

2004
Annual Report of the
International Institute

Gateway for New Americans



2004 Year In Review

Anna Peterson Crosslin – President & CEO

We reached a milestone in 2004 – our 85th anniversary. And what a milestone it was as the number of refugees sponsored, total clients served, and funding sources all grew!

In addition to our core services in education, employment and social services, new programs were launched or greatly expanded, especially in the areas of mental health, life skills preparation, and civic engagement. In all, we served nearly 8,000 new Americans of 105 ethnicities.

In March we presented the International Institute Award to Dave Kirkland, recently retired Board member. The award, designed by Vietnamese artist, Lebadang, is bestowed biennially on an Institute volunteer who has quietly made a difference at the Institute and in the lives of our clients.

Dave's services were absolutely critical to the acquisition and renovation of our present facility on S. Grand Blvd. At the awards ceremony, I stated that "...there is no question in my mind that we would not be in our new and vastly improved facility without the knowledgeable and sustained assistance of Dave Kirkland..."

In June I completed my year-long assignment as a member of the Independent Task Force of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. We published a report "Keeping the Promise:



Intricate Hanji calligraphy is always a highlight of the annual Festival of Nations.

Immigration Proposals from the Heartland" to contribute to the national discourse on immigration policy from a Midwest perspective. A copy can be downloaded at www.ccfri.org.

Earlier in the spring I began my two-year commitment as chair of the Standing Committee of the Partner Agencies of Immigration and Refugee Services of America (IRSA). IRSA, now titled the US Committee for Immigrants & Refugees, is the national umbrella organization for the International Institutes. It is a time of important transition for many of us as we diversify our services and funding bases to meet the changing needs of an increasingly ethnic America.

In the summer Festival of Nations rapidly expanded again, growing to nearly 100 booth participants and moving to the middle of July.

With EMMIS and their radio stations as well as KMOV Channel 4 on board, word about St. Louis' fantastic Southside ethnic fest went out far and wide, resulting in a weekend crowd of 30,000.

Finally, on November 19 our formal anniversary date, we dedicated our new flagpole and American flag in a ceremony for our students. The purchase and installation of the pole were made possible by an Ameren SmartLights grant. Special thanks to Board member Sharon Harvey Davis for facilitating this grant for us!

The following day, an Open House for our alums, volunteers and other friends was attended by more than 300. A mini-folkfest featuring ethnic performers delighted guests who snacked on flavorful appetizers provided by ethnic groups and restaurants. It was a very special and most gratifying way to celebrate our anniversary.

We know that our "founding mothers," those energetic and visionary women of the YWCA who started our services in 1919, would look to the Institute of today with a great deal of pride and satisfaction.

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Individuals & Families

Suzanne LeLaurin, LCSW; Sr. VP & Division Director

The Individuals and Families Division continues to provide both short-term and long-term services to newcomers. Except for Social Services—due to funding restrictions—all division departments can now provide services to the broader immigrant community as well as to refugees.

We made significant strides in the area of increased community collaboration. Through a grant for services to pre-literate individuals, we developed a system for integrating our services with those of several community agencies. They are African Refugee and Immigrant Services, Immigrant and Refugee Women's Program, Grace Hill Neighborhood Center, and Catholic Charities Refugee Services.

In addition, the Institute signed a contract with the City of St. Louis Mental Health Board. We will serve in a Care Coordinator role for nine community agencies providing mental health services to the foreign-born. These two initiatives constitute major steps toward the Institute's goal of coordinated community response to the varied needs of refugee and immigrant newcomers.

Other subcontracts continued or were established in 2004 with African Mutual Assistance Association of Missouri, Bilingual International Assistant Services, and Center for Survivors of Torture and War Trauma. And we continue to be active participants in the Refugee and Immigrant Consortium of St. Louis. RIC is a coalition of service providers dedicated to enhancing community services for new Americans to help them achieve their full potential.

Huy Richard Mach/Post-Dispatch



Habibo, a Somali Bantu, picks out packages of corn on her first trip to a supermarket. She and her family are among the 200 Somali Bantus who recently have been resettled by the Institute.

We continue to identify “best practices” for services to new Americans, utilizing professional literature to ensure we are at the forefront of evidence-based practice. This is challenging. It takes years for research to be published, and such research is usually on immigrant populations that have been in the US for a number of years. As such, we find ourselves on the leading edge of developing the most culturally appropriate services for newly arriving refugee populations.

Employment

Glenda Sullentrup, MA; VP & Director

We surpassed last year's outcomes. In all 585 placements were made with 235 companies. Staff served a total of 1,461 clients with job counseling, career planning, job readiness classes, job club activities, specific vocational training, and placement. The average starting wage was \$9.10 per hour.

The Patient Care Assistant training program graduated 23 nurse assistants who went to work in hospitals, nursing homes, and in-home health. To open the program to immigrants as well as refugees, we applied for certification by the MO Coordinating Board for Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Certification will enable students who meet the enrollment guidelines to receive training subsidy dollars. This two-part process required 250 pages of documentation and has taken a year to complete. As of this writing, we are in the last step of the certification process.

Our staff has developed an innovative Job Club project. They teach job and life skills to recent arrivals with little or no previous work experience or understanding of how to manage life in their new culture.

Once again this year, in collaboration with the Institute's Business Links program, we provided tax preparation assistance to clients with help from volunteers from VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) and the United Way. More than 80 clients had their taxes prepared with a remarkable average refund of \$1,500! The Earned Income Tax Credit really helps our clients.

Program Managers & Supervisors

**Paul Costigan; Colleen Qadadeh;
Kathy Tucker; Lany van L. Maas**

Youth Services

Jane Knirr, MFA; VP & Director

The major focus continues to be our Youth Career Services program funded through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). We had 129 immigrant and refugee youth, ages 14-18, enrolled in 2004. Goals focus on improved academic performance, enhanced job readiness and expanded knowledge of career opportunities.

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Our services included after-school tutoring, job-shadowing, mentoring, life skills development, and support services. Post-secondary education and career exploration were provided. The group participated in numerous peer events and Saturday Night Family events at the YMCA, as well as recreational and college field trips.

In 2004, we expanded programming to include publication of a student-written newsletter called *The Torch*. Students also gathered for Boys Day and Girls Day where they had a forum to have fun and discuss issues impacting their lives.

Working with the St. Louis Art Museum's *Art With Us* program, students participated in art classes. They visited the Art Museum, made a quilt and learned about drawing and painting.

Working with Washington University School of Law, students attended workshops and discussed the effects of power and the misuse of power. They also attended a Saturday workshop on cultural diversity. The Healthy Alternatives for Relationships among Teens (HART) program was offered again this year in collaboration with Women's Support and Community Services. Through an opportunity with SLATE, some students were able to attend a weekend computer camp. They also received a free computer, printer, software and a year of free Internet service.

Also, with support from SLATE's youth employment program, 63 students worked in full-time or part-time summer positions for seven weeks. Students were placed at 30 job sites, working as recreation aides, clerical aides, artists, cashiers, busers, kitchen helpers, library assistants, summer camp aides and general laborers. Some also attended one-on-one financial literacy workshops and opened savings accounts.

More than 130 kids and their parents celebrated the winter holiday season at the agency's annual Children's Holiday Party in January. At the end of the year, the Youth Services Department received a grant from Commerce Bancshares Foundation to enhance youth programming. In the new year, we will use the funds to build stronger relationships between American-born and refugee youth.



Kevin Manning/Post-Dispatch

(From left) Amie from Sierra Leone and Najima from Afghanistan have both thrived academically with support from the Institute's after-school tutoring program.

Social Services

P. Ariel Burgess, MSW; VP & Director

In all, resettlement services were provided to 462 newly arrived refugees. Case management and social services were provided to 497 secondary migrants and asylees relocating to St. Louis. New refugees included Afghans, Colombians, Liberians, Somali Bantu, and Ukrainians. The Home Visitor program was expanded to include new African arrivals. The program recruits and trains community volunteers to provide home safety instruction and follow-up to newly arrived clients during the first 4 weeks of arrival.

For clients and the community-at-large, 4,800 received immigration assistance including information, referrals, and photographs plus assistance with completing various applications. Among them were applications for citizenship and family reunification. During the year, clients received assistance with more than 7,000 various applications.

Thirty families participated in the Healthy Families program, which provided education on intergenerational conflict, bi-cultural identity and healthy life decisions. Staff also provided enhanced orientation, including parenting skills, school requirements/enrollment and accessing health care.

Throughout the year, staff worked with several community providers to advocate and include the needs of St. Louis' newly arrived refugees. As a result, children received dental exams and services from "Give Kids a Smile." Also, families and individuals were chosen to participate in the annual United Way 100 Neediest Cases project. Children received school clothing from "Operation School Bell."

Program Managers & Supervisors

Lara Fallon, Social Work Coordinator; **Booker Gilliam**, Housing; **Hap Dinh**, Immigration; **Asmira Ogresovic**, Casework Supervisor.

Health & Mental Health

Basia Waite-Wright, MSW; VP & Clinical Director

It was a very eventful year for mental health services. We were certified by the Missouri Department of Mental Health. We also received funding from the Missouri Foundation for Health. We were able to hire a new therapist, two mental health caseworkers/interpreters and a part-time social worker. The new therapist is a specialist in working with children, adolescents and families, so we can expand our services in those areas.

Our work continued to include individual and group therapy as well as peer counseling and support groups. We used new assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of therapy services. One of the Bosnian women's groups will be terminating its meetings in the coming months. Its members feel ready to move on and get involved in their families and community's life. They said that the group helped them heal to so they are now more ready to look forward rather than to always look back.

As the refugee population arriving in St. Louis changes, the mental health staff has been challenged to find new ways of making our services more client friendly. Therapy is often quite an alien concept to new arrivals, and we make every effort to explain our services in a culturally appropriate way. We have found that informal groups work best to introduce clients to mental health services. As clients become familiar with our services they are more comfortable in seeking the help they need.

We continued to offer less conventional forms of treatment such as Healing Touch and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Healing Touch is especially helpful to clients who suffered physical as well as psychological trauma. EMDR is gaining recognition as one of the most effective ways to treat populations traumatized by war and torture.

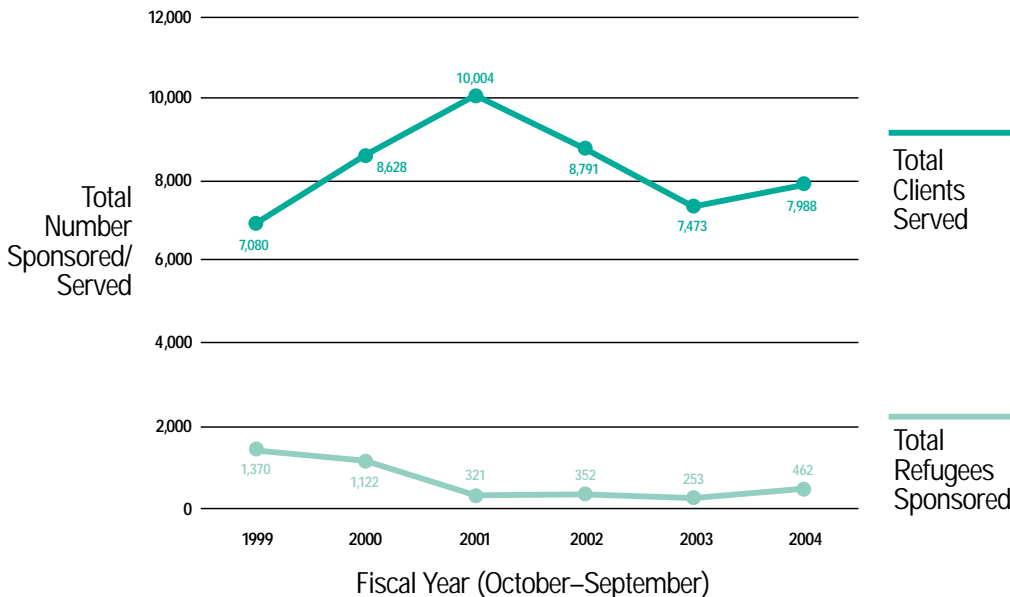


Beth Radtke/International Institute

Newly arrived Liberian and Somali Bantu children proudly show off their first-ever tennis shoes, courtesy of the Darling Baby Shoe Company.

Apart from working with clients who arrived in 2004, we continued our involvement with communities that were resettled in previous years. Our staff works with clients suffering from complex trauma syndromes as well as those clients struggling with the effects of cultural adjustment and intergenerational trauma.

Our mental health staff provides services in Arabic, Bosnian, English, Farsi, Polish and Spanish.



Institute Clients 1999–2004

Reflecting Negative Impact of 9/11/01

Education

Anita Barker, Ed.M.; VP & Director

In 2004, the Education Department served 2,256 students of more than 105 ethnicities through a variety of ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs.

Programs included core weekday and evening ESOL for adults (16+ years), featuring a curriculum into which workplace and basic academic skill development has been integrated. For pre- and low-literate students, the Literacy Tutorial program provided individualized literacy instruction with the help of trained volunteer tutors.

Two sessions of a new 10-week *Bridge-to-College* course were offered to help qualified students develop the academic reading and writing skills needed for success in higher education. Other programs included US Citizenship preparation classes (one for the elderly; two others for intermediate-level students), and an ESOL Family Literacy Program. In addition, we provided Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and General Education Development (GED) test preparation classes. Michigan testing services were offered on a weekly basis.

Field trip experiences were provided to families through the Saturday *Discover St. Louis* program and topic-based afternoon electives. Additional enrichment experiences consisted of a performance by the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis, concerts by St. Louis Symphony Orchestra musicians, and presentations by guest speakers on community-related topics.



Sam Leone/Post-Dispatch

Cong, a Chinese immigrant, learns what it takes to get a drivers license in an Institute class.

Education programs were funded through federal and state grants, speaker honoraria and charitable donations as well as through collaboration with the St. Louis Public Schools' Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) Program and St. Louis Community College at Forest Park.

The department and its clients benefited from the assistance of 143 Volunteers-in-Education who contributed a total of 4,744 hours.

Assistant Directors

Phyllis Mithen, Ph.D; Jan Rodriguez, MA

Special Literacy Efforts

On weekday mornings at the Institute, Somali women learn what it takes to read and write a language – an opportunity they were frequently denied at home.



Kevin Manning/Post-Dispatch

Culture & Community

Ann M. Rynearson, Ph.D.; Sr. VP & Division Director

Once they have satisfied their immediate survival needs, refugees and immigrants begin to discover the opportunities the larger community has to offer. Like those who came before them, today's newcomers eagerly buy homes, join neighborhood associations, and open businesses. And everyone works hard to overcome language barriers in official and casual settings. With greater financial security, many begin to look for ways to preserve and promote their culture and traditions.

Programs within the Culture and Community Division help new Americans take the next steps toward rebuilding fulfilling lives in their new community. The division includes services for the elderly as well as economic development; translation and interpretation; ethnic community development and the agency's ever-popular festivals.

The agency remains a leader in helping St. Louisans understand their new neighbors. Senior staff provided more than 250 public presentations to thousands of area residents as well as state agencies, civic organizations, and schools. Requests continued to pour in for Culture Links, the most comprehensive directory of ethnic and international organizations in our community.

In July we celebrated the fifth annual Festival of Nations in Tower Grove Park. Saluting the diverse heritages of South St. Louis, this fast-growing two-day festival was a huge success, attracting more than 30,000 visitors, even on the coldest July day on record!

Visitors enjoyed two stages with non-stop dance and musical performances, almost 100 booths selling international food and gifts, children's activities, craft demonstrations, storytelling, and international games.



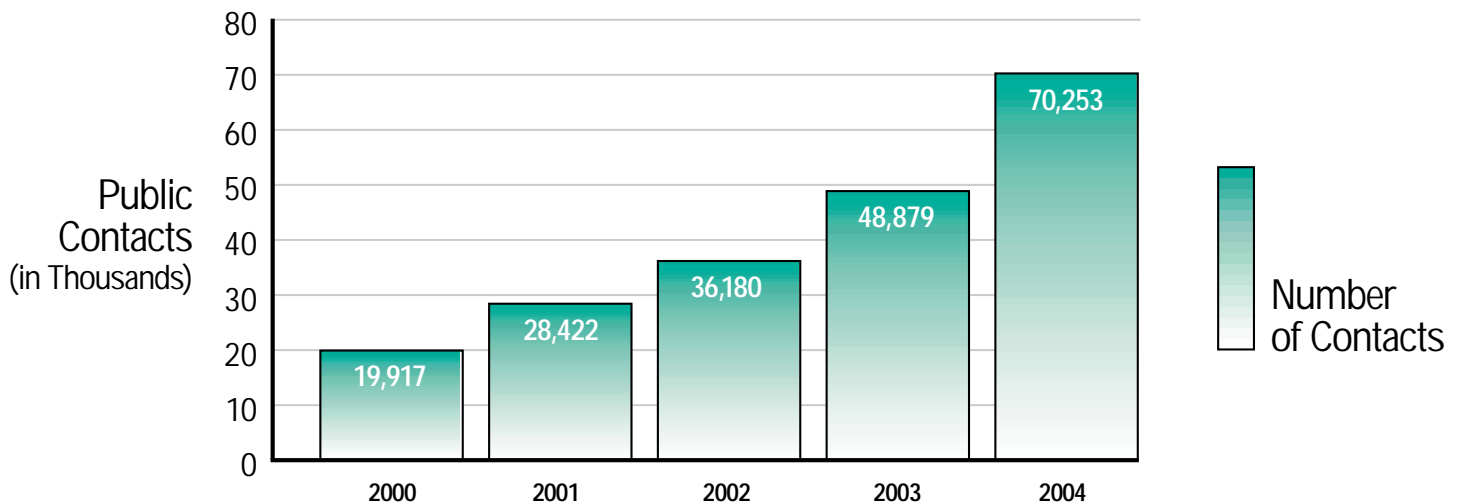
Energetic and colorful Mexican dancers are a crowd-pleaser at the annual Festival of Nations, which drew 30,000 in 2004.

Two very popular new attractions were the World Music Stage and the Village Green, an opportunity to learn traditional ethnic dances.

Late in the year the division established the *Ethnic Heritage Council of St. Louis*. This initiative will bring together leaders of St. Louis' many ethnic groups to share information about issues of common concern. Recent studies show that one major key to regional success is the presence of a healthy, ethnically diverse community. By year's end, the Council had already grown to almost three-dozen members, with more on the way.

Katherine Bish/International Institute

Growth in Community Outreach



Economic Development

Betsy Slosar, VP & Director

Economic development services promote long-term economic security for refugees and immigrants. Our staff provides business assistance to new American entrepreneurs and promotes family well-being through savings and financial education.

The Individual Development Account (IDA) program offers participants incentives and support to set and achieve a savings goal. Through a grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the Institute matches clients' savings deposits and provides education to help participants understand and navigate financial systems in the US.

By the end of 2004, the IDA program had enrolled 423 participants to save for major assets such as a first home, post-secondary education, business capital or an automobile. More than 300 reached their savings goal, completed financial education and purchased their assets, including 61 who achieved the American dream of homeownership. To date, the total value of assets purchased through the program is close to \$9 million, positively impacting the local economy.

Business Links, formerly known as the MicroEnterprise Program, helps refugee and immigrant entrepreneurs start new businesses and/or improve existing businesses. A wide variety of clients received assistance with business planning, marketing, referral to lenders, licensing and a host of other business concerns. Thirty-two businesses were opened or expanded in 2004.

One success in 2004 is Verona Restaurant & Coffee Bar, owned by Almasa and her husband, Hassan. Almasa was referred to Business Links by the City of St. Louis for food safety certification help. In spite of language challenges, she completed a comprehensive food sanitation course, passed the required exam and received her food safety certification. Almasa and Hassan welcome everyone to come in and try their fresh and thoroughly appealing fare.

Since the beginning of the program, 145 businesses have been started, strengthened or expanded, generating over \$20 million in revenue. For a list of businesses assisted by Business Links, visit the Institute's website at www.iistl.org and click on "Support a New American Business Operator."



Dawn Majors/Post-Dispatch

Page Auto Sales owner Morees Alyatim, a Palestinian, got counseling and loan application assistance from the Institute's Microenterprise Program.

Language Links

Marcia Wilderman; Program Manager

Language Links, the fee-for services interpretation and translation bureau of the International Institute, is the largest and most diverse language services provider in St. Louis. In the past decade, we have provided interpretation and translation services in more than 40 languages for 500 commercial and non-profit organizations. Our current roster of customers includes, but is not limited to, area businesses, state agencies, mental health providers, hospitals, schools, courts, and police departments.

This year we renewed our language services contract with the State of Missouri for another three years. This opportunity will enable us to expand our services to a wider range of Missouri counties. We now hold contracts with 90% of all Missouri counties.

Requests for interpreters and translators grew exponentially with gross revenue nearly reaching \$400,000 in 2004. In the new year, those language services will form the core of an International Business Center. The center will provide consulting and training to businesses interested in accessing ethnic markets or in further diversifying their workforces.

Our goal is to determine how the Institute can meet the needs of St. Louis business which are adapting to the growing diversity of our city and their markets. In 2005 we plan to put our action plan into effect and roll out a wider range of business-related services to complement our interpretation and translation.

Community Connections

Pamela De Voe, Ph.D.; Program Manager

During 2004 our two major efforts were providing developmental support to refugee organizations and spearheading the *New Americans Vote!* project.

We continued to provide training for leaders of new and existing refugee organizations. A series of workshops in both Spring and Summer were designed to strengthen ethnic groups' organizational capacity and structure.

Perhaps even more important was the development of a sense of solidarity among leaders from widely different communities. They discovered they shared very similar challenges in serving their communities. By the end, a coalition was forming among different refugee organizations.

Refugee organizations that participated in the workshops were able to take part in a MiniGrant Program designed to give participants experience in project management. Many organizations that had never operated a formal program were able to carry out projects specially tailored to meet their community needs. For example, one organization purchased four computers, which were used to train elderly refugees in computer literacy. Thus, they were better able to communicate with family members still in their homelands. Fifteen ethnic groups participated in the workshops and nine in the Mini Grant program.

In anticipation of the 2004 elections, we launched *New Americans Vote!*, a bipartisan initiative to help hundreds of refugees become active participants in the political process. With support from the Pettus Foundation and ECF of Boeing St. Louis, we worked closely with both the League of Women Voters and Jobs for Justice. At 13 community events we oriented participants on the rights and responsibilities of voting as well as use of the voting box.

To educate present and future voters about the candidates and their issues, a series of four bipartisan political forums were held in St. Louis City and County in collaboration with the League of Women Voters. Thanks to the partnership with leaders from refugee organizations participating in our programs, the forums drew more than 200 participants, mostly from Africa, Asia, and Europe.



Elderlinks Program

Swapna Kommidi, MSW;
Program Manager

ElderLinks empowers elderly refugees to enable them to become active players in their own lives. We provide refugees 60 years and older with socialization opportunities, social services, citizenship training and field trips. In 2004 ElderLinks served more than 300 clients from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Laos, Somalia, and Vietnam.

This year our special initiatives included a gardening project, medication consultation services and Bridging Gaps, a collaboration with Grand Oak Hill community senior center. There, Vietnamese seniors interacted with American seniors in weekly meetings.

In addition to weekly socialization sessions for Bosnian and Vietnamese seniors, we hosted various special events including a citizenship festival as well as celebrations for Bosnian *Eid* and the Vietnamese Lunar New Year.

A grant from the Employees Community Fund of Boeing St. Louis enabled elderly refugees to take field trips to a family farm in Illinois, Shaw Nature Reserve, the Art Museum, the Missouri History Museum, Channel 9, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, a music festival in Forest Park, the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis and Fox Theatre.

In all, 50 of our elderly refugees passed the US citizenship examination this year, a formidable task in a new land with a strange language, culture and history.



This year Raziya became a US citizen after studying at the Institute. Then, she became an informed voter by participating in New Americans Vote! (From left) Institute Board member Rod Kerner of Commerce Bank, Raziya, and Charles Bryson, Special Assistant to Mayor Francis Slay.

Beth Radtke/International Institute

Community Support

Beth Radtke; VP Development & Communications

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In 2004 hundreds of individuals and community organizations of all kinds found unique and meaningful ways to welcome newcomers to the metro area. More than 25 churches, school classes, scout troops and other groups organized collection drives, amassing necessities such as baby items, school supplies, personal care goods, and Warm Welcome packages for new refugee arrivals. Since 2000, Nerinx Hall High School has collected hundreds of coats and warm-winter accessories.

Throughout the year, but primarily during the winter holiday season, generous area residents “adopted” some 60 refugee families through the agency and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s* 100 Neediest Cases program. Newly-arrived refugee children visited “Give Kids a Smile,” which provides free dental work to low-income children. The Buddhist Tzu-Chi Foundation donated 96 brand-new comforters for the eighth year in a row. Year-after-year, so many dedicated groups bring their members together to support our mission.

The agency is especially grateful to Harrah’s St. Louis Casino & Hotel, which prepared and donated our traditional Thanksgiving feast. More than 450 refugee and immigrant newcomers, as well as special guests, enjoyed the annual celebration.

Beth Radtke/International Institute



Farhiya from Somalia worked one-on-one with dedicated volunteers, including Galye Hookerman (pictured here), in the Institute’s after-school program. Now Farhiya will be attending college!



Katherine Bish/International Institute

Afghan refugee children can have fun at the annual Festival of Nations while sharing their culture in the form of beautiful ethnic costumes with other festival-goers.

Volunteers – Hooray!

The agency’s growing volunteer program helps eager community members use their time and talents to benefit newcomers from across the globe. In 2004, more than 750 volunteers provided 13,800 hours of assistance valued at \$240,000.

The agency’s most popular volunteer positions are in our Literacy Tutorial for adults and After-School Tutoring and Support for refugee teens. Dozens of chaperones accompanied our families on Saturday *Discover St. Louis* field trips. Trained home visitors helped 30 newly-arrived refugee families become accustomed to their surroundings. Nearly 50 people helped prepare tax returns for more than 100 refugee families.

Students from local universities and high schools completed hundreds of service hours. Twenty university students provided as many as 40 hours weekly in internship or practicum experiences with us. Nearly 20 high school students donated one or more months of community service time.

Volunteer assistance is absolutely critical to our numerous special events, including our fast-growing Festival of Nations in Tower Grove Park. More than 300 community members helped with children’s arts & crafts activities, beverage sales, clean-up and other important duties at this spectacular annual event.

At our annual Spring Volunteer Reception, Garie Perry was recognized for 25 incredible years of service as a volunteer Teacher Aide. In November, Jose Salkeld, also a Teacher Aide, was awarded the 2004 Community Quarterback Award by the St. Louis Rams and the NFL.

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Mr. & Mrs. Robert Yu
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Ms. Shari K. Aguilar
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Mr. Amer Al-Yasiry
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Financial Statement*

For Year Ending 12/31/04

TOTAL ALL FUNDS REVENUES

United Way	\$183,523
Contributions	\$163,974
Contracts and Grants	\$4,547,446
Donated Services	\$473,744
Fees, Sales to the Public, and Other Revenue	\$415,645

Total Revenues **\$5,784,332**

TOTAL ALL FUNDS EXPENSES

Social Services	\$1,637,673
Education	\$820,037
Employment	\$783,916
Promotion of Intercultural Understanding	\$169,262
Cultural Transition	\$1,407,442
Youth Services	\$169,521
Support Services	\$654,214
Fundraising	\$62,617

Total Expenses **\$5,261,323**

CURRENT FUND

Revenues in Excess of Expenses	\$79,650
Fund Balance on 12/31/03	\$3,090,557
Fund Balance on 12/31/04	\$3,170,207

Address questions to:

Anna Crosslin, President
(314) 773-9090, ext 119

*Unaudited Statement as of 3/1/05.



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St. Louis, MO 63118

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Mission

To strengthen the St. Louis community by helping immigrants and their families become secure and successful Americans and by promoting the value of ethnic diversity in the social, cultural and economic life of the region.

Core Values

*Multicultural
Competence
Ethnic Diversity
Community Partnering
Global Perspective
Service Focus
Entrepreneurial
Leadership
Integrity*

2004 Annual Report of the International Institute

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