Refugees know that coming to this country gives them a second chance to rebuild their lives and their families’ lives. This gives them hope of recovery from the ruthless destruction of wars and persecution that they lived through in their former homes. Refugees are mothers and fathers, many of whom work two or three minimum-wage jobs to support their families and live a better life in their new home. They work even harder to integrate in their community.

Integration is complex. I think it is significant to recognize what it takes to create an integrated community: a place where integration is accessible. The task for integration requires knowledge of processes and resources. Successful integration is part of a “New American Dream”, and is a role both hosts and New Americans should play together. Even though resettlement agencies, both at the national and local levels, play their roles by providing refugees pre- and post-resettlement services, successful integration is not accomplished in a few months or even years.

Lack of cultural knowledge as well as not knowing where to go for support constrain integration. Knowledge of the English language is one of the most important things to become integrated, and this is why the NICE English program remains the core component. When I first arrived in this country, I didn’t know English. It was difficult for me personally to navigate the complex American systems. I pledged to do everything I could to change it. So, I committed to learn English well enough and enrolled myself in a learning center in Nashville before I transferred to a community college and then Tennessee State University where I graduated with a Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Science with a minor in Mathematics. This was a challenging time because I had to work two jobs while attending classes.

Part of the “New American Dream” for refugees and immigrants is successful integration into mainstream American society. They want their children to succeed academically. Their families want to stay in communities that embrace them. They need jobs that can help them overcome financial barriers. This is what successful integration or self-sufficiency means.

Integration does not mean to assimilate with a new culture or avoid one’s own cultural heritage. Instead, successful integration is a long-term process through which refugees and host communities work effectively together in order to improve each other’s lives by expanding opportunities, developing mutual respect, and understanding each other’s culture. This is why NICE is in business to ensure refugees and immigrants are welcome in their community through involvement and partnerships with community organizations.

In our 2014 annual report, I am personally delighted to share with you the work the NICE team and partners have done to positively impact the lives of our refugee and immigrant families in Middle Tennessee. On subsequent pages, please read detailed information about NICE’s programs. It is imperative to acknowledge the effort put forth by outstanding members of the NICE team. Most programs met or exceeded their strategic objectives set for 2014!

Thanks to our outstanding donors, board members, volunteers and staff. I also want to thank members of the Greater Nashville community for welcoming and supporting our New Americans in their transitions into an integrated community. I am looking forward to continue to partner with you now and for years to come.

Thank you!

Dr. Gatluak Thach
In order to become self-sufficient, an income is a necessity. For many refugees who have lived in refugee camps much of their lives and have little prior work experience and no formal education, finding a job in America can be a struggle. Our Employment Program gives these refugees an opportunity for a better life by helping them find secure and stable jobs. The Employment team provides resume building, mock interviews, application assistance, and job placement. We also follow up with clients to ensure they are thriving in their positions. In 2014, NICE enrolled 277 refugees/asylees in the employment program and placed 224 in jobs, exceeding program goals!

Ahmed came to the U.S. to reunite with his wife and child. We helped him get a job in his field (he has a BS in Computer Science) at Dell Genco and within 2 weeks, he was hired by Dell as a direct hire! With the extra money, he moved into a larger apartment and bought a car for reliable transportation.

If you know of a company looking to hire, please contact Morissa Duke at 615-315-9681.

To be full participants in their communities, refugees and immigrants need to become citizens. NICE’s Immigration program assists refugees and immigrants in Nashville to ultimately become U.S. citizens. Our Board of Immigration Appeals recognized staff members prepare and file many types of immigrant applications, including travel documents, green card applications, petitions to reunite families, and naturalization applications.

In 2014, NICE assisted 426 clients with immigration services and 105 in citizenship classes. 85% of our citizenship students who took the test passed! In addition, 90% of green card holders who applied for citizenship through NICE and completed their interviews became citizens!

Nancee and Homero are married with two beautiful children. Due to Homero’s seasonal work visa, each year, he had to leave the country. With the help of NICE’s immigration team, Nancee was able to apply for her husband’s green card, and they just spent their first holiday season together!

Imagine arriving in a new country with one suitcase containing all of your belongings! As refugees flee their countries because of persecution, they often have very little to take with them.

In 2014, our Resettlement Program resettled 201 refugees to Middle Tennessee. These new arrivals came from Afghanistan, Congo, Bhutan, Iraq, and Myanmar.

Our resettlement team begins preparing for arrivals right away. Case workers secure, rent, and furnish their homes using generous household donations we receive. We greet our new arrivals at the airport and take them to their new home. All arrivals are provided a cultural orientation about the U.S. and the community. We also administer cash assistance and medical insurance. For 90 days, the Resettlement team helps the refugees enroll in benefit programs, cash assistance, schools for the children and English classes for the adults, among other services. We are proud to welcome new Nashvillians to our city!

In 2014, NICE resettled the Kamutares, a family of 7 from Congo. When the father’s work hours were cut, they had difficulty paying their living expenses. Our employment team placed him in a better paying and more stable job at Tyson Foods. We also helped the family get into low income housing and found volunteers to help them move. NICE staff also gave the oldest child bus training to allow him to get to Hillsboro High, his new school he is attending because he wants to be a doctor!
Adult Education Program

A refugee/immigrant’s success in America stems in part from his/her English language proficiency, education and other skills, which lead to better job opportunities. NICE’s adult education program gives refugees these skills and knowledge.

In 2014, NICE served 720 refugees and immigrants in 26 adult education classes including: six levels of English Language Learning classes, pre-GED classes to help non-native English speakers prepare for the GED/HiSET exams, and computer classes.

As a result of our classes, most literacy students have shown growth in identifying letters, basic sight words and oral proficiency.

85% of our Intro to Level 4 students met or exceeded the national standard of growth in English proficiency.

2014 also was the final year of the Refugee Integration program. This program provided leadership and entrepreneurship training, English classes, and assistance applying for social services.

After completing our childcare training and then working as a childcare provider for our English classes, Safiyo started level 4 English classes at our Glencliff HS program. When a community partner was looking for parents of MNPS students with good English to work as a Parent Ambassador with MNPS, we recommended Safiyo. Because of her incredible personality and her improved English, Safiyo got a job working for MNPS full-time utilizing her language skills!

She calls herself our Somali Mom, but we couldn’t be more delighted to see all the positive things happening for Safiyo as a result of her hard work and warmth of spirit!

Youth Education Program

One of the best ways to empower refugee and immigrant communities to thrive is to educate their youth! NICE’s Youth Education Program provides academic support to Nashville’s refugee and immigrant children, ultimately leading to graduation from high school. Our program also increases students’ confidence and social skills.

This was a significant year of growth for the program that served 111 students with an expansion of the after-school program from Glencliff High to Antioch High. We added a NAZA program at McMurray Middle school. 95% of the youth in these after-school programs improved their grades in a core content area. We held our ongoing summer program at Millwood Apartments, which helped 89% of the students improve their reading and 83% improve their writing.

We also provided 9 Culture Exchange presentations, explaining the refugee experience and refugee schooling to 115 teachers and public school employees. 96% of participants increased their understanding of refugee culture.

Mohamed started the 2013-2014 school year as a very shy high school student who didn’t want any attention on himself. By the end of our Glencliff after-school program in fall 2014, Mohamed gave a thank you speech to a room full of program volunteers whom he did not know very well. Through our program, Mohamed found his voice and confidence and has continued to soar!
Refugee Integration Support and Empowerment

In 2014, the Refugee Integration Support and Empowerment (RISE) program provided educational services to a total of 124 clients. Childcare, credentials and transportation serve as daily barriers for refugees. 20 refugees completed the TN Childcare Provider Training, learned the basics of operating a childcare business and were CPR/AED certified. Our Driver Training classes prepared 70 refugees for the TN driver’s test. As a result, they now have access to better work opportunities. Another aspect of RISE gives refugees with educational degrees the opportunity for credential evaluation, career placement and mentors to aid them in their career journey.

Health Program

Refugees and immigrants are at high risk for non-communicable diseases, including hypertension, diabetes, and often do not know how to live a healthy lifestyle.

In 2014, NICE’s Health Program provided 336 refugees and immigrants with tools to improve their health through:

- **Fitness Classes** that teach participants easy exercises they can do at home.
- **Healthy Cooking Classes** that show participants how to cook healthy meals.
- **Health Screenings** measuring blood pressure, glucose levels and more, combined with health tips to assist participants make adjustments to live healthier lives.
- **Wellness Partners** pairing newly arrived refugees with volunteers who teach healthy living habits using a curriculum.
- **Difficult Medical Cases**, assisting newly arrived refugees with medical care when participants are unable to obtain quality care on their own.

Our program resulted in the following results:

- **97% of the participants maintained or decreased their glucose level and/or blood pressure** and **72% of participants moved closer to a healthy BMI**.

Spotlight: NICE Events

On November 13, 2014, 125 guests joined NICE staff, board members, volunteers and interns at the 3rd annual One World, One Dream: 2014 Refugee Benefit to celebrate the diversity of Nashville. In that year, we honored Molly Sehring, San Sarki, Salahadeen Center of Nashville and Siloam Family Clinic for their outstanding dedication to the New American community. Thank you all for coming and thank you to our sponsors!

On June 21 and December 13, 2014, NICE staff, board members, and many family and friends cheered on our education program clients’ achievements at NICE’s student celebrations. State Senator Jeff Yarbro and Councilwoman Megan Barry both gave encouraging speeches to our students to participate in their local government and to keep working hard. Each student received a certificate and took class photos with their teachers to capture the moment. After the ceremony, everyone mingled and enjoyed a delicious lunch with food from around the world that was prepared by our students.
Many thanks to our funders...

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2014 Income

- Private donations: $18,928
- Government grants: $1,219,679
- Foundations: $184,596
- Other: $155,867

Total: $1,579,070

2014 Expenses

- Program: 89.4%
- Admin & Funding: 10.6%

If you would like to assist NICE in its mission to serve the refugee and immigrant communities of Nashville, please consider:

Volunteering
Volunteers are at the heart of what we do.

Partnerships
Community partners strengthen our programs

Volunteer
Please contact Kathy Edson
615-315-9681

Monetary Donations
Monetary donations can be made on GivingMatters.com or on our website.

All donations are 100% tax-deductible.

Supply Donations
Our Resettlement Team is always looking for household supplies, dressers, beds, tables and any other home furnishings for our arriving refugees.

Please contact Karen Jones
615-315-9681