



WELCOME HOME

JERSEY CITY



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

WELCOMING REFUGEES TO JERSEY CITY SINCE 2016





WELCOME HOME
JERSEY CITY

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



Dear Friends,

A year ago as I prepared the introduction to our 2024 Annual Report a few days after the election, I recalled that Welcome Home had been established in the aftermath of the 2016 election as concerned Jersey City residents came together to help immigrants when government programs were cut and resettlement agencies were hollowed out. I wrote “More draconian measures may be coming.”

But honestly, I never imagined the chaos, uncertainty and hate that the second Trump administration would unleash against immigrants when it took office on January 20, 2025. The broad and deep effort to criminalize immigrants in the U.S., summarily revoke their legal status, dismantle the operations put in place to assist them, and make every effort to deport them with little regard for the rule of law all makes for very dark times. And now with the Supreme Court restricting the authority of federal district judges to issue injunctions, it’s even darker and foreboding.

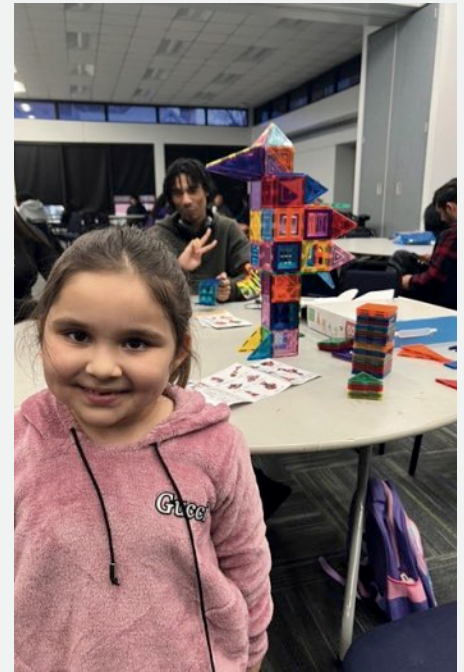
The Trump administration wants us to believe that refugees are threats to security and identity. This nativist narrative was one of the false arguments for the executive order suspending the Refugee Admissions Program, a legal pathway for resettlement established by the federal government in 1980. But those resettled in the U.S. have completed rigorous vetting overseas focused on ensuring national security. It includes biographic and biometric checks against FBI, Homeland Security and Department of Defense databases, in-person interviews by officers of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agency, and extensive medical evaluations – a process that can last years before a refugee is approved for resettlement.



Another narrative is that refugees who are resettling are just helpless victims whose need for care will exhaust resources needed by “real” Americans. It is certainly true that much of what Welcome Home tries to do is provide care. Sadly, this view is used against resettlement when there are claims – as the Trump administration has made – that resettlement compromises the availability of resources for Americans, despite a government study he commissioned in his first term which revealed that refugees had a significant net positive effect on the economy, contributing billions more in revenue than they consumed in public services.

In an interview with NJ Spotlight News and in an op-ed published by Jersey Journal and NJ.com, I said the suspension of the refugee program had nothing to do with national security. It had nothing to do with public safety. It had nothing to do with capacity. It was simply hate.

At Welcome Home, we’re reframing the narrative and writing a new script. We believe that those who are resettling are our new neighbors and contributors to community life. Their successful integration is a shared civic and moral responsibility. Indeed, we are inspired by our friends’ journeys and efforts, their dignity, their hope for a better future, and their resilience. With this in mind, we foster successful resettlement in many ways, described in detail in this report.



We emphasize capability-centered support services, building on the strengths and resources that our friends already have, addressing core domains of integration such as employment, education and health while supporting foundational competencies like language and cultural literacy.

We provide help with employment which reflects our commitment to dignified, stable jobs as a foundation for successful resettlement and as a counter to the narrative of refugees as passive recipients of aid or burdens. We also help our friends with school choice and the college application process.

We affirm the importance of social bonds. We promote cultural celebrations like World Refugee Day potluck dinners where food, music and dance build bridges between communities. We facilitate artistic expression. We arrange leisure activities like Red Bulls games, ice skating and kayak trips, Princeton campus visits, and summer arts camps that affirm belonging and normalize immigrant presence. These create narratives of integration as collective joy, not just individual adaptation.

We provide material support through donations, drives and deliveries of items that our friends need for daily living.

“AT WELCOME HOME, WE’RE REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE AND WRITING A NEW SCRIPT”



We practice advocacy: helping our friends sort out problems with benefits to which they are entitled, submitting recommendations to the Jersey City Division of Community Development regarding the needs of resettled refugees, helping our friends apply for wait lists for public housing, and collaborating with First Friends of NJ & NY so that our friends know their rights.

We use the local, sustainable resources of the community to support resettlement as a shared responsibility. Our partnership with Saint Peter’s University, which provides facilities, faculty guidance, and student volunteers in alignment with the university’s Jesuit values, illustrates this. When Fun Club meets, Dinneen Hall becomes a community center and hub for cultural exchange, practical support and civic participation. Resettlement also becomes a community undertaking through the extensive network of local schools, businesses and community groups that offer donations of goods, services, time, talent and money throughout the year to help us in our work.

Resettlement is not a strain on American capacity, but rather a reflection of how American values imagine inclusion, respond to trauma, and cultivate public solidarity. That is the narrative we proudly proclaim and strive to achieve through the many activities described in this Annual Report.

We aspire to make Welcome Home a powerful example of a holistic, refugee-centered, community-supported model of resettlement in a multicultural, immigrant-rich city. Please join us in our efforts.

Dave Mammen, Chair
November 2025



WELCOME HOME: A SNAPSHOT

As of October 2025 we are helping 69 households with 2 or more family members and 20 single persons for a total of 349 persons – more than half of whom are children. There has been some churn as some refugees from South America and other regions have moved into Jersey City and a slightly larger number of Afghans (3 families and 2 single adults) have moved out to lower-cost areas. We provide families considering a move with a checklist of things to consider, as the grass is not automatically greener. As a gesture of farewell, families who do ‘out-migrate’ each receive a \$100 gift card with our best wishes for their success.



WELCOME AND BELONGING

When refugees resettle, they arrive with perceptions and expectations rooted not only in their experience of displacement and loss, but also in their culture and history. Our welcome acknowledges their lived experience with respect, so that newcomers can be themselves as they begin to integrate into their new community.

During the summer, we had various activities at Fun Club to invite our friends to share about their experience coming to the U.S. and resettling in Jersey City.

I WISH PEOPLE KNEW THIS ABOUT MY COUNTRY

- Our food
- My home
- My language

WHAT HELPED YOU FEEL AT HOME IN JERSEY CITY?

- My daycare
- My home
- The help of government
- The people are nice
- Playing with friends
- Slushies

MY FAVORITE THING ABOUT JERSEY CITY IS:

- My mom
- Neighbors
- The weather
- Shopping
- How we're close to New York City



PIVOTING TO MEET UNCERTAINTY AND NEW NEEDS

In late February our Board Chair Dave Mammen was invited to submit an op-ed to NJ Spotlight News about how community groups were pivoting to help refugees in light of Trump's executive orders.

Welcome Home has been a case in point. We held our first "Know Your Rights" workshops at the first Fun Club that followed the election last November. There, staff from Welcome Home and First Friends explained what our friends should do if ICE enforcement agents appear at their home, school or work and discussed other related matters. It was also a time and space when our friends could share their worries, concerns and questions about what was happening. These discussions were held in Spanish, Dari/Pashto and English, in-person and online. We also participated in an Immigration Resource Fair convened by a local network called the Jersey City Mutual Aid Society, held on December 8.

We assisted those who needed to renew their authorization to work. We also participated in a state-wide effort to help new immigrants apply for work authorization, by providing outreach so that those eligible knew about clinics where they could receive assistance.

We have continued to stay up-to-date about any changes that can possibly affect our friends or their loved ones, such as the travel ban. When available, we are making sure to provide our friends with language-accessible materials to raise awareness.



WELCOME AND BELONGING

Local residents also have their own perceptions and expectations about refugee resettlement which they bring to their volunteer work with Welcome Home. Collectively, these frame how we as a community see refugees and what it means to try to foster a sense of welcome and belonging.



Connor Boyd

“When I think of refugees in Jersey City, unfortunately my first thought is how tough it must be! It’s so expensive here. It must be so hard to think longer term when there are so many hurdles for living day-to-day. But I think Jersey City has a lot to offer to refugees who are resettling. The local population is active, engaged, educated, affluent and progressive. We benefit from having everything a large city has, at a more manageable scale.

At Fun Club, I usually just float around helping where I can but am always prepared to lead an ad hoc mini activity due to the number of kids and their various attention spans. One week might have calm "Toddler group" chaos and the next wild "Youth club" vibes, but usually a fun mix of the two. Personally I get a lot of it. I come from a large boisterous family, my Mum is a 'Registered Childminder' in Belfast where she essentially runs a small day care out of the family home so for 2 hours a week I get to return to that madness. I've also developed some strong friendships with the other volunteers too.

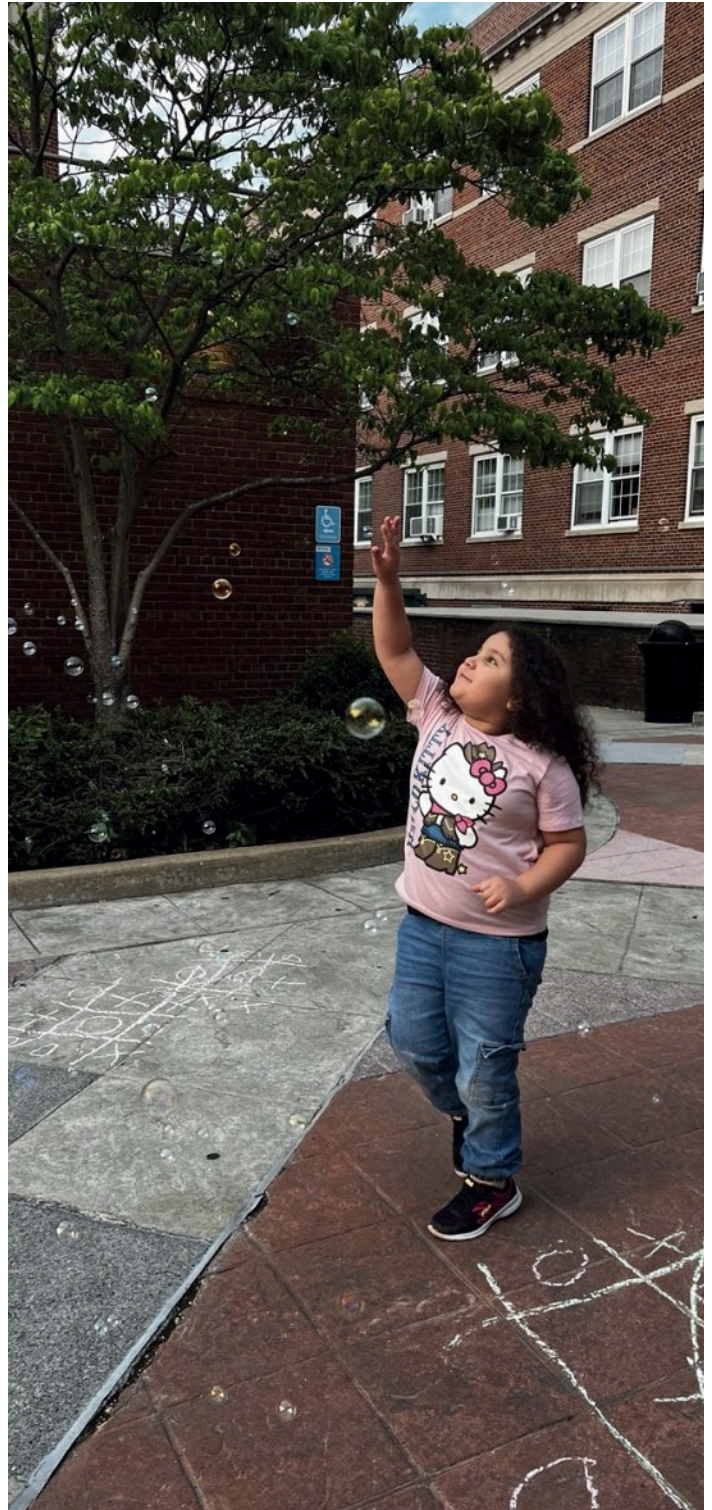
I know job, house, kids in education, a car if needed are of primary importance but I think having and enjoying leisure time is a particularly good indicator of success. I especially love hearing about the parents getting to do something typically American. Kids have clearer markers as they integrate into school life and schedules, get onto sports teams, etc. but I was impressed when I recently heard one of the mothers got a gym membership and was getting to take some time for herself.”

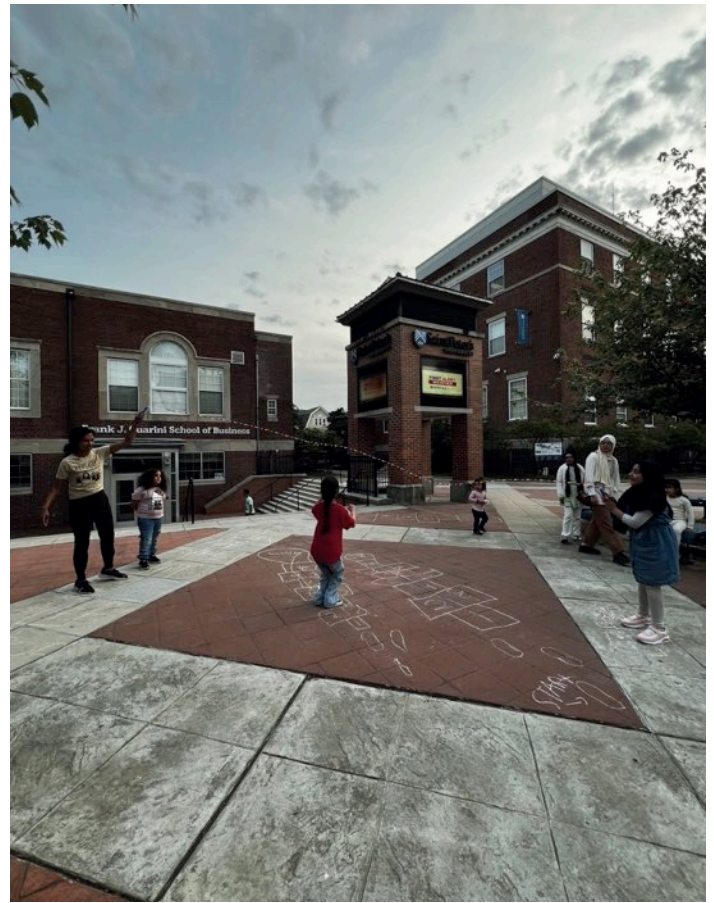
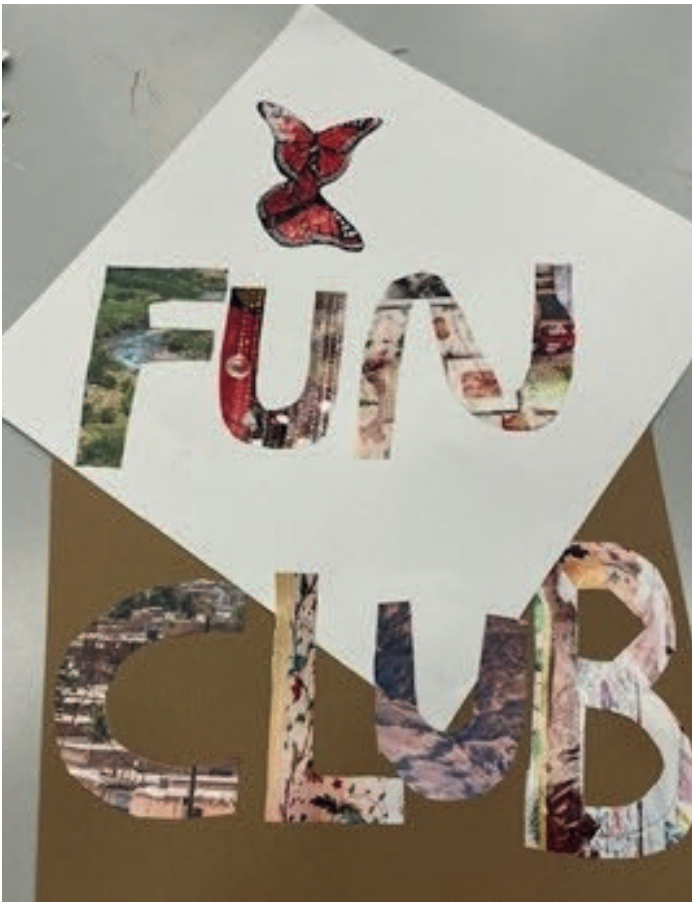


FUN CLUB

Much of Welcome Home's programming takes place at our Fun Club, held weekly on Monday evenings. Throughout the past 12 months we continued to hold Fun Club in Dinneen Hall on the campus of Saint Peter's University. The university generously provides a large room and break-out spaces at no cost; a faculty member attends each week and students also help out. Staff and volunteers (including board members) provide:

- Homework Help
- Adult Conversational ESL Practice and Tutoring
- Side discussions where we help our friends with various matters such as employment, school issues, benefits enrollment, etc.
- Games and crafts for children
- Pizza dinner
- Transportation for those who need it





“It's Fun Club and you see it's made up from different pictures. It means that in Fun Club we have different activities. They make fun times for us. It shows nature, because here in Fun Club we get a fresh feeling. It shows a butterfly, because Fun Club helps us feel light and sometimes we think we can fly with the help of Fun Club. Here you see art, because we make art at Fun Club. And sometimes we remember our mother country. Yeah, because Fun Club sometimes helps us remember and save our past and our culture. Here it's mountains in my country and the city.”

Zakia Naseri at Fun Club,
July 14, 2025



Fun Club is often a venue for a special workshop or discussion for adults. This past year these included the following.



Before the start of the new school year, our staff held workshops in Dari and Spanish for our families about supporting their children's educational journeys. The workshop touched on school enrollment, grading systems, the curriculum taught by age level, extracurricular activities and how to be up to date with the progress of your child. This was a great opportunity for our parents to start thinking about the school year and ask questions.

In August we collaborated with the International Rescue Committee to host a financial literacy workshop which covered essential topics such as budgeting, opening a bank account, responsibly managing a credit card, and starting a savings account. These skills are crucial for supporting the successful integration of our community members.

Our Employment and Education Committee Co-Chair Fred Miller gave an informative workshop during Fun Club on applying to high schools and exploring career options. The turnout was fantastic, with new families joining. Noted educator and Jersey City resident Nawal Qarooni led workshops at Fun Club for parents and children using art as a means for storytelling. Nawal has written extensively about holistic approaches to literacy instruction that emphasize the integration of family experiences into the learning process.

In early April, during Fun Club we hosted an Eid celebration which was a joyful evening filled with delicious food, laughter, and community spirit.

It was a beautiful opportunity for families and volunteers to gather, celebrate, and reconnect.

We continued our collaboration with Dr. Samar Issa, a faculty member at Saint Peter's University, who once again hosted a Field Day for our children. The day featured outdoor games, snacks, and goody bags which created a festive and memorable experience for all participants.

In early May Dr. Jennifer Ayala, also from Saint Peter's University, hosted a Spring Fair during Fun Club. This event included community resource tables, fun activities for families, a Zumba class, and raffle prizes.

Throughout the year Maryam Khardoush from the International Rescue Committee hosted sessions during Fun Club for a "Women in Action" group (pictured below) composed of Afghan women. They took part in a Home Health Aide certification program and are now able to seek employment as aides. The group also began collaborating with our Fun Club ESL volunteers to incorporate conversational English into their sessions. And a grant from the Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey allowed us to underwrite the cost of driving lessons for those in the group who had their learning permits.



WELCOME AND BELONGING



Rebecca Teichman

“I’ve been volunteering with Welcome Home since its early days in 2017. I teach adult ESL at Fun Club and I also usually help one or two newly arrived families with a range of support. I often tutor the mothers and their children in their homes. I also accompany mothers to doctor appointments and teacher conferences, help them navigate the bus system, and bring mothers and children to museums and park adventures.

I become quite close to the families I work with, often developing a real bond of friendship. I have been fortunate in that I have been welcomed into many families’ homes over the years I have been volunteering. I have had countless meals - Eritrean, Syrian, Egyptian, and Afghan foods - with the friends I have made. I have also hosted many families in my home - though my cooking is much less impressive!

Welcome Home is such a unique and important organization. The families we help feel a sense of community and have an opportunity to socialize and form close friendships with each other. They also know that there are people in the community who are there for them to help with the many challenges of the immigrant/refugee experience. I believe the interaction with volunteers plays an important role in easing our families’ adjustments to living in the U.S. “



LEISURE AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

During our winter break while Fun Club was paused due to the university's closure, we found other meaningful ways to connect with families and volunteers through age-appropriate, family-friendly outings. One highlight was an evening ice skating trip to Newport Skates. Many of our refugee friends experienced ice skating for the very first time and had a wonderful time. Another outing was a day at the Newport AMC to see Mufasa: The Lion King.

This past year the New York Red Bulls generously donated tickets for our friends and volunteers to attend two of their soccer games. We were able to support our friends with transportation so they could attend this event. For many of our friends it was their first professional soccer game ever.



FAMILIES AND VOLUNTEERS BONDED THROUGH FUN COMMUNITY OUTINGS

In October we once again took two buses to Princeton University, arranged by their Office of Religious Life. Many of our new Afghan families attended and enjoyed lunch, pumpkin carving and a tour of the campus.

These outings gave families and volunteers opportunities to bond and engage in community-based activities beyond our usual programming.

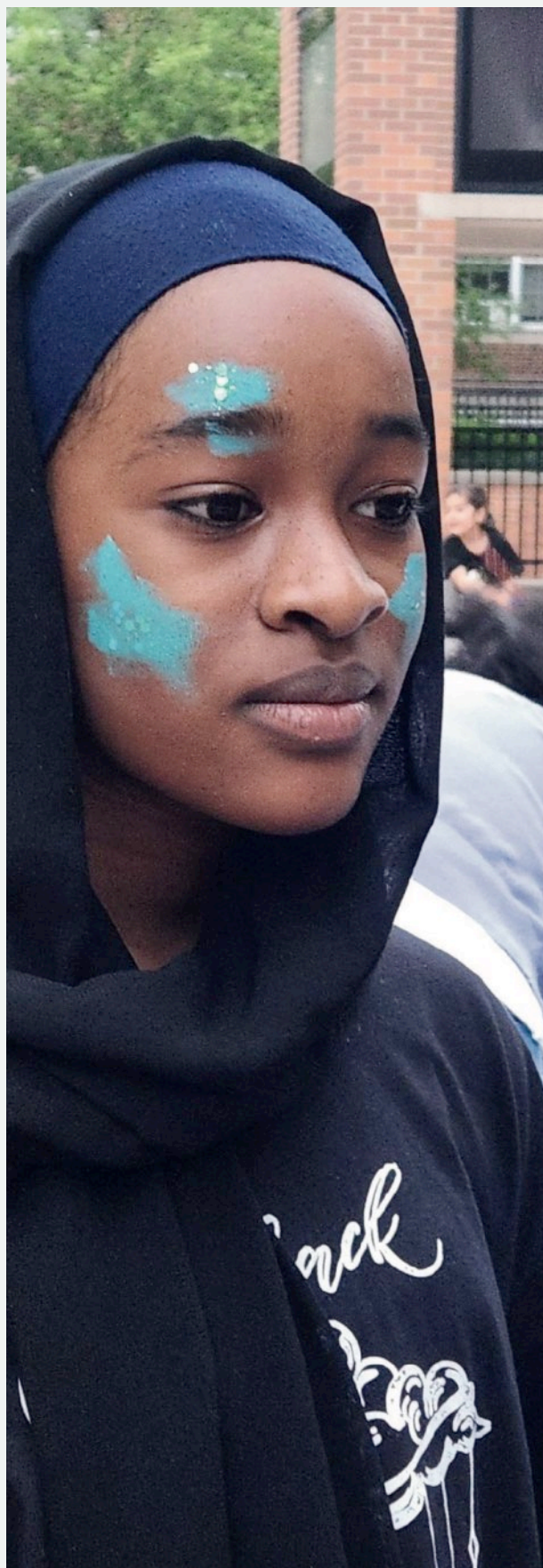




OBSERVANCE OF WORLD REFUGEE DAY, JUNE 2025

In June, we observed World Refugee Day during Fun Club with a festive potluck dinner.

A week later, board chair Dave Mammen reflected on the occasion in remarks at a vigil organized by the United Synagogue of Hoboken (a long-time supporter of Welcome Home) as part of a nationwide observance of World Refugee Day by HIAS.



“Tonight our lighting of candles will represent our belief that hope and light can endure even in such dark times. But let’s be honest: We need a lot of candles.

Last Monday evening I found more than a hundred, brightly burning with lots of light, in an unexpected place: at our organization’s weekly Fun Club where we celebrated World Refugee Day. Together were refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Colombia, Eritrea, Chad and other countries: parents and children who were invited by our federal government to make new lives in the U.S. because they had demonstrated to the satisfaction of a long and thorough vetting process that they were unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and who have now been resettled in Jersey City.

They were joined by other local residents – who are not refugees -- who volunteer their time, talent and money to help throughout the year.

We honored cultural traditions with food from home countries; the potluck dinner meant we didn't have our usual English language conversation practice, or homework help, or volunteers helping with job applications or answering questions about immigration status or benefits. But, as we do most every Monday evening, we had indoor games and activities for children (who make up more than half of the 350 people we currently assist), outdoor activities even in the heat, and lots of socializing.

Nine Afghan women received certificates for completing a training program focused on life skills; several of them have recently received certification as home health aides and will soon be earning income from work; others recently obtained their driving licenses, having mastered that most difficult American challenge – parallel parking. And, as usual, we had a table of Afghan men who diligently spent the evening discussing foreign policy and solving the problems of the world as men do at social gatherings.





Notwithstanding the uncertainty, confusion and fear that many of our friends are experiencing because of the weaponization of immigration that is taking place, for 2 hours each person was like a candle in the darkness and there was light and joy in the room.”



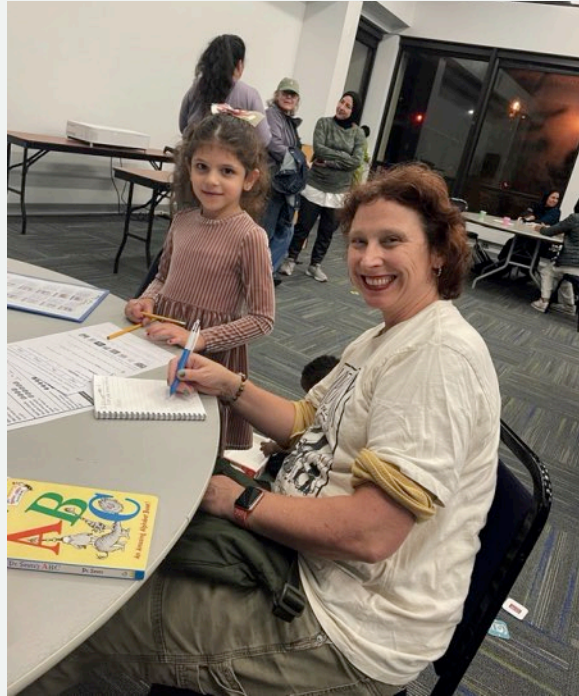
STEMentors



Sage Underwood Pozzobon (co-founder) , Sophie Dong (co-founder), and Trina Chatterjee (assistant director)

We continued to partner with three high school students from the Academy for Mathematics, Science, and Engineering in NJ. They are providing tutoring through Zoom for our friends from grades K-12. We currently have five children receiving tutoring for subjects like chemistry, biology, algebra, and physics.

WELCOME AND BELONGING



Jennifer Strong-Mentha

“I moved here in my 20’s with my partner Alain Mentha (now deceased) and have lived here for thirty years. Having worked alongside my husband in his mission to help resettle and befriend refugees in Jersey City, when I think of refugees I think of very strong and determined heads of families who find themselves here through the luck of the draw, often very surprised at how hard it is to live in a safe and clean home and neighborhood, and to find work and access to the opportunities promised. They’re individuals who have endured unimaginable hardships and yet, they’re here, rebuilding their lives. Refugees play a vital role in shaping the community’s cultural identity and contributing to its growth and diversity.

To me, successful resettlement means finding a sense of belonging, security, and purpose in a new community. Welcome Home Jersey City serves as a beautiful model of what that feels like through its weekly gatherings of local volunteers, young and old, with recently resettled families and individuals. I have felt this in my work with individual families in this organization, through their smiles, laughter, embraces, and sincere expressions of relief and gratitude.”

KARA MURPHY AWARD



This year we had the honor of presenting the Kara Murphy Award to one of our most dedicated and inspiring volunteers - Connor Boyd. The award is named for one of the co-founders of Welcome Home who now serves as a board member, exemplifying the volunteer spirit that animates the organization. Connor has been an active part of Welcome Home since 2023. Nearly every Monday, he brings his energy, kindness, and commitment to Fun Club, creating a joyful and welcoming space for everyone involved. Connor is also a vital member of our 3D Committee (Delivery, Drives, Donations) where his reliability and passion for service continue to make a meaningful impact. Connor exemplifies the spirit of this award: consistent, compassionate, and deeply involved in building community.

We're incredibly grateful for everything Connor does and for all the volunteers who make our work possible. To volunteer with us, please fill out the form [on this page](#).



EXIT

LOVE LIFE
SUNSHINE & HONEY

GIRLS

DONATIONS, DRIVES AND DELIVERIES



The Donations, Drives and Deliveries Committee is chaired by Board Vice Chair, Priti Gress. In February we held our Ramadan Food Bag Distribution in partnership with ICNA Relief, New Jersey where our 3D committee members delivered 74 bags with non-perishable food like oil, rice, flour, beans, and canned vegetables, with a gift card from a local halal butcher shop.

In June a Spring Clothing Distribution was held at the Hank Gallo Center in Lincoln Park where our friends were able to select spring and summer clothes and shoes. There were also some diapers and baby wipes given out during this drive. This event was open to the outside community as well as those in the Welcome Home family.



In August we were able to have our annual back-to-school distribution where we gave all of our friends with children backpacks full of school supplies. We also gave each family a gift certificate to a local Kid's City store so that parents can purchase school uniforms.

In October we held our annual winter coat distribution event. Everyone who came left with a bagful at least and we had many good quality, useful items to offer.

Many schools and organizations collected items for us to distribute including United Synagogue of Hoboken USH Refugee Support Committee, The OLC School, Saint Peter's Prep, All Saints Episcopal Day School, Stevens Cooperative School, Hoboken Charter School, The Hudson School, The Scandinavian School of Jersey City, and Franklin School. The Flow Initiative also donated feminine hygiene products. We also had volunteers from the Afghan American Community Organization, a nationwide organization that sent local NJ members to help us.

The year will end with our annual Winter Food Bag distribution in mid-December where our volunteers will deliver bags with non-perishable food like oil, rice, flour, beans, and canned vegetables, with a gift card from a local halal butcher shop.

The 3D committee also continues to match in-kind donations of household items, bicycles, AC units, car seats and more from our generous community with families who can use them. This year, we welcomed three new babies into our Welcome Home family, and our friends at CityLife Church in particular sourced many essential baby items for these families.



Board Chair Dave Mammen was the guest speaker at the Refugee Shabbat held at United Synagogue of Hoboken on Saturday, February 22. Board member Bess Morrison and her husband Fred Miller are members of the congregation. Dave thanked the synagogue's Refugee Support Committee, chaired by volunteer Hope Koturo, for all the help they have provided to Welcome Home over many years. Dave described the current activities of Welcome Home and how those we help and the work we do were being impacted by executive orders and threatened actions from the Trump administration.

WE ACT LOCALLY, BUT THINK GLOBALLY



REFUGEES & MIGRANTS
IN OUR COMMON HOME

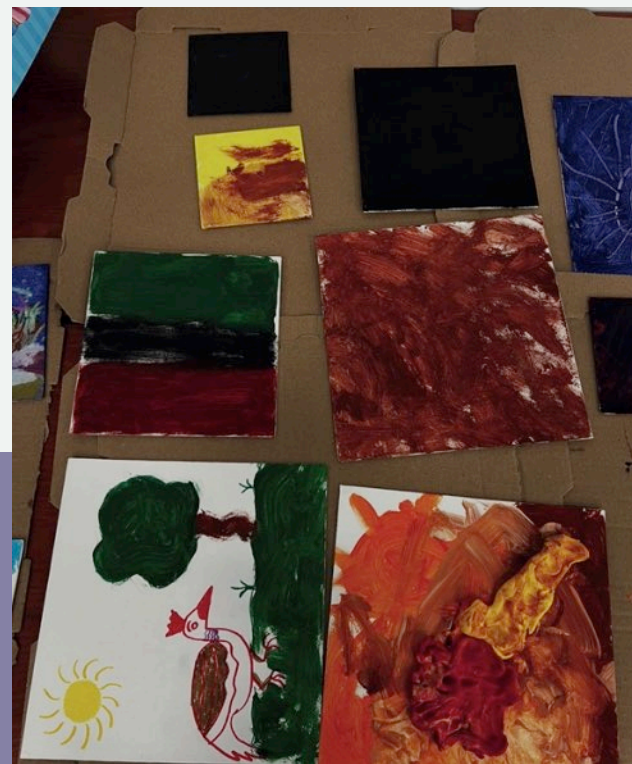
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNIVERSITIES

We are mindful that those resettling in Jersey City are part of a worldwide humanitarian and migration crisis influenced by wars, climate change, economic inequities, and shifting political landscapes. Thinking globally brings awareness, perspective and connections that provide opportunities to learn from others -- and to share our local experience promoting integration, belonging and opportunity. In this sense those who support Welcome Home through their donation of time, talent and money can take pride that they are part of a global effort.

Board Chair Dave Mammen has joined the academic project “Refugees and Migrants in Our Common Home”, a global effort to promote education, dialogue and meaningful action for migrants and refugees. With support from Rutgers Presbyterian Church in New York City where he is Church Administrator, he attended a conference in Rome in October where the multi-year project was launched. He presented about his ongoing study of how community development approaches can make resettlement more effective, with better outcomes for refugees and host communities. [Details here](#)

WELCOME AND BELONGING

We invited children to make drawings that shared their feelings about their home. Some drew houses; many drew the flag of their home country (featured on the front cover of this report).



ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Developing English language competency is a foundation of successful resettlement. In addition to offering conversational English practice during our Fun Clubs, our staff and volunteers also assisted our friends with registering for free ESL classes offered in Jersey City.

Also, one of our dedicated volunteers began to offer Zoom classes to adults using the abceng.org platform, designed for adults with little or no first language literacy. She reports: “We have many such learners in our community, mainly women with little or no prior education, and with young children at home they are unable to attend outside classes. When one of our longtime members moved away, I decided to set up a zoom class with her and a couple of her close friends. The zoom class worked so well for both me and the students that I reached out to more students and volunteers. We now have 4 volunteers and 5 classes with a total of 14 students attending regularly. Classes are under 45 minutes and meet at least 2 times per week.”

Welcome Home was honored to be selected as a 2025 Library of Congress Literacy Awards Program Emerging Strategies Honoree, “in recognition of achievement in demonstrating significant creativity and promise in its approach to literacy”.



EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Employment and Education Committee, chaired by board member Bess Morrison and her husband Fred Miller, is at the heart of Welcome Home's mission. This year we assisted 10 people in finding work, with three more in the interview process. We have also worked on preparing many women for employment opportunities by discussing what skills they would need to enter the American workforce. Job placement is challenging because of limited English language skills and childcare responsibilities. Welcome Home is providing regular ESL; one of Jersey City's programs has been cancelled due to federal budget cuts, so we are stepping up to provide more ESL classes this year.

Welcome Home has continued its "refugee chef" program this year, partnering with The United Synagogue of Hoboken to hire refugee chefs to cater dinners in private homes, leading to other catering opportunities for several women. Welcome Home's refugee chef program also partnered with Jersey City's Hudson West Music Fest for the fourth year. This year, all of the food was provided by two refugee chefs, from Eritrea and Afghanistan.

This year we had one student applying for college. We provided guidance and support, and he was accepted at Stevens Institute in Hoboken and offered a full scholarship. We also assisted other students with financial aid applications.



We also helped a high school student transfer to The Hudson School in Hoboken and filled the gap in her substantial scholarship through our Alain Fund for Education, established in memory of Alain Mentha, one of our founders and first Managing Director. This is the 8th student from Welcome Home that the Hudson School has accepted and funded, and we are very lucky to have them as partners.

This fall, we are helping two students with the college process and two with the high school process.

Welcome Home has also developed a relationship with Bucks Rock Camp, a sleepaway arts camp in New Milford, CT. The camp has invited our Welcome Home kids to attend at no cost. This year we had two campers return, one as a counselor-in-training.



A TALE OF TWO FUN CLUBS

Our Fun Club's beginnings were inspired by an earlier effort, the Westfield Fun Club launched in 2016 by Alissa Berger and Jenny Tananbaum, members of Temple Emanu-El, in partnership with local churches. In recent years it has met biweekly on Saturday mornings to serve adults and children from about 20 households who have resettled in the area. Several of us from Welcome Home visited Westfield last year to see their Fun Club in operation, and we were so impressed. Then they visited us on a Monday evening. And we've continued to share ideas and experience through an informal network of community-based organizations that assist refugees in northern New Jersey.

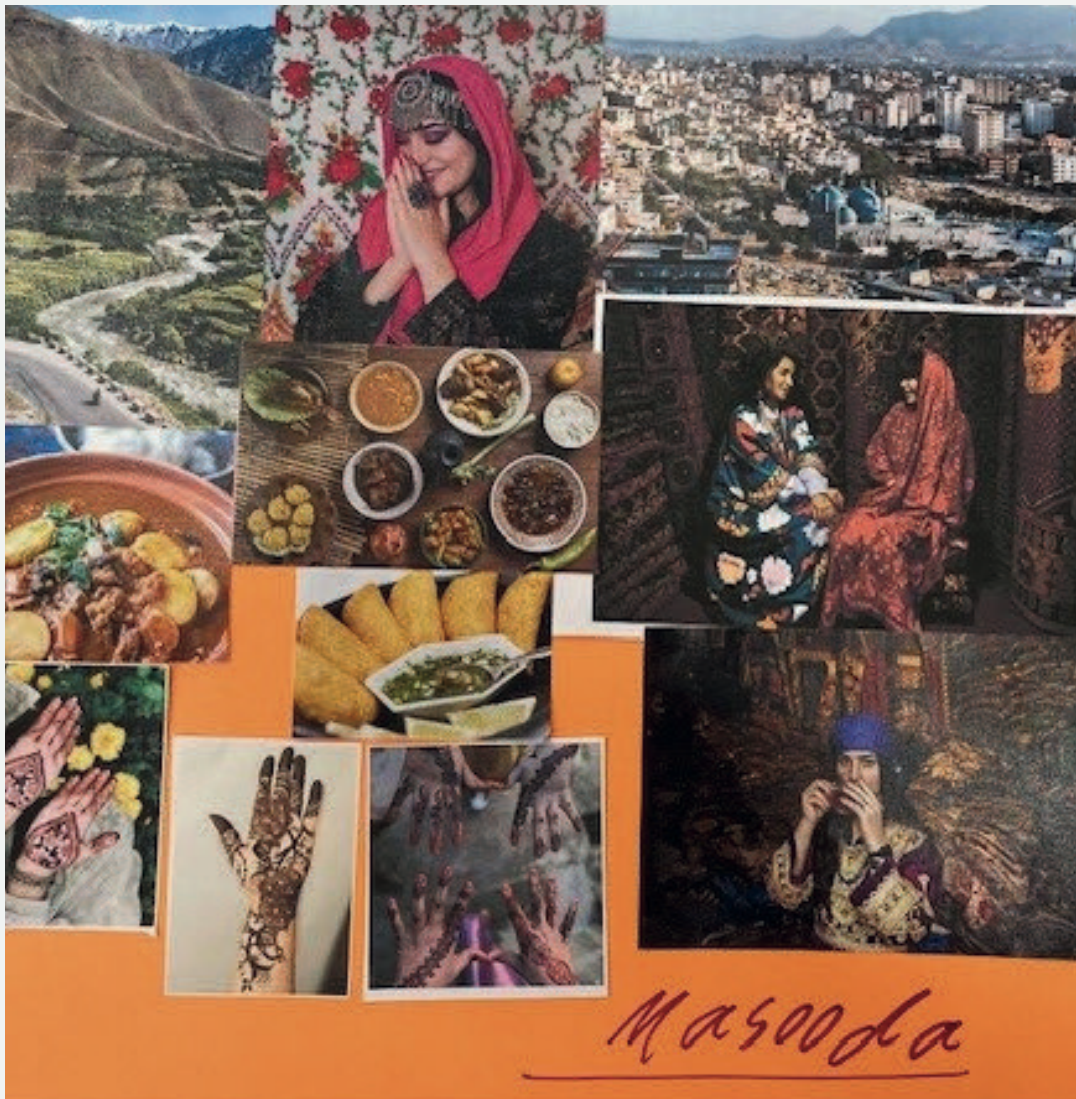
This Fall the coordinator, co-founder Alissa Berger, retired after ten years of dedicated volunteer service. Stepping in to fill very big shoes is our own Jackie Zapata, Welcome Home's part-time Director of Programs, and Gladys Almodovar. They will be retained on a part-time basis by Temple Emanu-El and will bring their own knowledge and experience and, with Alissa helping with transitions and support from the extensive team of volunteers she assembled, they'll keep the Westfield Fun Club a strong welcoming program.



WELCOME AND BELONGING

Masooda

“These provinces are in the north of Afghanistan. It has very delicious food. Also we have very beautiful clothes there that are very famous in all of the country. And we have rugs -- the number one rug and all the people know that our rugs are very famous. These pictures give me a very emotional feeling because we were born and raised in this area. It's unforgettable. We can't forget it. We love our country.”



Adults were invited to make collages that shared their feelings about their home country. Local artist Julissa Bedoya facilitated and provided many magazines with photos to cut out.



Khatera

“This is a province in Afghanistan; this area is Amir. There are two ladies. Unfortunately, I don't know the name of the two ladies, but this one is very brave. Obviously all the Afghan woman, as you know, in this situation they suffer a lot and face a lot of problems. But they fight for their rights. On the left side we have our famous foods like bread and some meats with sauce. We love our country and hope that peace will come in our country. Thank you so much.”



Each year the Grant Writing Team compiles and submits over 20 grant applications, big and small, to bring in necessary funds to Welcome Home. Although needs shift from time to time, we focus on grants that support literacy initiatives, workforce development, and food security. The Library of Congress Literacy Award was one of the team's major accomplishments this year, as well as securing funds from Whole Foods and Wegmans.

Upper left to right: Nicole LoBello, Lila Kalish, Sasha De Fazio

Lower left to right: Michelle Kelly, Joseph Haverlock, Makiko Oku



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Over the past year many local schools, youth groups, and other nonprofit organizations contributed volunteers and donated goods and services for Welcome Home events and to fulfill the specific needs of families. This is a testament to the desire of many to help refugees and to the reputation of Welcome Home as a trusted organization. We thank them all.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



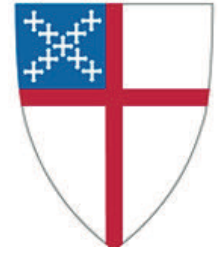
The Scandinavian School of Jersey City



All Saints Episcopal Day School



The Flow Initiative



Grace Church Van Vorst



Hello Neighbor Network



Hoboken Charter School



International Rescue Committee



Jersey City Board of Education



Jersey City Department of Parks and Recreation



Jersey City Library System



Learning Community Charter School



Jersey City Board of Education



ICNA Relief USA



Jersey City Division of Immigrant Affairs



One World One Love



Stevens Cooperative Middle School



The Warehouse NJ



Saint Peter's University



Stevens Cooperative Middle School



The Warehouse NJ

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



The OLC School



The Hudson School



USH Refugee Support Committee



Cantigas Womens Choir



TeamBonding



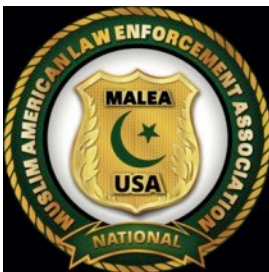
Beacon For Hope



Hope Jersey City



City Life Church



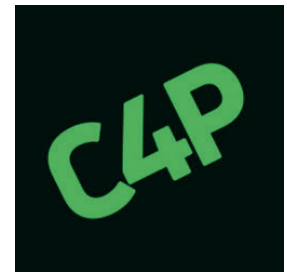
Muslim American Law Enforcement Association



Goya Foods



Westfield Fun Club



Computers 4 People



Envision Freedom Fund



First Friends of NJ and NY



Rutgers Presbyterian Church



Hudson West Folk Festival



Stem Mentors



Bucks Rock Camp



Welcome.US



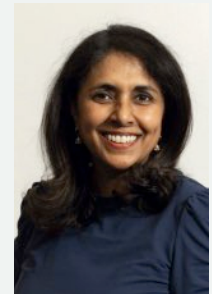
Islamic Center of Jersey City

LIST OF BOARD MEMBERS AND STAFF (AS OF DECEMBER 2025)

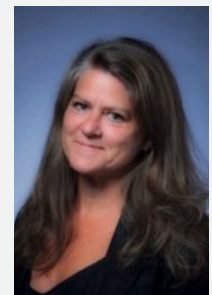
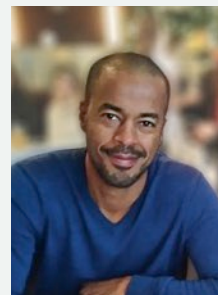
BOARD MEMBERS

Welcome Home's volunteer board members are involved in direct service as well as governance and fundraising.

Dave Mammen, Chair



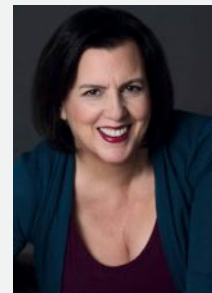
Priti Chitnis Gress, Vice Chair



Dawit Kibreab, Treasurer

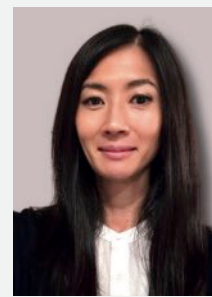
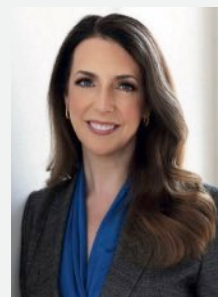
Betsey Barnum, Secretary

Doaa Hussein



Bess Morrison, Co-Chair, Employment & Education Committee

Kara Murphy



Makiko Oku, Chair, Fund Development Committee

STAFF

(AS OF DECEMBER 2025)



Jackie Zapata



Jen Moranchel



Manija Mayel

Our part-time Director of Programs is Jackie Zapata. She has worked with many organizations with similar missions and values as ours including First Friends of NJ & NY and Wind of the Spirit. Jackie holds a Master in Public Administration degree.

Jen Moranchel is our Assistant Director of Programs. This year she completed her Master of Social Work degree and is now working in a local public school while continuing to help Welcome Home on a part-time basis.

Manija Mayel continues to serve as our Afghan Resettlement Volunteer Coordinator.

FINANCIALS

Platinum
Transparency
2025

Candid.

Our Finance Committee is comprised of board members Dawit Kibreab (Treasurer) and Kara Murphy. Sabrina Hamady is our part-time controller, with additional assistance from Chris Khani.

The firm of Scody Scot & Co. CPAs prepared our 990 tax return for the year 2024, which is available on [Guidestar/Candid](#). We are proud to have achieved the highest level platinum seal from Guidestar demonstrating our commitment to transparency and excellent financial management.

For the calendar year 2025, we set a revenue target of \$175,000. Through September, our Fund Development Committee chaired by board member Makiko Oku raised \$173,498 in revenue; institutions and individuals who donated money from January through September 2025 are listed below. During this period we spent \$132,487 on expenses. We expect to end the year with a modest operating deficit which will reduce our reserves. (We carried over \$141,139 from 2024 to 2025). Exact amounts will be reported on our 990 tax return for the year 2025 which will be available on Guidestar / Candid after it has been prepared.



LIST OF INSTITUTIONAL DONORS DURING 2025

Borger Financial

City Life Church

City of Jersey City

Grace Works

Highland Park High School

Jewish Women's Foundation of New Jersey

Kenny & Wendy Epstein Charitable Foundation

Laurel Bakery LLC

Mulbrandon Research, Design & Insights, LLC

Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP

Rutgers Presbyterian Church

Schorr Family Foundation

United Synagogue of Hoboken Refugee Committee

Wardell Family Foundation

Princeton University's Office of Religious Life

Wegmans Woodbridge Community Giving Program

Whole Foods Market's Community Giving Program



INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Welcome Home Jersey City is a 501(3)(3) nonprofit organization. Our tax i.d. number is 82-242862. Donations made be made [online here](#), or by check to Welcome Home, 597 West Side Avenue # 200, Jersey City, NJ 07304. Thank you.



Cassandra Adams
William Armbruster
Lordez Asafo-Boakye
Deepika Bagchee
Hadas Bar
James Barker
Charma Behnke
Eleni Beja
Carly Berwick
Pauline Blues
Helen Blumenthal
James Boice
Rasika Boice
Richard Bowen
Connor Boyd
Elizabeth Brockland
Marinus Broekman
Lindsey Buller
Shazia Buskens
Joel Caminer
Emily Castro
Lydia Chibane
Joann Christie
Danielle Cohen
Brian Critz

Patricia Culbert
Julie Dalton
Liz DeBeer
Miranda Dennis
Kevin DeVine
Jennifer Dickinson
Ryan Dominguez
Griffith Dudley
Elizabeth Eickhorst
Monika Emara
Jonathan Eng
Jana Epstein
Sophie Epstein
Julie Eveno Chantepie
Hilary Fezza
Joshua Finkbeiner
Judith Flynn
Edward Friedman
Deepthi Gandhi
Rose Ann Ghabour
Francesca Giannetti
Veer Gidwaney
Michael Governor
C Wede Greene
Beverly Greenfield

Priti Gress
Debra Gress
Jesse Grossman
Matthew Hammond
Joseph Haverlock
Suellen Havsy
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Will Henkal
Lorna Henkal
Brian Hilgendorf
Jordan Ho
Terri Hodara
Fred Hodara
Emma Holl
Barbara Howard Trueger
Alison Jackson
Syeda Jaffry
Matthew Kalish
Becky Kalish
Susan Kalish
Teresa Kaminsky
Julie Kaufman
Michelle Kelly
Kayla Kessler
Manasi Khedlekar

Dawit Kibreab
Jane Klueger
John Koffer-Kelly
Barbara Kotwicki
Adam Krass
Vineetha Krishnan
Kezio Lacerda
Ryan Larrabee
Tyler Lawrence
Misha Lee
Martha E. Lewis
Yuan Li
Joan Litman
Nicole LoBello
Lauren M Sapira
David Mammen
Lailley Mansouri
Gregory Marx
Kenna Mateos
Julia Maxwell
Kunal Mehra Mehra
Kristina Mevs-Apgar
Fred Miller
Christina Miller
Crystal Miranda
Kristen Mitchell
Nancy Sue Moore
Esteban Moranchel
Belen Moranchel
Jennifer Moranchel
Selena Moranchel
Bess Morrison
Catherine Mulbrandon
Courtney Munro

Kara Murphy
Andrew Nathenson
Charles Natt
Edward Needham
Meena Negandhi
Suellen Newman
Thomas Newman
Katherine Nguyen
Susan Nolan
Martin Nystrom
Makiko Oku
Yahaira Osorio
Kaylin Padovano
Abha Pandya
Leigh Panek
Amanda Parekh
Sheri Pargman
Sophia Parker
Allisen Patel
Rachel Pavlakis
April Pavlish
Catherine Picker
Janice Pilch
Katherine Prussack
Mayra Quintero-pasdar
Ellen Ray
Tracey Rice
Rebecca Rodgers
Noah Rousson
Edward Salomon
Shefali Samrai
Monica Sanz
Jesse Sawyer
Mia Scanga

Alex Beth Schapiro
Angelly Shahani
Sherry Shokouhi
Karen Siegel
Chloe Siegman
Elyse Silverberg
Ellen Simon
Jennifer Slomack
Kimberley Smith
Lindsey Smith
Leslie Sperber
Tara Stafford
Barbara Stern
Jennifer Strong
Heather Tafur
Luca Taite
Geraldine Tan
Harriet Taub
Rebecca Teichman
Diane Tider
Kathryn Valenta
Kelly Vassilakas
Lisette Velazquez
Rebecca Vilanova
Courtney Walker
Deirdre Wall
Hannah Weeks
Rebekah Wilford
David Wolfson
Christopher Woodard
Gloria Wu
Lisa Zablocki
Bonnie Ziegelstein




GET INVOLVED





WELCOME HOME JERSEY CITY

597 West Side Ave #200, Jersey City,
NJ 07304 201-283-8734

info@welcomehomerefugees.org

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<https://welcomehomerefugees.org/>