



Welcome Connect Empower



A Message from our Executive Director



JENNIFER RIZZO-CHOI

For over 100 years, the International Institute of Buffalo has been at the vanguard of serving Western New York's foreign-born population.

As you'll see in this report, we're continuing and expanding that tradition of service.

The past year or so has been transformational for the organization. During the pandemic, we had to be creative about delivering our services while enduring historic cuts from the federal government. Now that it is largely in the review mirror, we've adjusted to the new realities and an increased workload.

Sadly, many in Western New York look past the historic contributions that immigrants and refugees have brought to America and our region specifically, ignoring the fact that unless they are indigenous, their relatives came from another country.

Instead of using the issue of accepting immigrants, refugees, and asylum

seekers as a political football or winking and nodding as our clients are sent to work in the underground economy, it is my daily wish that our political leaders will reform our country's immigration system. Until then, IIB and our colleagues will do our best to treat all we serve well and with dignity. We will also continue educating anyone who listens to the salient issues facing our foreign-born neighbors.

During this upcoming year, IIB will complete its strategic planning process, setting the trajectory for the organization's future. I look forward to reporting the exciting results when that report is complete. Until then, let's continue to work together to make Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees.

Scan for our
Recent News



Our Year in Three Words



WINTER JACKET DONATIONS

NEED

After President Biden took office, he raised the yearly limit of refugee admissions into the United States to 125,000, allowing them to resettle here after being vetted in refugee camps and refugee processing centers worldwide. This was a tremendous increase compared to the historic reductions in refugee admissions by the Trump administration.

However, the backlog, coupled with the influx of people who came to our shores because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, resulted in a perfect storm of need for agencies like the International Institute of Buffalo.

Finding suitable, safe, and affordable housing and providing vital services such as English language and job training so our New American neighbors can quickly and easily become part of our community remain at the top of our agenda.

Compounding the challenge, governors from some Southern states sent busloads of asylum seekers to the Northern cities, including New York City. Some of them made their way to Western New York. As they apply for asylum, we continue to assist with necessary services.

We continue to help foreign-born survivors of domestic violence and those exploited by human trafficking.

GROWTH

We're building our bench to address our current and anticipated needs. The growth in refugee resettlement and the accompanying services require us to grow to meet the demand.

In addition, we've partnered with Child & Family Services (C&FS) to continue a youth anti-trafficking program to guarantee continued services to a vulnerable population who are targets and survivors of labor trafficking.

To work more efficiently, we've partnered with other peer agencies that serve our clients. The Refugee Partnership is the rebranded collaboration's name. Originally called the Western New York Refugee and Asylee Consortium (WNYRAC). The group members work together to improve refugee and immigrant services throughout the region through targeted advocacy work.

As the world opened up post-pandemic, we've grown other parts of IIB to serve the community. Our interpreting and translation teams provided language access services to organizations of all sizes. Schools, hospitals, governments, non-profits, and others all benefit by communicating with their students, customers, and clients in their native languages.

We've hosted an increasing number of international visitors to Western New York as they study various aspects of America's business, educational, government, and cultural sectors to learn best practices for getting things done here.

Just as we provide a conduit for people from around the globe to come here to learn, so too, our mission includes educating our community about the world beyond the US borders. Programs for students, such as the Model United Nations, have grown strongly since the pandemic's end. However, our educational mission extends beyond the schoolyard. We've trained community members in many types of organizations on cultural competency topics so they can better understand the best ways to engage with those born abroad.



IMPACT

Throughout this report, you'll see all we do to serve our community as a cultural, educational, and social service institution.

You may have noticed that we are more proactive in getting the word out. Over the last year, we have gotten out into the community to engage with our neighbors, letting them know what we do and why we do it. You might have seen the International Institute of Buffalo team at the Taste of Buffalo, the Taste of Diversity, the Elmwood Festival of the Arts, or monthly naturalization ceremonies.

Our social media platforms have provided more news and information about everything that is happening in our corner of the region. (If you're not following us on Facebook, X, Instagram, or LinkedIn, this is your invitation to that now!) We are also appearing more in the news media.

You've taken the time to read this report, and we appreciate that! However, please consider forwarding it to a relative, friend, or colleague who might be interested in our mission.

Donor Spotlight



But for a serendipitous Google search, the International Institute of Buffalo might not have been on Tina and Jeff Hassler's radar for charitable giving. They are not sure what made them zero in on IIB, other than there may have been an international event centering on refugees that precipitated it.

However, the Grand Island couple wanted their giving to demonstrate their values and set a good example for their three children while honoring Tina's mom's spirit of generosity. Before her passing, Sue Allsop welcomed strangers into her home with a meal and a place to stay when needed.

"She was a deeply religious person in the best way," says Tina, reflecting on her mother's selflessness and propensity for doing the good and right thing. "People don't have the luxury of knowing her now. All they can know about her is what we do through our actions. Given that Jeff and I are not very religious, it was important to us to make sure we are "tithing" in the way we would if we belonged to a church. We wanted to put that money in the hands of people who can go out into the community and put it to good use."

The Hasslers know the value and work ethic refugees bring to an organization. As President of Starline, a promotional products company, Jeff has seen it firsthand with his employees, many of whom are from other countries, including Myanmar (Burma), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Nepal.

In discussing New American employees, Jeff described some of their struggles but also their strength and determination to rise above adversity. The result is a community that helps and keeps a watchful eye on other New American employees who come to work at the company.

"To have an organization like the International Institute who is also watching out for these people, who are going through hell sometimes to get here and get out of a bad situation in

hopes of the American Dream-- it's really important for everyone to support that type of organization," he adds.

While the immigrant and refugee part of the Institute's mission resonates with them, so does the Institute's decades-long work on behalf of survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence.

"We are very blessed to have resources, and our two daughters will always have a place to turn; everyone's daughters don't have that," says Tina, a partner and investment advisor at Sandhill Investment Management.

The Hasslers' relatives came to America mainly from Germany and Ireland. However, it's clear that they acknowledge the importance of giving back through their charitable donations.

"We all come from somewhere, and it wasn't necessarily an easy road for our ancestors and others to get here," says Tina. "It's an exponentially more difficult road for them to get here now. If someone has a shot at that, shouldn't we give them their best chance of success?"

Client Success Story



Wilson and his family of four came to the US from Colombia with an eager attitude toward employment and work experience in hospitality, yet they were still struggling to find a job with their limited English-speaking level. In the Match Grant program, they were enrolled in English classes (ESL), and their IIB case manager worked hard to search for a good job placement for the client. Ultimately, their case manager found a local restaurant with the perfect job opportunity. The owner spoke Spanish and English, and Wilson was hired.

Quickly, he caught on and even helped the owner to incorporate authentic Colombian dishes onto the

menu, benefitting the establishment that had given him a chance. Eventually, the restaurant owner hired Wilson's eldest daughter part-time for a few hours after school!

After he started working, Wilson had an instant community with other Spanish speakers in the area who understood the transition he and his family were going through. The client worked on his English at the restaurant, developed job skills, and became more accustomed to their community and the US work environment. In just a few months, Wilson saved money, met wonderful people, and found self-sufficiency in the US within a few months to take care of himself, his wife, and two children.

International Exchanges and Education

In FY 2023, our International Exchanges and Education Department continued to build bridges among and within the different cultures in Western New York and around the world to promote understanding and sensitivity for one another.

The International Visitors Program (IVLP) partnered with the U.S. Department of State and Library of Congress to bring groups of current and emerging leaders from countries around the globe to Buffalo for professional and cultural visits. We facilitated connections between these visitors and local professionals to exchange best practices, and also with local community members who welcome these visitors into their homes.

We welcomed 127 professionals on 20 projects focused on the following topics:

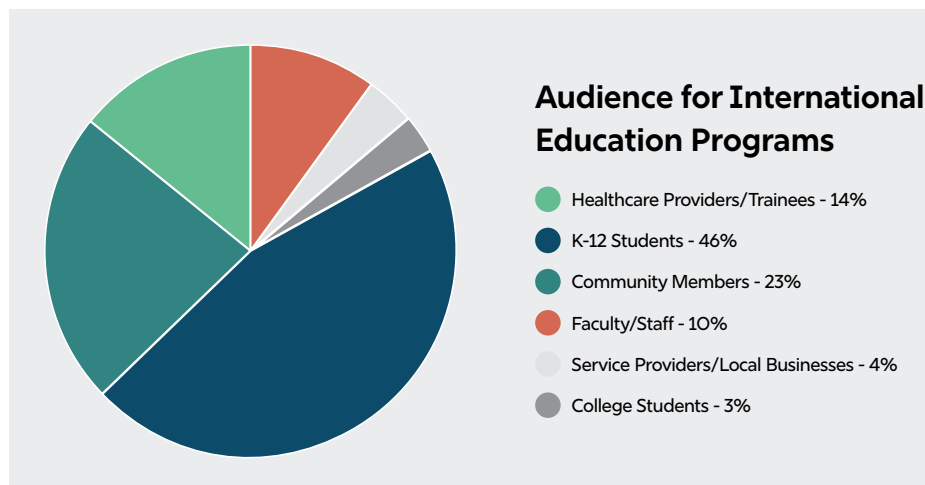
- Human and Minority Rights
- Migration and Integration
- Innovation and Resilience in Energy, Transportation, and Infrastructure
- Museum Collaborations
- Good Governance
- Combating Addiction
- Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development
- Interfaith Dialogue
- Combating Trafficking and Border Security
- Youth Empowerment

We also helped to welcome two other international visitor

projects: In June and July, we created plans for cultural activities during four weekends for 10 Zimbabwean visitors to the University at Buffalo. In September, we planned the visit of a Distinguished Humphrey Fellow from Kyrgyzstan to WNY. He met with local resources to combat human trafficking at the international level.

The Institute's International Educational program created cross-cultural awareness programming to promote sensitivity, understanding, inclusion, and equal access to services.

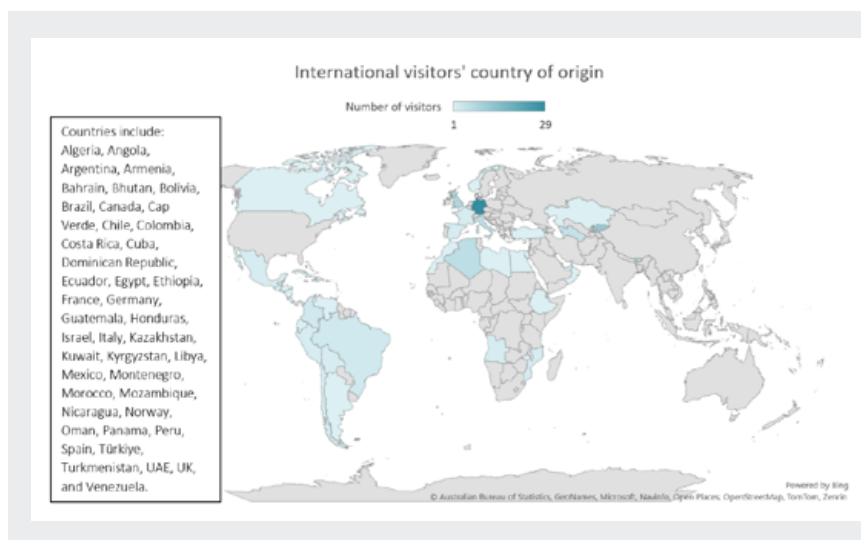
- Our Model United Nations conference brought together 616 regional high school students from 36 schools to practice critical thinking and conflict resolution skills by acting as delegates from 58 countries worldwide. This con-





ference gives students a context to develop their skills and perspectives in becoming globally minded community leaders.

- We offered cultural competency training to educate local students, teachers, community members, service providers, and business professionals on effectively working with the foreign-born population. Our office held 15 sessions with local hospitals, colleges, and social service agencies, of which six were part of a partnership with the Catholic Health system. These training courses served a total of 341 attendees.
- The Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Speaker Series, facilitated in Buffalo by IIB, brought together 21 community members and eight speakers to confer on pressing foreign policy issues, including the following topics: War Crimes, Energy Geopolitics, Politics in Latin America, Global Famine, Iran at a Crossroads, Economic Warfare, China and the U.S., and Climate Migration.
- Our successful Community World Trivia event brought together 14 teams, 26 local businesses, individuals who donated items for prizes,

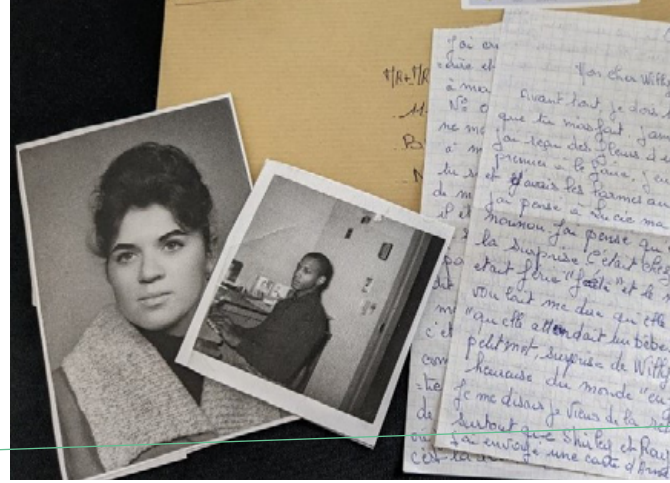


and three event sponsors in an evening of global trivia competition to raise funds to support the above global education programs.

- Our Health Literacy classes provided eight health education sessions on different health topics, focusing on Mental Health and Colorectal Cancer, for 155 attendees, all recently arrived refugees and immigrants.

In the context of both International Exchanges and International Education activities, we formed new partnerships with local companies and businesses, K-12 and higher education institutions, and public offices to expand our ability to promote intercultural and international relationships.

Interpreting & Translation



Language access continues to open opportunities for non-English speaking people in our community, searching for opportunities to provide for their families and contributing to the area in many ways.

During our fiscal year, November 1, 2022, through October 31, 2023, the Interpreting and Translation team exceeded expectations by providing language access to the community and adding dedicated staff to meet the demand. Community leaders, employers, educators, local attractions, and all types of industry continue to increase their reach and visibility through onsite interpreters, on-demand calls/video, and written communications to and for non-English speaking people in the area.

INTERPRETING

The Interpreting team provided 18,291 interpreting services in 47 different language groups. The most requested languages were Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Dari, Pashto, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Rohingya, Spanish, and Swahili.

The Interpreting team continues to offer onsite interpreting as well as on-demand phone and audio/video remote services in over 85 different languages. These invaluable services provide comprehensive language access to limited English speakers in WNY and beyond.

TRANSLATION

The Translation team completed 1,131 individual projects during our fiscal year, marking the largest number of requests for a twelve-month period/year. Many of these projects were translated into Buffalo's top ten languages for the area's richly diverse schools, government agencies, tourist attractions, and local employers throughout Western New York. Individual projects included but were not limited to personal documents and human resource documents such as employee onboarding materials, legal documents, and genealogy research.

The Interpreting & Translation department continuously recruits and trains top linguists in the community to provide services for medical, educational, legal, and governmental organizations, plus a wide variety of other places for non-English speaking people in the community. By sourcing talented local interpreters and translators, we can better provide first-rate language access and keep local dollars in the community. Our training team continues to offer in-person and video training for all linguists looking to improve their skills.

We continue to educate and advocate for more and better language access in the community. Simply put, we want to ensure that community members who cannot fluently read, write, or understand English have better access to vital information.

New American Integration

Every year, the International Institute of Buffalo works with the US Department of State to resettle people who fled their home countries for safety in other countries or in refugee camps. Some have spent over a decade in the camps, and others were born there. After they were vetted and had complete background checks, they came to Buffalo to start their American dream.

During FY 2022-2023, IIB resettled 167 adults and 159 children for a total of 326 individuals.

Clients came from 22 different countries, and the Top 5 made up 71% of arrivals and were from:

- Democratic Republic of the Congo (26%)
- Myanmar (17%)
- Colombia (12%)
- Afghanistan (9%)
- Turkey (8%)

After we welcome them at the airport, we help them establish themselves in the community, including settling them into apartments, taking them to the doctor, teaching them about the transit system, etc. That included enrolling 116 kids in school.

After that, our employment team works to prepare working-age clients



ready to get a job in the American workplace. Our pre-employment training is called Job Club, and over the last fiscal year, we had 180 participants, with 170 of them graduating. So far, 140 New Americans have been hired into their first jobs in America. That's an 82% placement rate!

Some of the employers include:

- New York State Restaurant Association
- Amrex Trucking
- Sewing Technologies
- Roswell Park Comprehensive Care Center
- Harmac Medical Products
- Buffalo Wire Works
- Tesla
- Amazon

Survivor Support



In FY 2023, we served 541 survivors of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking with the overall goal of increasing safety, stabilization, and independence. The diverse needs of survivors since the inception of our Human Trafficking Survivor Support Program have been significant.

We provided services to survivors presenting with serious medical needs, mental health needs, and substance use issues, as well as those requesting support regarding their housing, entitlements, employment readiness, dental, preventive care, sexual orientation, religious preference, cultural needs, and developmental/educational disability.

The people we helped were from many countries, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China,

Cuba, Ethiopia, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Laos, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Tibet.

Highlights of 2023:

- Established a dedicated intake and after-hours phone lines
- Hired eight new staff, including contracting with an immigration lawyer to provide counsel and training
- Completed the process of transferring 121 youth victims of trafficking to Child & Family Services through a subcontract agreement
- Streamlined our procurement process
- Added two NGOs to the Western District Task Force Services Committee

Volunteers and Community Engagement

A big Thank You to the 156 volunteers and interns who helped us achieve our mission! We appreciate their sweat equity in making Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees!

They helped our resettlement team set up 77 apartments, turning housing into homes for newly arrived families.

The HELLO program is our in-home English tutoring course that pairs volunteers with homebound clients, usually the elderly or mothers with small children. We had 28 great volunteers help people from Afghanistan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Syria, and Yemen.

Donations help our New American families stretch their budgets and transform their living spaces. In fact, 77 percent of the household goods we supply come from community donations. Thanks to the many individuals, businesses, church groups, and other organizations that help us meet their immediate needs of winter coats, backpacks with school supplies, toiletries, kitchen gear, and household items. The organizations include,

- Academy for Human Rights
- Breadhive Bakery
- Buffalo and Erie County Board of Block Clubs



- Buffalo Philharmonic Volunteer Chorus
- Colvin Cleaners
- FC Buffalo
- Fidelis Care
- Fig Tree Patisserie
- Lord of Life Lutheran Church
- Marrano
- North Presbyterian Church
- One Warm Coat
- Parkside Lutheran Church
- St. Mary's of Swormville
- Talking Leaves Bookstore
- Unitarian Universalist Church
- Wheels for Workers

Our Gifts for Good Neighbors program invites donors to sponsor one of our families, including refugees and survivors from many countries, to purchase gifts from their wish lists. This year was a rousing success to the tune of \$19,664.43 in gifts and gift cards for 144 of our clients.

Recent Events



COMMUNITY
WORLD TRIVIA





WE STAND FOR PEACE



Karina Krantz, a former refugee from Ukraine resettled by the International Institute of Buffalo in 1995, felt moved by the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and other places worldwide. So Krantz, owner of Filled with Love Buffalo, partnered with other local small businesses for “We Stand For Peace,” a fundraiser to benefit the International Institute of Buffalo and its services for Buffalo’s diverse refugee population.



THOM TRAN



Comedian and actor Thom Tran, a refugee from Vietnam, grew up in Buffalo. He served in the US Army and was wounded in combat during the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Tran used comedy to combat his PTSD, propelling him to create his *GIs of Comedy* tour, appearances in major motion pictures (*My Dead Friend Zoe* with Morgan Freeman), television shows (*Bosch: Legacy*, *United States of AI*), and video games (*Call of Duty: Black Ops*). Tran shared his life through serious and not-so-serious stories at an International Institute of Buffalo fundraiser called *From Refugee to Comedy: An Evening with Thom Tran*.

Annual Fund Donor Acknowledgment



FRIEND - \$100-249.99

Anonymous
Bennett, Sean
Bloch-Rodwin, Lisa
Brady, Brendan
Brighton, Mark
Brodfuehrer, Sean
Brooks, JoAnne
Brooks, Todd
Bunker, Barbara
Buscaglia, William
Campbell, Charles
Carey, Christine
Carrington, Patricia
Chvala, Molly
Coder, Caitlin
Croglia, Adam
D'Addario, Louise
DeMarsh, Timothy
Diallo, Amina
Embow, Robert

Falletta, Sandra
Feigin, Michael
Frizlen, Karl
Frontstream
Gerber, David
Gertz, George
Gondree, Howard F. and
Lillian L.
Grace, Lee Ann
Gurtowski, Stephen
Hengerer, Ann
Hyatt, Lindsay
Jones, Mary
Keegan, Isabella
Keil, Karen
Kennedy, James
Kester, Daniel
Ketchum, Mary Jo
Killeen, Allison
Koch, Faith

Kolken, Robert
Kozlowski, Geraldine
Kushin, Robert
Lawrence, Grace
Le Fauve, Kathleen
Luczkiewicz, Debra
Mangan, Laura
Mathews, Karen
McCleary, Mary
Nenni, Linda
Neumeister, Maura
Neumeister, Michael
Newell, Karl
Nobel, Sanford
Oberlin, James
Pauly, Elaine
Pizzutelli, Niki
Puglisi, Cynthia
Puust, Siiri
Roberts, Mary

Rowan, Maria
Ryan, Eileen
Schneekloth, Lynda
Schwab, Jennifer
Sherry, Constance
Simon, Susan
Sowinski, Joseph
Spina, Joseph
Stevens, Phil
Stutz, Nathan
Titran, Laurie
Usen, Joshua
Vagnucci, Traci
Venuto, Ann
Viksjo, Sarah
Whalen, Allison
Wilk, Linda
Wisbaum, Janet
Witczak, Virginia
Yurko, Pamela

PARTNER - \$250-499.99

Anonymous
Bojdak, Robert
Dorritie, Megan
ElNasser, Omar
Fell, Jessica
Foster, Howard and Laurie

Gioia, Horace
Gruen, Joan
Hasan, Aliah
Horn, John
Hurley, John

King, Harry
LaFalce, John
McClatchey, David
Morris-Chatta, Rebecca
Odrzywolski, Dawn

Painter, Susan
Priebe, Susan
Priest, Joseph
Simon, Peter
Stern, Cheryl



It Takes a Community

The International Institute of Buffalo counts on the generosity of others to help support our clients. If you are interested in assisting us on our mission and making a lasting impact on the community, please consider donating!

ALLY - \$500-999.99

Anonymous
Andrews, Molly
Beich, Susan
Connolly, Ryan

Dewald, Jonathan
Grassi, Marcelle
Hyde, Alison
Loesch, Margaret

McGuire, Nora
Miller, Cristanne
Regan, William
Savino, Elizabeth

Sherpa, Sherku
Walsh, John III

ADVOCATE - \$1,000-2,499.99

Anonymous
Arora, Erzsebet
Babaria, Umesh

Hyde, Thomas
O'Brien, Michael
Peck, Katherine

Polchlopek, Kenneth
Rizzo-Choi, Jennifer
Romagnuolo, Matthew

Sela, Rotem
Stockton, Richard
Theal, Daniel

LUMINARY - \$2,500+

Adema, Andrea
Hassler, Kristyna

Johnstone, D. Bruce
Pinto, Priya

Schneider, Katie

BUSINESSES/ORGANIZATIONS

Above Board
Alden Presbyterian
Church
All the Embellishments
Alpha-Lit
Amherst Quilters Guild
APA Solutions
Barclay Damon
Becker Law
BreadHive Worker
Cooperative
Buffalo Gal
Buffalo Kitchen Club
Buffalo Niagara
Heritage Village
Crazy Beats Sound
Crowley Webb
Daxl Boutique

Dedrick Family Founda-
tion
Dolce Panepinto
East Aurora High School
Espesyal Designs
Filled with Love Buffalo
Forbes Capretto Homes
Fortunes America
Properties LLC
Freed Maxick
Gallagher
GEICO Philanthropic
Foundation
Hilbert College
Rotaract Club
Hodgson Russ
HusVar Real Estate
Independent Health

J. Nicole Designs
Joseph and Kathleen
Curatolo Foundation
Josephine Goodyear
Foundation Fund
KeyBank Foundation
lloyd Taco Factory
Lumsden &
McCormick, LLP
Mayas Makings
Murak & Associates, LLC
My Balanced Style
National Fuel Gas Foun-
dation
Northtown Automotive
Companies
Planned Futures Financial
Group, LLC
Rinart By Nature

Sik Braids
Sisters of St. Mary of
Namur
Soho
Sound Wave DJ & Photo
St Paul's Evangelical
Lutheran Church
The M&T Charitable
Foundation
The Mothers' Club of
Buffalo
The Noble Family
Charitable Foundation
unLMTD Team: Envision
Real Estate
Vogt Family Foundation
Walsh Duffield
Companies, Inc.
Zemsky Family
Foundation

2022-2023 Board of Directors

OFFICERS

Matthew Romagnuolo
Chair
Kevin Gentry
Vice Chair
Umesh Babaria
Treasurer

Dawn Odrzywolski
Secretary
Katie Schneider
Immediate Past Chair

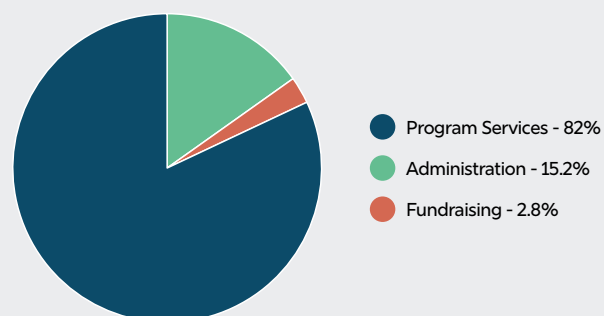
DIRECTORS

Luisa D. Bostick
Larry Christ
Molly Chvala
Adam Croglia
Amina Diallo

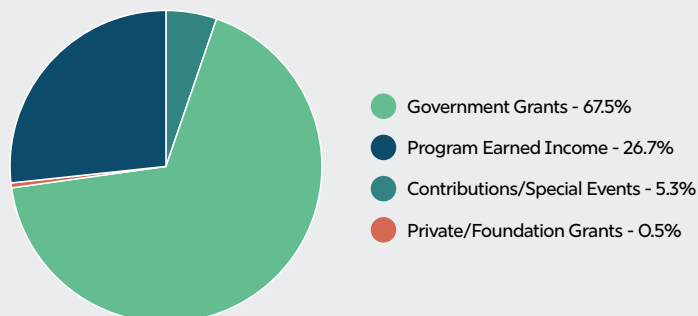
Omar ElNasser
Jim Kennedy
Mohammed Osman
Dan Theal

Financial Report

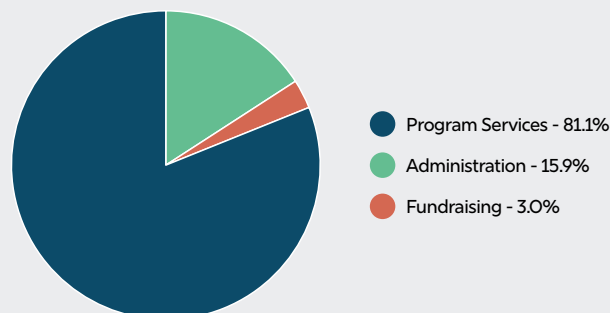
FY 2022 Expenses - \$6,372,349



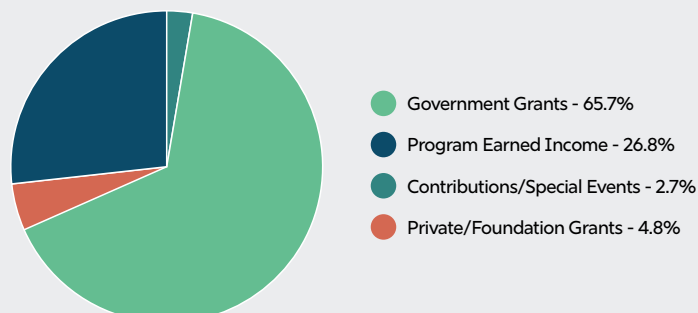
FY 2022 Revenue - \$6,546,657



FY 2023 Expenses* - \$6,372,349



FY 2023 Revenue* - \$6,908,619



* Preliminary data. FY 2023 Audit has not concluded



What it's like to work at the International Institute of Buffalo

I like working at the International Institute of Buffalo because the work we do is so rewarding, and that's priceless. I know that when I come to work, I can make a difference; I am able to help others while continuing to learn new things every day. When I come to work, I feel like I am in my second home.

- MAY SHOGAN

Working at the International Institute of Buffalo is important to me because it gives me the opportunity to make a difference in other people's lives which gives me purpose and enriches my soul. As the daughter of Polish immigrants, the ability to give back to the community and help others make a new life for themselves in this country is extremely rewarding.

- JULIA DUTKA

When I was a small child, my parents completely normalized my sense of being a world citizen rather than just a U.S. citizen. They did this by bringing me and my siblings to events that celebrated different cultures and people, and by inviting people from all over the world to our house. Working at the International Institute of Buffalo is important to me because now I'm able to continue the work my parents started, in bringing the world to Buffalo and Buffalo to the world.

- SUZANNE THEPAUT-HASSELBACK

I enjoy working at the International Institute of Buffalo because I have the opportunity to serve clients from all over the world. Hearing about their lives and different cultures while assisting them with their paths to US citizenship has been life-changing.

- MARY COSGROVE MORAN, ESQ.