigration Court. This year the ILS Program grew substantially. Almost doubling in staff size, the program has solidified its role as the leading immigration legal service provider in Western New York and beyond!

**2018-2019 Program Highlights**

- Assisted 2,740 individuals in immigration matters
- Elimination of program fees
- Increase of program budget by 145%
- Funding for interpreting & translation
- 27 interns, externs & fellows provided 2,452 volunteer hours

**New Offices Established**

- **Western New York** (funded through the Office for New Americans & Liberty Defense Project)
  - JERS & VIVE
    - Director of ILSP
    - Supervising Attorney
    - 4 Attorneys
    - 3 DOJ Reps
    - 4 Legal Assistants
  - Buffalo office serves Erie, Niagara, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, & Allegany Counties

- **Finger Lakes** (funded through the Office for New Americans)
  - Catholic Family Center
    - Attorney
    - Supervising Attorney
    - 1 Legal Assistant
  - Rochester office serves Monroe, Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming Livingston, Ontario, Seneca, Yates, & Wayne Counties

- **Southern Tier** (funded through the Office for New Americans & Liberty Defense Project)
  - American Civic Association
    - 3 Attorneys
    - 1 Legal Assistant
  - Binghamton office serves Broome, Steuben, Schuyler, Chemung, Tompkins, Tioga, Chenango, & Delaware Counties
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NYS Refugee Services
NYS Unified Court System, Office of Court Administration
SUNY Erie
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement

(Donor Data through 10/31/2019)

Special Thanks to Kathy Boyd for her contributions to this Annual Report
If you need help communicating with someone who has limited English proficiency, translating a document into another language, or simply setting up an appointment, we can help. The Interpreting & Translation Department at Journey’s End can help your agency overcome language barriers big and small – from phone or in-person interpretation support, to document translation, provider trainings, and assistance in scheduling an appointment or developing an agency language access plan.

Why work with Journey’s End?
- In-person and phone interpreting support in over 45 languages
- Fast, reliable, personalized, and HIPPA compliant online appointment scheduling
- Affordable one-hour minimum rates for most in-person appointments
- Appointments when you need them - rush, after hours, and weekends available

- Trained interpreters who adhere to strict codes of ethics and confidentiality
- Accurate and accountable document translation for projects big and small
- “Best Practices for Working with an Interpreter” training available for service providers upon request

Demonstrate your commitment to providing excellent and accessible client care. Call Journey’s End today to learn more!

Call (716) 882-4963 ext. 201 or 207 to learn more about our how we can help you, or send an email inquiry to: interpreting@jersbuffalo.org