



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Riverview Community,

In early 2021, I attended a Kiwanis Club meeting at the downtown Columbus Athletic Club. I was late because I parked in a lot that was too far away, missed the actual entrance, and wandered around the building until I found the room. I slinked into the meeting feeling embarrassed, stressed and naive. Today, I'm even more humbled to realize my feelings that day were strikingly petty, compared to the overwhelming experience of disorientation our New American neighbors confront when they arrive in Columbus.

We meet our neighbors where they are: stressed with life changes and missing home, sometimes embarrassed about asking so many questions, while simultaneously full of hope and great expectations. In 2020-21, we assisted with pandemic needs and calmed fears. In late 2021, we adjusted to meet the needs of a large number of new Afghan refugees on Riverview, coordinating with a large number of volunteers who were ready and waiting to help.

2021 was the year where the RIC tipped the scales of neighbor need versus capacity to deliver. The need for a full-time Executive Director became evident and our current staff, including founder, Kirsta Benedetti, did not want to take on this full-time role. I stepped in, as interim, for the purpose of preparing the infrastructure to support our next leader.

It seemed impossible to add more work to all of our plates, but the impossible took shape in volunteers like Mary, who was the only ESL teacher to teach in person during the pandemic. It happened when United Way gave enough funding to hire Hamida to lead our Community Care program. This program enabled our office hours to increase more than 50%, and allowed us to receive even more OSU interns and volunteer help. The impossible happened when Heather volunteered to start a preschool class that included isolated mothers who didn't have transportation to get their little ones to school. It happened when Neighborhood Services and Heart to Heart stepped up to provide food choices that matched our neighbor's preferences, and when Chemical Abstract Services sponsored an employee-driven campaign to provide "New Shoes for New Americans." The impossible happened when ongoing and first-time donors, grantors, and business owners gave enough money to hire an executive director in 2022 and increase the pay of current staff. These are just a few of the stories of creative selflessness and giving that we witnessed and received in 2021.

Thank you for contributing to the empowerment of New Americans in Columbus and Riverview. Kirsta's original vision of kindness and welcome continues to foster real relationships, now with nearly 1000 individuals! We enter 2022 prepared and ready to find our next leader, to usher in a new phase of service and growth.

Kindly,



Diane Linton



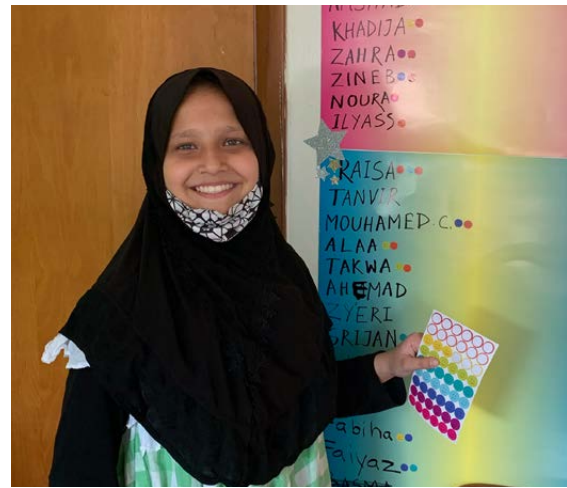
Diane Linton
Interim Executive Director



Kirsta Benedetti, RIC founder, and Hamida Ouali, current RIC staff member, meet together in early 2019 when Hamida had just arrived from Algeria.

The Riverview International Center empowers our New American neighbors by supporting individuals, strengthening families, and nurturing community.

Our vision is that all New Americans in our city are welcomed and empowered to thrive in the United States.





SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS

At the RIC, we support individuals not only by assisting our neighbors on Riverview, but also helping our businesses. In December, a manager named Fehd, reached out to the RIC to say he needed to hire a large number of staff because he was opening a new restaurant in Columbus called Roots Natural Kitchen, based in Charlottesville, VA. Fehd had emigrated here from Algeria some years ago and remembered how hard it was to get started. Now, he wanted to hire other New Americans to staff his restaurant. Roots was ideal because it was located only a short bus ride away! We advertised on Facebook, distributed flyers, and helped our newly arrived neighbors apply for jobs. Soon Fehd had hired 5 of our Afghan and Algerian neighbors. One of our Afghan neighbors, Fawad, tells us how he loves recommending his favorite foods to the customers. Note: By March 2022, Fawad was promoted to manager and is now doing the hiring!

The RIC is proud to connect individuals together to fill employment needs that benefit all.

“We are extremely grateful for Fawad’s energy and interpreting services to help with the rest of the team members that do not possess the same language abilities yet”. - Fehd Massen, manager Roots Natural Kitchen



STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

This year, Hamida joined the RIC team as our Community Care Advocate. Her work centers on supporting the families in Riverview from all angles. When Abderahim, his wife, and their two children recently arrived from Algeria, Hamida provided them with some donations to furnish their new apartment, made an appointment for Abderahim to apply for a social security number, and enrolled the eldest child in school. She applied for Medicaid and SNAP benefits for both of the kids, and showed Abderahim how to set up all of his household utilities. Just last week, he popped into the office to show her the car that he was able to purchase after she helped him sign up for driving classes. Whenever Abderahim has a challenge or a win, he turns to Hamida for the support she so skillfully provides.



NURTURING COMMUNITY

In December alone, more than 63 Afghan people joined the Riverview community, and our neighbors have gone the extra mile to welcome them. Tania, a friend who emigrated to Columbus three years ago, noticed a new family had moved into the apartment across from her. She knocked on the neighbor’s door to say hello and noticed she did not recognize the usual languages heard on the street.

After a few days, she convinced this new Afghan family to walk with her to the RIC, who in turn, was able to enroll their 4 children in school, connect the family to needed clothing, and begin the job search process. About one month later, Emelia, RIC Program Director, called on Tania again to help another one of her Afghan neighbors use a newly donated sewing machine. They went to the apartment to teach the woman, step by step, how to use the machine.


Having become an accomplished seamstress through classes from Riverview Sewing group, Tania was again paying it forward. Tania returned a few days later, bringing fabric and other materials, so that her neighbor could begin making clothes. The RIC works to bring diverse people together, and it’s friendly neighbors like Tania who make our supportive community possible!

A photograph showing a group of people, including children and adults, gathered around a table outdoors. They appear to be receiving or preparing food. The scene is overlaid with an orange tint.

8,113
OFFICE
VISITS

A photograph of several people, some wearing masks, working together at a table. They seem to be organizing or packing items. The image has a blue tint.

3,700
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

A photograph of the open trunk of a car filled with numerous food boxes wrapped in plastic. The image is tinted blue.

498
FOOD BOXES
DISTRIBUTED

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of several people sitting on a bench or chairs. The image is tinted dark blue.

626
JOB HELP &
COMPUTER
APPOINTMENTS

A close-up photograph of a smiling woman holding a young child. The image is tinted orange.

630
INDIVIDUALS
EMPOWERED

A photograph of a large stack of books and educational materials, including coloring pads and worksheets, arranged on a table. The image is tinted dark blue.

996
SUMMER READING &
HOMEWORK HELP

A photograph of a pair of hands holding a folded blanket or piece of fabric. The image is tinted blue.

110 VOLUNTEERS

A photograph of a person wearing a dark t-shirt with a logo that says "ROOTS". The image is tinted orange.

82 JOBS SECURED

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Rasoul Law Office

North Community Counseling Center

The Godman Guild

Neighborhood Services Inc

United Way of Central Ohio

The Ohio State University

Legal Aid Society of Columbus

Value Life Ministry of Vineyard Columbus

CoHatch

Advocating Opportunities

Columbus City Schools

Here & There Around OSU

The Columbus Foundation

Columbus Diaper Bank

Northwest Christian Church

Overbrook Presbyterian Church

FRINGE22 Design

Ohio Progress Asian Women's Leadership

BioStat Global Consulting

Heart to Heart Food Pantry

The Period Pantry

CAS, A division of the American Chemical Society

First Drive Logistics

STAFF



Kirsta Benedetti

Executive Director (JAN. - MAR.)



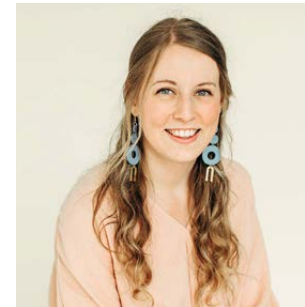
Diane Linton

Interim Executive Director
(APR. - DEC.), Director of
Philanthropic Engagement



Emelia Sheeley

Director of Programs



Emily (Em) Miller

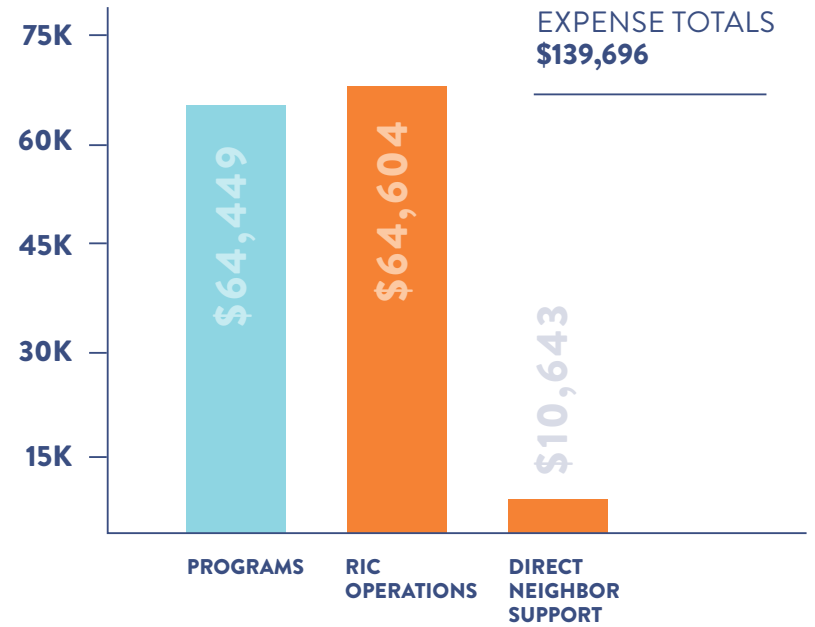
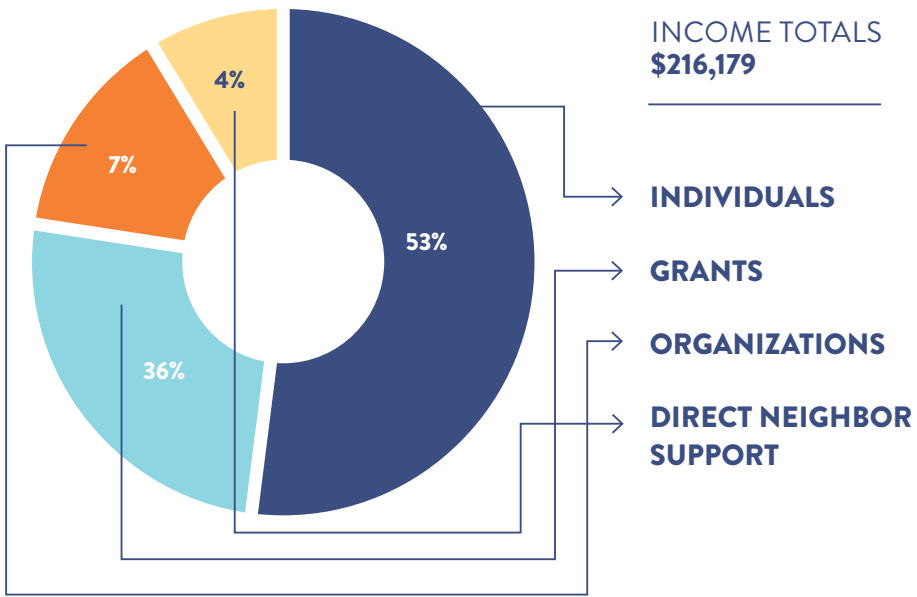
Career Specialist



Hamida Ouali

Community Care Advocate

FINANCIALS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Laura McDonald, Esq, President
Volunteer

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Attorney, Rasoul Law Office

Kalkidan Tefera, Secretary
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Design & Creative Strategy Studio

Amir Hassounaahuseini
Researcher, The Ohio State University
College of Dentistry

Andrea Jacobs
Senior Manager, Product Management, CAS, a division of the
American Chemical Society

Andrew Oswald
Licensed Insurance Advisor, Heritage Insurance Advisors
Pastoral Counselor and Coach, Living Leadership

Cori Page, IMFT
Owner & Therapist, Restoration Therapy of Columbus



Riverview
INTERNATIONAL CENTER

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DESIGNED BY
**FRINGE
TWENTY
TWO**