

IMPACT REPORT 2023



CWS

Virginia

Who We are

For more than 30 years, CWS in Harrisonburg has welcomed refugees, immigrants, and asylum-seekers from around the world to the beautiful Shenandoah Valley. Through partnerships with individuals, faith communities, and local organizations, we empower our newest neighbors to build new lives in peace and security through up to five years of service and support.

OUR MISSION

Building a world where there is enough for all.

OUR VISION

Food, voice, and a safe place to call home.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The vitality and diversity of our local culture depends on integrating the gifts and stories of new Americans. That's what I love about CWS—we provide a soft landing for folks making a new home in this country and we sponsor their vision for using their gifts and enriching the local culture. As young adults from Afghanistan prepare to complete their university education, as Ukrainians learn to drive, as Rwandan children enroll in school, and as women and men from around the world succeed in their first job in the United States, our clients' vision for their future expands.

My vision for CWS has also been expanding this year, especially as the number of displaced people globally has reached 110 million. Locally, we are increasing our

capacity for mental health services, legal services, and responding to the needs of children. While any changes in federal policy for refugees that roll down to the local level can affect our work directly, as CWS we are committed to partnerships with people like you to provide equitable services for all our clients. What do you love about CWS? What is your vision for CWS Virginia? Together we can make a difference worth celebrating. As you flip through this report, join me in celebrating the impact we've had in the last year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Lepley".

Susannah Lepley
VIRGINIA DIRECTOR

SAMUEL'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

Samuel's journey to Harrisonburg began in Eritrea in 2015 when he and four friends traveled to Ethiopia, where his uncle welcomed them. After four years in Ethiopia, Samuel and his uncle moved to the United States, neither speaking any English. Additionally, Samuel faced a hearing challenge, and there was a delay in receiving hearing aids. Despite these hurdles, Samuel wanted to complete high school, but aged out of the public school system at 18.

Fortunately, with the support and resources available through CWS Harrisonburg, Samuel made a plan for success. He applied for Flatwood JobCorps—a government program that offers free education and vocational training for young adults. However, COVID-19 temporarily halted his plans.

Although his plans were put on hold, Samuel's desire to learn, work, and achieve his goals was undeterred. He registered for Eastern Mennonite University's Intensive English Program for the fall semester of 2020 and received a bike from a local partner program called **Bikes for Neighbors** (formerly Bikes for Refugees) to commute to his classes. He continued EMU's program throughout the spring, summer, and fall 2021 semesters. Every day, 4 days a week, Samuel rode his bike to English classes, all while working at the same time.



At EMU he befriended someone interested in Job Corps and both finally joined in April 2022, along with another CWS client. The three close friends trained as firefighters together through Flatwood JobCorps. Samuel was sent out of state with a crew to fight raging wildfires during the summer of 2022. He served as a firefighter at 5 different fires in 4 states. Samuel also gained expertise in electrical work and will soon head to Miami for advanced electrical training in the field.

Recently, Samuel achieved his dream of earning his high school diploma. He said, "I just want to say to those like me who came from Africa or anywhere in the world, I would like to advise them to study in JobCorps. It's a good choice for them. And I will say thank you to Rebecca (CWS Youth and Employment Programs Coordinator) for applying for me to JobCorps, and to all my teachers."

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Each year, tens of thousands of unaccompanied children seek refuge in the United States. Most are from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, or Mexico and are fleeing violence and threats to their safety. For many, the long and dangerous journey to the United States is just the beginning. In the first year of the Home Study and Post Release Services program at CWS, we have served **107 unaccompanied children** after being reunited with their sponsor in Virginia. Each child is provided case management and connections to mental health, English language programs, vocational training opportunities, overall health, legal needs, and additional support as needed for a smooth transition. The Children's Services Department's vision is that unaccompanied children maintain hope for the future, feel supported by their community, and build resilience.



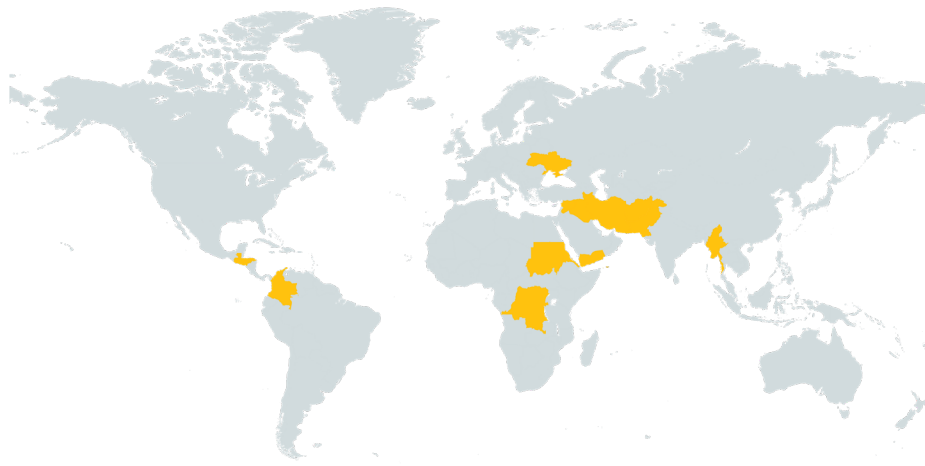
Photo by JMU

245 SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, CAMPS, MENTORING, & SUPPORT SERVICES

As we welcome refugee families to the Shenandoah Valley, CWS provides initial school enrollment services as well as a school liaison to support and advocate for families and students who are navigating a new school system. The school liaison also coordinates enrichment activities like field trips and workshops. This past year summer camps focused on arts, math, business, and computer science. We also matched interested refugee youth with a mentor. These cultural integration experiences allow refugee youth to explore and grow as they develop vision for their lives.

REFUGEE RECEPTION & INTEGRATION SERVICES

CWS Harrisonburg's Refugee Services programs provide up to 5 years of support for new neighbors. From initial reception and placement services like housing and school enrollment to employment orientation, finding jobs, and extended case management for families and vulnerable individuals, we empower individuals and families to build fulfilling lives. We believe all families deserve respect and the ability to make choices to shape their own future.



WHERE ARE OUR NEW NEIGHBORS FROM?

- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Sudan
- Eritrea
- Rwanda
- Burma
- Ukraine
- Guatemala
- El Salvador
- Honduras
- Colombia
- Iraq
- Afghanistan
- Syria
- Yemen
- Pakistan
- Iran

226

TOTAL ARRIVALS

Through our Reception & Placement program, the CWS resettlement team provides initial welcome and core services to new neighbors within the first 90 days after arrival, empowering them towards self-sufficiency.

225

JOB PLACEMENTS

CWS Employment Specialists work closely with new neighbors to understand their educational and employment history, as well as career goals, providing job orientations and workforce readiness programs. In partnership with 27 local employers, including **Marshall's** and **George's**, these 225 jobs represent first jobs, skill upgrades, and second jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, warehouse industries, and more.

100%

OF CLIENTS IN OUR MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM WERE SELF-SUFFICIENT AT 180 AND 240 DAYS.

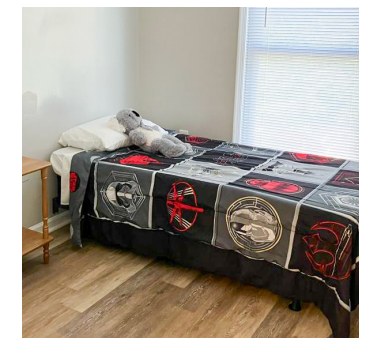
58

HOUSES BECAME HOMES

CWS begins identifying appropriate housing for new neighbors once travel dates are confirmed. In partnership with **Village to Village** and community volunteers, houses are stocked with new beds, donated items, groceries, and a welcome meal before new neighbors arrive.



CWS has reached a significant milestone by opening a **Welcome House** with 3 apartments, marking a historic moment in our organization's history. Now newly arrived families can settle in and get acquainted with downtown Harrisonburg while they wait to move into their permanent home.



UKRAINIAN HUMANITARIAN PAROLEES



244

UKRAINIAN NEW ARRIVALS

There are 24 CWS regional offices across the United States, and CWS Harrisonburg has the largest program for resettling Ukrainian humanitarian parolees. With two full-time staff members who are themselves immigrants from Ukraine we've been able to serve 244 new arrivals since 2022.

This fall, 13 people from Ukraine began driving classes, which include private instruction and behind-the-wheel experience, so that these individuals and families can become more self-sufficient.



IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

Immigrants and refugees have many complicated and expensive legal hurdles on the path to protection, citizenship, and reuniting with their families. CWS Virginia's Immigration Legal Counseling staff provide low-cost legal advice and representation to refugees, asylum-seekers, and other immigrants in the Shenandoah Valley. We're pleased to have hired a staff attorney in October 2023.

APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED

43 ASYLUM

127 GREEN CARD

91 CITIZENSHIP

Asylum provides protection for those fearing persecution. Green cards offer permanent residence and work privileges. Citizenship is often the ultimate goal for our clients.

66 
FAMILY
REUNIFICATION CASES

Once a refugee has been resettled to the U.S., CWS legal staff can provide support for those who wish to reunite with family living in other countries via family-based immigrant visas.



Lucia Canizares leads our immigration legal services department. Now we're expanding capacity to provide services to clients relating to the CWS Winchester office as well as CWS Harrisonburg.

154
WORK PERMITS

500
LEGAL CONSULTATIONS

CWS Legal Staff members are accredited to practice Immigration law before the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Immigration Courts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

\$12,557

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Generous in-kind donations supports newcomers in rebuilding their lives and making a home in the Shenandoah Valley.



2,421

VOLUNTEER HOURS

CWS volunteers are flexible, patient, kind, compassionate, willing to offer their expertise, and always ready to lend a helping hand. Volunteers help with move-ins, community and cultural orientation, English tutoring, and more.



CWS staff member Rodrigue Makelele engages local refugee and immigrant leaders to use their collective voice in advocating for policies at the state and federal levels that support welcoming new Americans. He also convened a recent session with the Harrisonburg Police Department and refugee and immigrant communities to build bridges of understanding, trust, and collaboration.



BE PART OF THE WELCOME

Harrisonburg is deeply enriched by the individuals who have chosen to work hard, create, and thrive here, no matter where they are from. It is our responsibility to continue our legacy of hope and hospitality by offering help to those who have fled their home countries in search of a better life. Together, we can continue to build a world where there is enough for all.

HOW TO SUPPORT CWS AND OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

- **Volunteer**- tutor students, teach adults English, get a group together to complete a household setup, or assist at the front desk. There are many ways to get involved that fit every skillset and time commitment.
- Enroll in **Community Rewards at Kroger Food Stores**. Simply visit their website, sign in using your registered email address and password, enter code **FT586** to find CWS Harrisonburg and Kroger will donate a percentage of every purchase price back to CWS Harrisonburg at no cost to you!
- Set up a **recurring donation** of \$10, \$25, or \$50 to CWS Harrisonburg. Making a financial gift is the most effective way to help CWS Harrisonburg. Your funds will go where they are most needed, helping us continue to build community for new Americans. Money raised in the Shenandoah Valley stays in our community.
- **Give a legacy gift**. See cwsharrisonburg.org/planned-giving for IRA distributions and gifts of stock.
- **Like CWS Harrisonburg on Facebook and Instagram** and share a post with your friends.
- Will your **employer match** your philanthropic gift? You can double your impact through an employer match.
- Encourage your employer to learn about the benefits of **hiring refugees**. Refugees are authorized for employment the moment they arrive in the United States and do not need visa sponsorship.
- **Rent to refugees**. Families are eager to establish themselves in our community. Landlords can partner alongside them by contacting CWS to learn about the benefits of renting to our new neighbors.
- **Organize a donation drive** for hygiene products, diapers, household goods or gift cards which help newly arrived families settle into their new home. We would work with you to support a donation drive.
- **Contact your local, state, and national policy makers** to educate them about the vital role that refugees and all newcomers play in our community.





Thank You for being part of our
**WELCOMING
COMMUNITY**

 **CWS** | *Harrisonburg*

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