

Welcome, **Opportunity.** Welcome,
Courage. Welcome, **Brave.**

Welcome, **Different.** Welcome,
Reinvention. Welcome, **Revitalization.**

Welcome, **Determination.** Welcome,
Perseverance. Welcome, **Enterprising.**

Welcome, **New Beginnings.**

Welcome, **New Thinking.** Welcome,
Expanded Horizons. Welcome,
International Nonstop Flights.

Welcome, **International Hub.**

Welcome, **New Renaissance.**

Welcome, **Greater Prosperity for All.**

Welcome, **Next 100 Years.**

Welcome to **St. Louis.**

Welcome,
Greater Prosperity for All.

Welcome,
Next 100 Years.

Welcome to

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INSTITUTE
SAINT LOUIS



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LAST YEAR WAS A YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS in our work at the International Institute of St. Louis. The year marked the first year of our three-year strategic plan and the implementation of our expanded vision and mission.

Our new vision, outlined in the pages ahead, changes how we look at our work to see the bigger picture. While in the past we focused primarily on providing resettlement services, today we are focusing on the immense value and potential that immigrants and refugees provide to our region and working to make that potential a reality.

The most successful and fastest-growing metropolitan areas across the nation have strong international roots and a significant percentage of foreign-born residents. For St. Louis to keep pace with other metro areas, it's imperative that we grow our foreign-born population and make St. Louis an international hub once again.

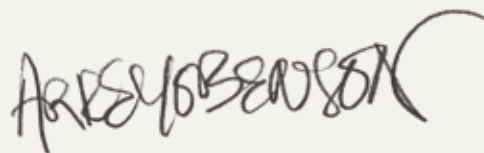
Growth, however, does not often come without challenges. In 2022, we welcomed the largest single influx in our more than one-hundred-year history with the arriving Afghan refugees. This presented us with the opportunity to put our vision and strategic goals to the test.

I'm proud of how our organization responded to these challenges, developing new innovations and partnerships with many other organizations along the way. The Afghan Support Program, as just one example, provides a template for how to expedite the success of new arrivals and make St. Louis known as a welcoming city for all.

As an organization, we are working to become more agile and think beyond traditional approaches to be more innovative in how we serve our clients for both their benefit and the greater region.

Our vision is intentionally bold, but it is born out of necessity. It is also not something we can achieve on our own. Our donors and partners, who are equally committed to the success of the greater region, will help us make this vision a reality.

On behalf of all of us at the International Institute of St. Louis, thank you for supporting our mission of welcoming the world to St. Louis to create greater prosperity for all.



Arrey Obenson
President and CEO

A MULTI-
CULTURAL,
GLOBAL
ST. LOUIS IS
MORE
PROSPEROUS
FOR ALL

04

Welcoming the world to St. Louis for more than a century

WHEN WE WELCOME THE WORLD, we welcome greater opportunity.

We welcome a more robust workforce with diverse talents and experiences.

As data shows, we welcome increased small business creation, higher home values, lower unemployment rates, increased economic growth, and greater prosperity for all.

We also welcome a more dynamic and culturally rich home with greater relevance and standing on the world stage.

What was true one hundred years ago is just as true today: Immigration makes a region stronger and is an essential driver of growth and prosperity.

Since 1919, the International Institute of St. Louis has welcomed generations of immigrants and refugees to St. Louis.



The Afghan story then and now: (left) Ahmad, an IT professional at the institute, is pictured front and center with then President of Afghanistan before the overthrow by mujahideen factions in 1992; (right) Mr. Azimi and his family arrive at St. Louis Lambert International Airport on July 25, 2022

Today, the institute provides integration services to more than six thousand foreign-born people from eighty countries. Nearly one thousand volunteers and one hundred staff members help provide citizenship and language classes, job training and placement, small business development and microloans, and more.

We live in a global era. The most successful and rapidly growing metro areas have deep international roots and a thriving percentage of foreign-born residents. For our region to

prosper in the years ahead, we need to attract and welcome greater numbers of immigrants and refugees.

The International Institute's work has always been centered on transformation and new beginnings. Today, we are reinventing our own organization's work and mission, highlighted in the pages ahead, to provide a greater impact for the St. Louis region.

We are committed to making the most of the many opportunities that immigration provides to create a more welcoming and prosperous St. Louis for all.

Highlights of 2022

From welcoming a sudden influx of refugees displaced by conflicts in Afghanistan and Ukraine to reviving the popular Festival of Nations, 2022 was a year of growth and furthering our mission.

Welcoming Afghan Refugees to St. Louis

THE FALL OF KABUL to the Taliban in August of 2021 created significant upheaval in the lives of thousands of people who fled the country for safety and freedom. In 2022, we welcomed the challenge of resettling nearly six hundred Afghan refugees—the largest volume of new arrivals in our more than one-hundred-year history.

To meet the surge of need, the International Institute launched the Refugee Command Center in partnership with Christian Friends of New Americans, Oasis International, and Welcome Neighbor STL to better align efforts and resources.



Afghan Community Center initiative is announced in August 2022.

The effort blossomed into a region-wide coalition of partners that today includes the Islamic Foundation of Greater St. Louis, Just Serve, Kindness Begins with Me, Little Angels Foundation, and St. Louis Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.

One of the most immediate challenges was a shortage of available housing. Thanks to

donors and partners, a housing fund was created to provide housing for our new Afghan neighbors for the first ninety days. We are proud to report that by May of 2022, all 594 Afghans from the first wave of refugees were settled in permanent housing.

Between August 2021 and the end of 2022, **the International Institute welcomed 1,064 Afghan refugees to St. Louis**. That total includes fifty-nine families (184 individuals total) who chose to relocate to St. Louis after initial resettlement in other U.S. cities.



A group of immigrants and refugees attend class at the institute's campus in 2022.

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In addition to new partnerships, our work in resettling Afghans also led to many new innovations, which are highlighted in the next section.

Our work in welcoming Afghans to St. Louis has just begun. We expect to welcome roughly seven hundred additional Afghans by the end of 2023, many of whom are currently residing in temporary settlement in Albania while awaiting U.S. visas.

Afghan Community Support Program: A Template for the Future

IN SOME WAYS, the turmoil in Afghanistan resembles the situation in Bosnia in the 1990s. Today, more than seventy-thousand Bosnians call St. Louis home—the largest population outside Bosnia. One of the reasons for this growth was the wave of secondary Bosnian migrants from other U.S. cities who were attracted to the region by word of mouth from the local community describing the many outstanding opportunities in St. Louis.

In 2022, the Afghan Community Support Program was created to replicate the success of the Bosnian migration by making St. Louis a preferred destination for Afghans. Launched with the leadership and generosity of attorney and Arch Grants founder Jerry Schlichter,

the first-of-its-kind program is designed to go above and beyond to make Afghans feel truly welcomed in St. Louis and expedite their path to success.

The program welcomes the growing community through a holistic range of supportive resources. The first of these is a \$500,000 housing fund. Because refugees arrive with no credit history and few resources, the fund acts as a co-signer to help secure rental



Children and volunteers gather at Futbol Club STL after a Soccer Saturday session. As part of the Afghan Support Program, children were invited to play soccer each week for free.

housing approval from landlords. Thanks to a 96% success rate in rental payments by Afghan renters, the fund is almost entirely intact to continue aiding new arrivals well into the future.

Housing is only the beginning. Through a new partnership with T-Mobile, iPads, cell phones, and internet access were provided so the new residents could be fully connected in their new city. In addition to serving the community through welcoming events and basic needs, the program is also providing \$15,000 grants to up to ten entrepreneurs and scholarships for a twelve-week computer software-coding program through Claim Academy.

The program also led to the creation of the **Afghan Community Center**. Planned and developed in 2022, the center was officially opened in 2023. A gathering place to bring the community together, the center provides resources that include English classes, creative activities for kids, mental health programs, and resources to empower Afghan women. An Afghan community newspaper was also created to share news of the extensive, ongoing developments within our work and the community.

The center also houses the **Afghan Chamber of Commerce**, which also launched in early 2023. The chamber focuses on economic, employment, and entrepreneurial development within the community through a variety of employment and business training, access to loans, and other education and support.

“We want to make St. Louis the most welcoming and embracing city in the U.S. for Afghans,” says Moji Sidiqi, who runs the Afghan Community Support Program and serves as a liaison to the community. Sidiqi was born in Afghanistan and spent most of her childhood in Moscow before moving to St. Louis with her family. She says, “What we are providing here is not being done anywhere else.”

Recently, members of the International Institute and partners traveled to temporary settlements in several cities in Albania to promote the great things being offered in St. Louis.

These efforts, programs, and activities illustrate how we are thinking far beyond basic resettlement services. We are working to make St. Louis a more welcoming, preferred destination for future immigrants and refugees and those who have resettled in other U.S. cities.

Welcoming Ukrainians and Others

IN EARLY 2022, the conflict in Ukraine created another wave of refugees. In St. Louis, most of the estimated three hundred refugees who arrived in 2022 were sponsored by local families through a private sponsorship program. Though the institute did not see a continued influx of Ukrainian refugees, we are gearing up to welcome up to nine hundred refugees throughout 2023.

We also welcomed many others in 2022, including Burmese, Congolese, Cubans, Guatemalans, Haitians, and Syrians. As with the success experienced by the Afghan population, all of these new arrivals are settled and thriving within the St. Louis community.

Festival of Nations

SINCE 1934, the Festival of Nations has been the premier multicultural event in St. Louis. Through the sharing of music, art, food, and traditions, the event is a celebration of the many diverse national origins in St. Louis as well as the common bonds of our shared city and humanity.

In August of 2022, the Festival of Nations was held in Tower Grove Park after two years

*Attendees
celebrate
the Festival
of Nations in
2022.*



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of scaled-back productions due to the pandemic. The highly anticipated return was a major success, with the more than one hundred thousand people at the two-day event enjoying art, cultural dance and music performances, and cuisine from more than seventy-five nations around the world.

Anna E. Crosslin Center for Multicultural Excellence

IN 2022, WE BEGAN TAKING STEPS to make a long-held dream of the organization a reality by making plans for the Anna E. Crosslin Center for Multicultural Excellence.

Named in honor of the institute's longtime CEO and multicultural thought leader, the center will bring a world of diverse cultures within St. Louis closer together to harness the power of multiculturalism in our region.

By valuing the dignity and strengths of every individual, the center will work to foster excellence within our businesses, organizations, schools, and other institutions throughout our region to ensure a welcoming St. Louis for all where every person can thrive.

The center will showcase the unique experiences, talents, and strengths of the many cultures within St. Louis; host experiential learnings and simulations to deepen understanding and expand horizons; and work with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and other professionals to build more inclusive, connected, and engaged organizations to drive innovation and growth.

World Refugee Day

ON JUNE 18, WE CELEBRATED World Refugee Day at the institute's campus. The event was held to honor the resilience of the refugees in our community and to build empathy for and understanding of their individual journeys and experiences.

In addition to a variety of music and cultural performances and activities, the day featured refugee story videos, self-guided interactive learning experiences, conversation and reflection on the experiences of refugees in our community, and a silent auction to support our refugee community.



Afriky Lolo guides attendees in group dance.

Ubuntu

ON NOVEMBER 17, WE CELEBRATED the spirit of Ubuntu with an event showcasing our work and exciting vision for the future. An ancient African word that means "I am because we are," Ubuntu encapsulates the truth that our individual destinies are so intertwined that we must lean on and collaborate with each other to succeed as individuals and a community.

At the event, we honored the legacy of former International Institute President and CEO Anna Crosslin by announcing the founding of the Anna E. Crosslin Center for Multicultural Excellence. We also unveiled our vision for the next one hundred years to harness the power of immigration and multiculturalism to make St. Louis a welcoming, global region that creates greater prosperity for all.

2022 Impact by the Numbers

1,423*

total new arrivals

65%

adults

35%

children

ARRIVALS BY NATIONALITY

405

Afghans

603

Ukrainians

127

Congolese

88

Cubans

30

Syrians

24

Iraqis

17

Sudanese

26

Haitians

104

individuals from more than 30 other nations, including Burundi, Guatemala, Myanmar, and Sudan

**includes 368 individuals resettled through our affiliate office in Springfield, Missouri*

EMPLOYMENT

282

job placements

9%

increase in hourly pay over 2021

87%

employment rate among Afghans within six months of arrival

EDUCATION

513

attendees at English to Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes

151

participants in citizenship classes

105

after-school students

61

recipients of computer instruction

9

Career Advancement for International Professions (CAIP) graduates

29

youth mentoring students

15

participants in Bridge to College prep program

13

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

24

total loans provided to small businesses

14

business startup loans

5

business expansion loans

5

credit building loans

30

participants in business classes

19

attendees in financial literacy classes

FESTIVAL OF NATIONS

100k

attendees



14

AN INSIDE LOOK INTO THE AFGHAN REFUGEE EFFORT

Ajmal Arazem and his son Mateullah, 4, gather the family's luggage at baggage claim on November 16, 2021, at St. Louis Lambert International Airport. After two and half months of travel, the family of nine Afghan refugees arrived in St. Louis.

Laurie Skrivan/POST DISPATCH/POLARIS

FOR HUNDREDS OF REFUGEES FROM AFGHANISTAN, the resettlement journey started with the butterfly effect of a single social media post in 2021. The tweet came from Jason Kander, a prominent local nonprofit leader, former politician, and military veteran who served as an intelligence officer in Afghanistan. He asked if anyone knew a fearless immigration attorney.

People quickly started tagging Javad Khazaeli. The St. Louis lawyer had strong experience with both immigration and civil rights cases—and he had worked for the Department of Homeland Security for a decade, rising to become its senior terrorism prosecutor.

Kander was part of a small group working fervently ahead of the fall of Kabul to help evacuate thirty people, including family members of his former translator, whom he had earlier helped flee from Afghanistan. Kander's connections extended across the Biden administration and U.S. Congress and throughout Missouri from his time as the secretary of state. In addition, he kept in close contact with individuals and organizations around the world who were actively helping relocate Afghans whose lives were threatened by the imminent Taliban takeover.



Javad Khazaeli at his law firm, Khazaeli Wyrsh.

Khazaeli was immediately intrigued by the project for both professional and personal reasons. His parents had immigrated from Iran two years before the revolution, when he was a young child, so he could relate on a family level. “The Afghan and Iranian populations have a major intersection culturally,” Khazaeli explains. “It’s very much the same, just split by arbitrary geographic borders.” In addition, he was very familiar with the work happening around refugee resettlement in St. Louis. His aunt, Varasteh Khazaeli, had

worked for the International Institute for two decades, and Khazaeli himself was on its Community Development Corporation board.

Khazaeli agreed to help Kander coordinate the evacuation by reaching out to people he knew from his days at the Department of Homeland Security. The wings of the proverbial butterfly started to flutter.

Navigating shifting policies and priorities

BY THE END OF 2022, Khazaeli and Kander's efforts had intersected with dozens of organizations, including the International Institute and other St. Louis-based nonprofits, on behalf of a group that grew to more than three hundred Afghan refugees. Not only did they help the group safely leave Kabul, they arranged for them to be housed in Albania, where most still await immigration papers due to revised U.S. State Department policies



Afghan evacuees disembark from a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III at a naval air station on August 22, 2021.

that put the processing of their applications on the back burner.

Unwilling to leave the hundreds of refugees in limbo, Khazaeli, Kander, and other partners of the nonprofit Afghan Rescue Project successfully lobbied the department to revisit its policy—and in the fall of 2022, the U.S. government committed to processing all of the group’s applications by June 2023.

It was a triumph. “But then we ran into the question of where all these people would go,” Khazaeli says. “Because in the interim, Ukraine happened. Venezuela happened. Afghanistan went from the front page of the news to the back page. A lot of the cities that had been willing to take these people had hit capacity. Meanwhile, we were still trying to raise funds to keep them in Albania.”

Getting the group he calls “my Albanian Afghans” to the U.S. as quickly as possible is a priority for Khazaeli, who joined the International Institute’s board of directors in late 2022. He’s also looking forward to opportunities to support the institute using his hard-won knowledge of refugee resettlement, immigration, and civil rights.

A life shaped by global events

KHAZAELI’S LIFE HAS ALWAYS BEEN intertwined with global events. A particularly dramatic turn came when he was a college senior hoping to enter the Congressional Administrative Law Program at Washington University in St. Louis, a goal he had worked toward for years. “The day after I got accepted, 9/11 happened,” he says. The eyes of the world turned toward terrorism.

Khazaeli’s job once he entered the program was with Sen. Jean Carnahan of Missouri. Terrorism once again intersected with his life, this time in the form of an anthrax-laced letter to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle’s office. “The day I did my interview with Senator Carnahan, the anthrax letter showed up,” Khazaeli recalls. When he started work in early 2002, Carnahan’s office was still being decontaminated.

While working for Carnahan, he learned about the Presidential Management Fellowship Program, an honors program for graduate students interested in joining government service. Acceptance into that program led to a job with the Immigration and Naturalization Service’s national security unit, which later became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

For nearly a decade, Khazaeli practiced immigration law within a terrorism context. “I always considered it to be a terrorism job,” he says. “But we did immigration too.” He then worked in Chicago with a U.S. Department of Labor immigration program for a few years before achieving his goal of starting his own law firm in 2014.

All of those experiences honed Khazaeli’s ability to handle pressure at the highest levels.



And that would be provident for the 2021 Afghan refugee evacuation project with Kander, because it quickly escalated beyond a relatively straightforward evacuation of thirty people into a much more complex scenario involving hundreds.

Negotiating an international evacuation from a war zone

DURING THE DAYS LEADING UP TO THE FALL OF KABUL—an incredibly chaotic time, as we now know from official U.S. government reports—Kander and Khazaeli had arranged for their group of thirty people to fly out from the airport in Kabul. The Afghans were about a hundred yards from the entrance when a suicide bomber wrecked the plan.

Kander and Khazaeli came up with a second plan to fly the group from Mazar-i Sharif, about eight hours from Kabul. The only transportation they could arrange was a 370-seat jet. To pay for it—and fill it with as many refugees as possible—they started working with other ad hoc groups that were trying to evacuate Afghans. They organized a fake four-day wedding so the growing group would have a hall to sleep and eat in until their departure. Meanwhile, they arranged for the plane to fly to Georgia and then Albania.

“This was all done with State Department knowledge and the backing of high-level officials in the U.S., Georgia, and Albania,” Khazaeli says. But the logistics took valuable time, and the group did not depart until a week after the U.S. government stopped sending planes out. That proved to be an important detail. When the State Department changed its policy for priority processing of Afghan refugees, the cutoff was its last official flight out. Kander and Khazaeli’s group didn’t qualify—hence their lobbying campaign to overturn the change in late 2022.

St. Louis as a refugee haven

MEANWHILE, AFGHANS WERE COMING TO THE U.S. via other programs and agencies. The first family from the Afghan Rescue Project to resettle in St. Louis, the Azimi family of four, landed to much fanfare in July 2022, and others have followed. Khazaeli expects most of the rest to arrive in mid-2023.

Although there’s a perception that the influx of Afghans to St. Louis is a recent phenomenon, Khazaeli points out that there was already a good-sized Afghan community here. “We have very large immigrant populations of every sort,” he says. “It’s just that in a city like St. Louis that is so car dependent, people spread out. You don’t see areas where the cultural affinity is all together.”

Many other prominent St. Louisans have also stepped forward in support—such as Jerry Schlichter, a local attorney and a founder of Arch Grants. In January 2022, he started the Afghan Community Support Program, an umbrella for housing and other resources. The program has been instrumental in launching an Afghan community center, chamber



Second graders Avery Frank, 7, Sophie Williamson, 7, and Afghan refugee Sumaya Arazem, 7, run during a game of jump rope tag at Mesnier Primary School in Affton.

Laurie Skrivan/POST DISPATCH/POLARIS

of commerce, a newspaper, immersive coding classes, children's soccer, and funding opportunities like entrepreneurial business grants.

"We have the capacity to welcome and resettle up to one thousand more Afghans currently in Albania who, like the Afghan Rescue Project group, are similarly waiting for State Department processing so that they can make St. Louis their new home," says Arrey Obenson, president and CEO of the International Institute.

Khazaeli explains that "one of the tenets of refugee resettlement is to send people to the place where they're most likely to succeed. So the first priority is always anywhere they have family." In addition, some refugees have sponsors, often former employers or people they met while translating. About one hundred of the individuals in Albania with the Afghan Refugee Project have families or sponsors waiting for them across the U.S.

“The two hundred or so remaining are people who don’t have a connection to anywhere in America, so their best place is probably St. Louis, where we already have a culture,” Khazaeli says. “And they’ll be moving with people they’ve been connected to for the past year and a half.”

Khazaeli has traveled to Albania several times to extend St. Louis’ warm welcome. He has continued to learn more about resettlement by connecting with people like Arindam Kar, a fellow attorney who regularly handles pro bono immigration matters. Kar, the immediate past chair of the International Institute Board of Directors, is currently helping lead the region’s effort resettling Afghan special immigrant visa holders, humanitarian parolees, and refugees.

“The things we’re doing here in St. Louis are way different from what other places are doing,” Khazaeli says. “We have several natural selling points.” For example, “We have a very low cost of living here. We’re centrally located. There’s a major demand for workers in the nonprofessional space. And the political and civic infrastructure here realizes that growth in the St. Louis area has to involve an expansion of immigrants.”

Along with those attributes, Khazaeli points to the International Institute’s long track record of resettlement and building community acceptance as St. Louis’ ace in the hole. “The International Institute is a world-class organization that has done this work

successfully many times,” he says. “The fact that most people associate the institute with the Festival of Nations—one of the region’s most popular events—shows that we have avoided a lot of the political stuff that typically happens in the resettlement world.”

Looking ahead to the next century

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE HAS SHOWN remarkable resilience since its founding in 1919, weathering many periods of anti-immigrant sentiment and substantial threats to its funding as recently as the late 2010s.

“Many resettlement organizations collapsed during the Trump years,” Khazaeli says.

“They’re gone. That shows how fragile the environment is. It also shows all of the work we have to pick up because we’re consolidating into fewer organizations nationwide.”

As a new board member, Khazaeli feels a sense of optimism that’s tempered by on-the-ground realities. “The institute has to figure out how to insulate ourselves so that we are not affected by political winds,” he says. “For as much great work as we do, toward the end of the Trump years, no refugees were coming. Even the program to bring people



Khazaeli and his family

who fought alongside U.S. troops was shut off.”

Khazaeli is excited about the institute’s new strategic initiatives and looks forward to contributing to them. “Right now we have some unique opportunities, like housing development, that will have a long-term, transformational effect on the organization and the region,” he says. “That will help the institute become less dependent on federal funding.”

He’s also excited about the power of human connections—like the ones his own family has forged. “I took the first family to settle in St. Louis from Albania, the Azimi family, to my mom’s for Thanksgiving, and my parents were able to communicate with them in Farsi,” he says. But he adds, “The nice part is that there are a lot of translators in this group.” By the time the 2023 Festival of Nations rolls around, Khazaeli expects that they will be ready and able to celebrate with their new St. Louis neighbors.



Palwashah Arazem hugs her daughters, Shogofa, 11, and Kojesta, 9, on hearing about their first day of school at Gotsch Intermediate School while her eldest child Nooria, 15, prepares dinner at their home in Affton.

Laurie Skrivan/POST DISPATCH/POLARIS

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BUILDING US AN INTERNATIONAL JOB AGAIN

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN a driving force in the building and growth of America. This is as true today as it was in our country's beginning,

and it is also true for the St. Louis region.

The most successful and fastest-growing metropolitan regions in the United States have a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than the national average. They are known as places of opportunity where immigrants can thrive. For the St. Louis region to remain competitive in the years ahead, we must build on the great work done to date.

Immigration presents an enormous opportunity for our region.

More than ever, the needs of immigrants and refugees worldwide and the needs of our city and region are mutually aligned: Immigrants and refugees need a welcoming city where it is still possible to achieve the American dream. And St. Louis needs an influx of new residents to grow and energize our population, revitalize our city, strengthen our workforce and supply chain, ignite our region's economy, and elevate St. Louis' standing on the national and world stage.

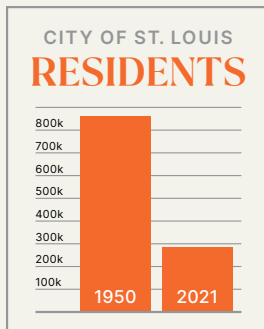


To capitalize on the opportunity before us, **the International Institute of St. Louis is evolving our work and mission to welcome greater numbers of immigrants and refugees, revitalize our population, ignite our workforce and economy, and transform St. Louis into a global, multicultural region creating greater prosperity for all.**

Growing and energizing our population

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, St. Louis has struggled to keep pace with the growth of many other metropolitan areas throughout the U.S.

At its peak in the 1950s, the city of St. Louis had eight hundred thousand residents. In 2021, the city of St. Louis dropped below three hundred thousand residents for the first time, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data.



This decline also extends to the greater region. **From 2010 to 2020, the St. Louis metro's population growth ranked forty-seventh out of the largest fifty regions. During that decade, the St. Louis region grew just 1.2% compared to 7.4% growth for the nation and slid from the twentieth largest U.S. metropolitan area to twenty-first, behind Baltimore.**

A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the population exodus in many of the largest cities cooled in 2022 thanks to more immigrants moving in. The St. Louis metropolitan area, however, lost roughly 0.5% of its population, roughly eleven thousand residents. Data from the New American Economy shows the loss in 2022 was greater than in the previous two years combined. By comparison, the next three metro areas on the list—Orlando, Charlotte, and San Antonio—all had significant population gains. If these trends continue, St. Louis is likely to drop out of the top twenty-five metro area ranking altogether within just a few years.

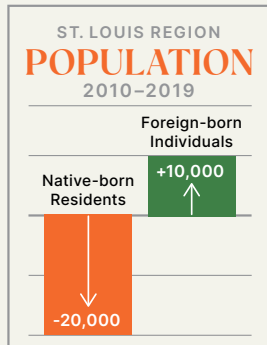
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Immigrants and refugees bolster our workforce and businesses in a variety of industries. Pictured left to right: Narcisa Przulj Symank, Gandy Masimbuka, Mina Hadzialic, and Yaman Alwan.

The bright spot is that, without new immigrants, our population decline over the last several years would have been far worse. Between 2010 and 2019, the St. Louis metropolitan area lost more than twenty thousand native-born residents but gained nearly ten thousand foreign-born individuals.

Immigration provides our most immediate opportunity for growth—with plenty of room for improvement. **In 2019, about 5.5% of the region's population was foreign-born**



compared to a national average of 14.6%, according to the St. Louis Federal Reserve. Other top metro areas have two to five times the share of foreign-born as the St. Louis region.

In contrast to larger, more expensive cities, St. Louis is also a region that provides immigrants with greater opportunities to succeed. A study by the George W. Bush Institute-SMU Economic Growth Initiative **ranks the St. Louis metro area sixth among America's largest one hundred metro areas where immigrants are thriving the most**, based on cost-of-living and

well-being measurements. The Dallas-based nonpartisan organization also listed St. Louis as one of several midwestern cities that “punch above their weight” in attracting immigrants through immigrant-welcoming initiatives.

For the St. Louis region to be competitive in the years ahead, we must do all we can to grow our foreign-born population and promote St. Louis as a welcoming region of opportunity for all.

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Igniting our workforce, supply chain, and economy

A continual influx of skilled workers and entrepreneurs is needed to drive our region's growth and make St. Louis more prosperous and competitive in the years ahead.

Immigration provides a direct pipeline of talented individuals who often arrive after overcoming significant challenges and are hungry for opportunities to succeed. From our own organization's data, we know that the **employment rate within the Afghan population alone is nearly 100% just months** after arrival.

The demand for workers by area businesses is at an all-time high. The institute receives a significant number of calls from area businesses looking for qualified, dependable workers.

Data from the New American Economy shows the immense value our immigrant population provides to our workforce, our businesses, and the prosperity of our region. Among the region's 132,797 foreign-born residents:

28.2%

have a **graduate degree** compared to 13.9% of U.S.-born residents

31.2%

more likely to be **entrepreneurs** than U.S.-born residents

\$5.8B

in **household income**, accounting for \$500.7 million in state and local taxes paid and \$4.2 billion in total spending power

There is no doubt about the key to our region's economic vitality and growth: Increasing our ability to attract and serve greater numbers of immigrants and refugees is vital for the success of our businesses and our region's economy.

Elevating our region's standing on the global stage

WE LIVE IN A GLOBAL ERA. The most successful cities in the U.S. have deep economic and cultural ties to the rest of the globe. To thrive in this era, St. Louis must become an international hub once again.

Increasing our immigrant and refugee population also elevates our region's standing on the global stage.

In addition to creating a truly multicultural region, increasing St. Louis' stature on the world stage has many benefits, from more nonstop international flights to making St. Louis a more attractive destination for global business.

While we are proud of the institute's history and work to date, we are excited about the potential to create a cultural and economic renaissance for St. Louis and a more thriving, prosperous region in the years ahead.



For over a century, we have welcomed

Afghans,

Bosnians,

Burmese,

Cameroonians,

Chinese,

Congolese,

Indians,

Iraqis,

Kenyans,

Koreans,

Mexicans,

Nigerians,

Sudanese,

Syrians,

Ukrainians,

Vietnamese,

and **many others,**

to become

Americans—

and **St. Louisans.**

Their origins are different.

Their story is the same.

They left all they knew behind.

Overcoming unrest, upheaval, and adversity.

For over a century, their success

has been our success.

Benefitting our **economy** and **culture,**

and giving St. Louis a greater foothold

on the world stage.

Welcome,

opportunity and

prosperity.

WELCOME TO **ST. LOUIS.**

TRANSFORMING ST. LOUIS INTO

A GLOBAL CITY

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CREATING GREATER PROSPERITY FOR ALL

Expanding our mission to meet the needs of our city and region

IMMIGRATION IS A TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITY for our city and region on multiple levels. From growing our population to reverse decades of decline to spurring further revitalization and bolstering our workforce and supply chain to ignite our economy, immigration provides a source of growth necessary for our region to remain competitive and relevant in the years ahead.

As we saw with the sudden influx of Afghans in 2022 and with more on the way, there is no shortage of need. There also is no time to wait. To ensure that St. Louis does not lose out on the opportunities before us, we must act now to increase our capacity to accommodate more significant numbers of immigrants and refugees.

To capitalize on the tremendous opportunity before us, the institute has set a goal of scaling its work to serve one thousand new arrival families a year by 2024 and ramping up to 3,500 families a year by 2030.

Year	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Families Served	750	1,000	1,250	2,000	2,250	2,500	3,000	3,500

To become a true facilitator of growth and transformation for our region—and an ambassador promoting St. Louis to the world—the institute has identified five pillars of transformation to guide our work moving forward.

Five Pillars of Transformation

PILLAR
ONE

HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE

TO DATE, the International Institute has relied on local landlords for its rental housing needs. Relying on third-party housing providers, however, reduces the institute's control over housing quality and availability. Housing development will also make the institute less dependent on federal funding and provide a new income stream to help fund programs and operations.

Creating a portfolio of housing infrastructure will provide the foundation to scale our work to serve larger immigrant and refugee populations and make a greater impact on St. Louis.

TRANSFORMING ST. LOUIS INTO A GLOBAL CITY CREATING OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL

PILLAR
ONE

**Housing
Infrastructure**

TRANSITIONAL • RENTAL
HOMEOWNERSHIP

PILLAR
TWO

**A Holistic
Approach**

FOR STRENGTHENING
INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

PILLAR
THREE

**Economic
Development**

PILLAR
FOUR

**Employment &
Entrepreneurial
Development**

PILLAR
FIVE

**Championing
Multiculturalism**



Grow
population

Bolster
workforce,
strengthen
supply chain

Ignite
region's
economy

Revitalize **STL**
neighborhoods
and
communities

Reinvent **STL**
as a global hub
and a welcoming
city creating
opportunity for all

The institute's Housing Fund and Advisory Board was created to research and identify innovative new housing opportunities, partnerships, and financing methods.

The advisory board will focus on three areas of housing:

Transitional Housing

Transitional, short-term housing plays an important role for new arrivals during the transitional and acculturation process. The institute will need an adequate portfolio of transitional housing to accommodate 3,500 arriving families a year by 2030.

Rental Housing

To achieve the goal of bringing 3,500 new immigrant and refugee families a year to St. Louis by 2030, the institute will need an abundance of quality rental housing.

The Housing Fund Advisory Board is working with potential partners to identify and finalize plans for new rental development.

New Home Construction

Homeownership is a vital part of the American dream. Creating an expedited path for immigrants and refugees to become homeowners and build generational wealth is essential for the success of those we serve as well as the greater region.

PILLAR
TWO

A HOLISTIC APPROACH for STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

PEOPLE HAVE MANY NEEDS that must be met to thrive truly—from basic needs to affordable housing, employment that provides a living wage, access to health care, transportation, and more. Because these needs are interdependent, it's essential to address them in a holistic, integrated manner.

In addition to continuing to provide language and acculturation services, the institute will create a network of partner organizations to help us offer a holistic suite of supportive services to create successful, thriving families.

The institute has created a pathway for families to attain self-sufficiency within three years of their arrival. Refining this pathway will be vital for scaling to serve 3,500 newly arriving families annually by 2030.

PILLAR
THREE

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS ESSENTIAL for creating thriving communities by providing jobs, access to goods and services, and stimulating local and regional economies.

Creating thriving foreign-born communities will require creating more small immigrant and refugee-owned businesses as well as attracting existing businesses such as grocery stores and health providers.

In addition to small business development, the institute will be exploring additional opportunities such as expanding the institute's Community Development Corporation's offerings with more products adaptable to the needs of our immigrant and refugee population and even a credit union to support building wealth in foreign-born communities and funding small businesses.

PILLAR
FOUR

EMPLOYMENT and ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT

LIKE MANY OTHER METRO AREAS, the St. Louis region faces a shortage of skilled workers across multiple industries. This severely hampers our supply chain, dampening the success of our businesses and our region's economy.

As an indicator of the severity of this issue, the International Institute receives several calls a week from prospective employers looking for workers.

Increasing our foreign-born residents—many of whom arrive with valuable industry skills and education—provides an immediate solution to alleviate the region's labor shortage and create more small businesses to grow our region's economy. Given the fierce competition for talent nationwide, this is also vital for maintaining our region's competitiveness.

There are many opportunities to explore, from potential partnerships with trade organizations and corporations to more robust employment and entrepreneurial development to even creating our own placement service.

PILLAR
FIVE

CHAMPIONING MULTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

A MORE global and multicultural St. Louis is a more prosperous St. Louis for all.

Diversity and multiculturalism make our companies and organizations more innovative and create a more dynamic, thriving region for us all. A more global

St. Louis also better positions our region to attract more international business, more nonstop flights, and other economic advantages.

Communicating the economic and cultural benefits of creating a welcoming, multicultural region is central to our plans for the future and our proposition for St. Louis.

Anna E. Crosslin Center for Multicultural Excellence

Named in honor of the institute's former CEO, the Anna E. Crosslin Center for Multicultural Excellence will serve as a regional and national resource hub for training and knowledge on the benefits of multicultural diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The center will help companies build more inclusive, connected, and engaged workforces and reach out to a more diverse customer base. The center will be instrumental in creating a more welcoming city for all.

Advocating for Existing Populations and Under-Resourced Communities

If St. Louis is to become a more welcoming city and embrace the strengths of multiculturalism, it cannot forget about our residents in under-resourced communities that have continually been left behind. The institute must work to be an advocate and catalyst for investing in these communities to fulfill the mission of creating a welcoming and prosperous region for all.

In addition to our work within the St. Louis region, we must also become ambassadors of St. Louis to the world—promoting St. Louis to communities throughout the U.S. and the world as a welcoming region where immigrants thrive.

Now is the time to be bold

AS AN ORGANIZATION AND A REGION, we must be intentionally bold in making St. Louis a place where greater numbers of immigrants today and in the future can thrive.

We must equip ourselves to meet the challenge of competing with other cities across the United States to attract greater numbers of foreign-born populations.

This is an opportunity to create an economic and cultural renaissance for the St. Louis region, position our region to better compete in the years ahead, and elevate St. Louis' standing within the global economy.

To growth, revitalization, and greater opportunity and prosperity for all, we must collectively and enthusiastically say, "Welcome to St. Louis."

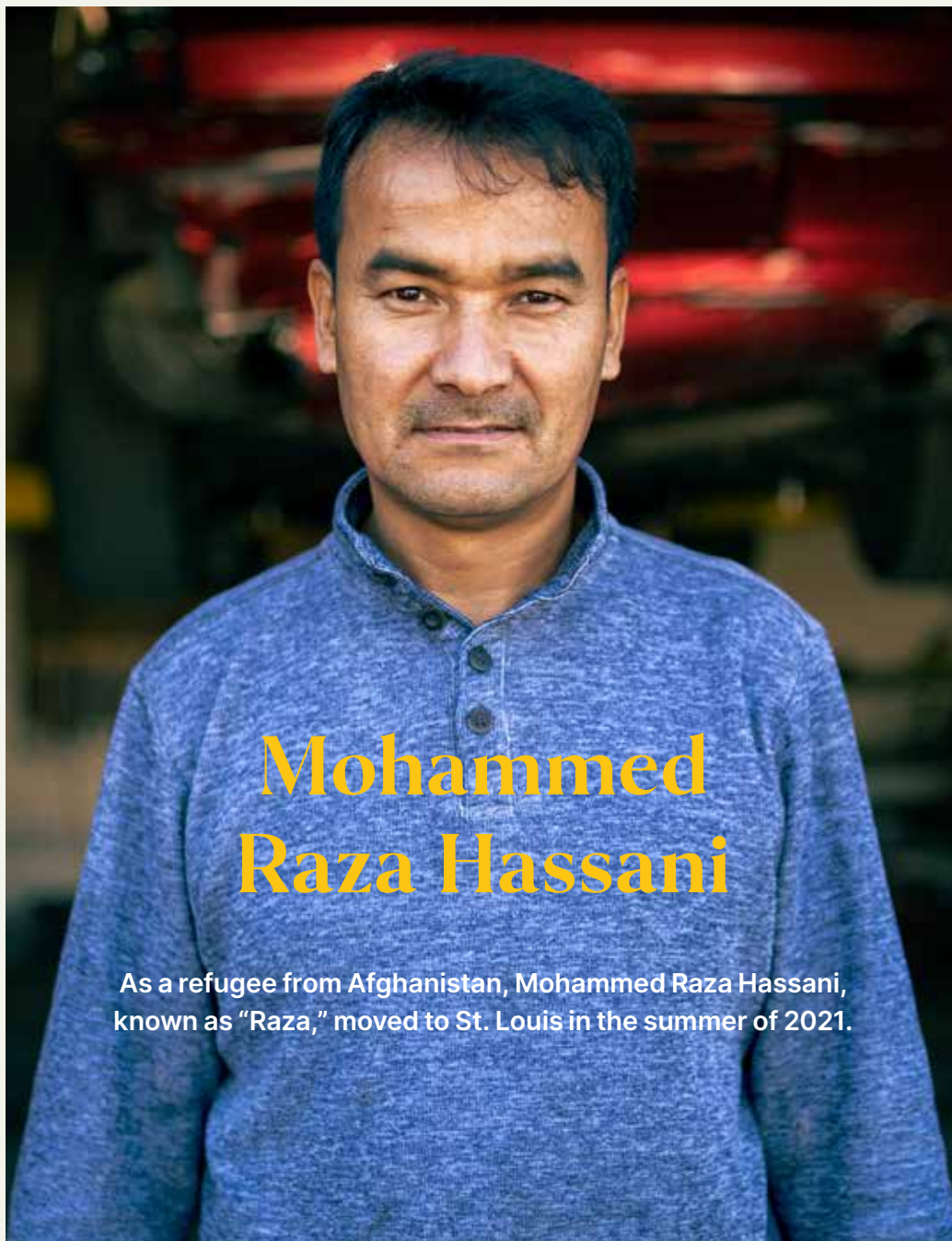


OVER THE YEARS, we've had the pleasure of witnessing countless new beginnings and stories of success. Many of these individuals remain closely involved with our organization. Others work alongside us and even sit on the International Institute Board of Directors. While their origins vary, their stories are the same. Over-



coming great challenges and adversity, they arrive with a determination to succeed. Their success adds to the success of the greater region, creating a more prosperous and global St. Louis for all. The following are a few of the many immigrants and refugees who credit their success to the support of the International Institute.

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Mohammed Raza Hassani

As a refugee from Afghanistan, Mohammed Raza Hassani, known as “Raza,” moved to St. Louis in the summer of 2021.

A HIGHLY SKILLED MECHANIC, Raza's father began training him in auto mechanics when he was young. He has worked in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and he boasts that he has worked on every type of vehicle and machine except airplanes.

The International Institute helped Raza set up doctor appointments and get settled into the St. Louis community, and he quickly found work as a mechanic. He initially worked in a body shop on South Grand and then for a truck repair business in downtown St. Louis. But the long daily commute was unsustainable.

When Raza learned that a friend had a commercial property available for rent, he seized the opportunity to open his own automotive shop. The International Institute Community Development Corporation guided him through writing a business plan and financing the launch of his business.

In the fall of 2021—just a few short months after his arrival—Raza Auto Sales & Repair opened its doors. Today, business is booming, and Raza employs two full-time staff members.

In October 2022, Raza became the first recipient of the Afghan Support Program's Afghan Entrepreneurship Grant. Through the process, Raza made valuable connections with other St. Louis entrepreneurs, support that will be instrumental in his plans to open a dealership in 2023 selling vehicles that he has refurbished. Raza's aspirations for expanding his business, his hard work, and success to date leave no doubt that he will achieve these dreams.

Summarizing the role of the institute in his journey, Raza says, "The International Institute is a resource for people to rise up and become successful."



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Jackline Noella

Jackline Noella, a vibrant single mother with two sons, came to St. Louis in November 2016 and immediately began working with the International Institute of St. Louis to become integrated into the community.

WHEN SHE FIRST ARRIVED IN ST. LOUIS with her two young sons, Jackline was worried about how she would learn English and find work to support her family. The International Institute helped her find a well-paying job and enroll her children in a nearby school. Jackline is frank about the challenges she faces raising two children on her own and credits the aid she received early on with enabling her to support herself and her family.

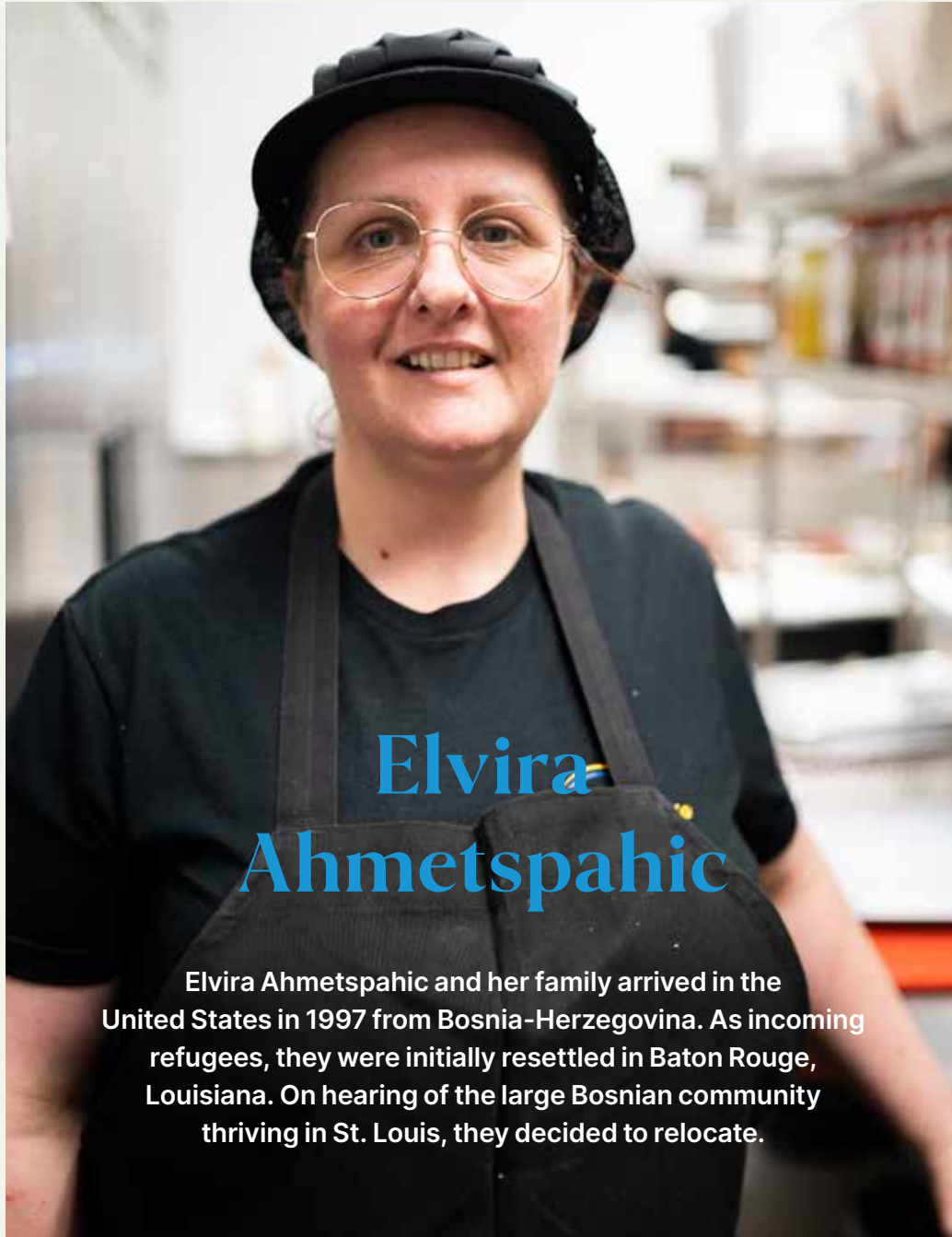
Thanks to the English classes she attended at the agency, she now confidently communicates and works as an interpreter. Her family has set down roots in the community, and Jackline is proud to have purchased her first home in 2022. She has planted a vegetable garden in her sunny backyard and looks forward to cooking and sharing the dishes she grew up with in Africa.

Looking to the future, Jackline is focused on continuing to provide for her sons and paying off her mortgage. She also plans to go back to school so she can pursue even better job opportunities. With a smile, she says, “One day, I want to be a big boss woman!”

Having recently become a U.S. citizen, Jackline looks eagerly ahead to the opportunities unfolding before her. Radiating peaceful joy, she describes how she will pursue the paths and possibilities that she says the International Institute opened to her. “All of us refugees and immigrants, when we start our lives here, we begin with the International Institute,” she says. “The organization and staff provide us the ability to become who we are.”



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Elvira Ahmetpahic

Elvira Ahmetpahic and her family arrived in the United States in 1997 from Bosnia-Herzegovina. As incoming refugees, they were initially resettled in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. On hearing of the large Bosnian community thriving in St. Louis, they decided to relocate.

ELVIRA'S FIRST CHILD WAS BORN two months after they arrived. With the help of the International Institute of St. Louis, she studied English and found employment in a factory, a furniture store, and a hotel.

In 2000, Elvira earned a real estate license and became a successful realtor for seven years, during which time her second child was born. She enjoyed the flexible schedule that real estate provided, but by the time her youngest child began kindergarten she was ready for a change.

Elvira had attended culinary school in Bosnia and had always dreamed of running her own professional kitchen. With help from the International Institute's Community Development Corporation, in 2020 she launched a catering business, Taste of Bosnia. Although the COVID-19 pandemic presented an immediate challenge, she was able to reach customers through the institute's Wednesday Lunches and Takeout Dinners. Her food

rapidly gained a loyal following, and by 2021 she was ready to expand beyond the shared commercial kitchen she had been using.

On June 23, 2021, Elvira and her husband, Emil, opened Taste of Bosnia in its current location in the Bevo Mill neighborhood. Business continues to surpass her expectations, and she and her staff are thriving, serving dine-in customers throughout the day and filling catering orders on the weekends.

Elvira prides herself on being able to offer every guest a personalized experience while they enjoy the best Bosnian food in St. Louis.



2022 Financial Statement

For the Twelve Months Ending Saturday, December 31, 2022

NET INCOME/LOSS STATEMENT

INCOME

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions	2,498,257
Total Contributions	2,498,257

FOUNDATIONS

Foundations	654,395
Total Foundations	654,395

GRANTS & FEES

Federal, State, Local	4,635,644
Fees for Services	10,806,759
Special Funds	21,688
Total Grants & Fees	15,464,090

PROGRAMS

Interpreting Services	56,518
Translation Services	31,016
Booth Rentals	75,259
Immigration Fees	49,335
Misc Fees	11,928
Total Program Income	224,056

OTHER INCOME

Sales	135,524
Interest	19,390
Miscellaneous	328,152
Total Revenue	19,323,863

EXPENSES

SALARIES, BENEFITS, TAXES

Fundraising	77,548
Program	3,562,468
Management & General	937,869
Employee Benefits	596,366
Payroll Taxes	377,446
Total Salaries, Benefits, Taxes	5,551,697

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANTS

Translation & Interpreting	80,239
Program Consulting	357,958
Subcontractor Incl RCA/RMA	5,915,441
IT Consulting	233,996
Temporary Employees	89,433
Telephonic	108,793
Other Consultant/Services	167,080
Total Professional Consultants	6,952,940

OPERATIONS

Consumable Supplies	215,572
Occupancy	665,060
Equipment	385,369
Conf. Meetings and Special Events	182,705
Assistance to Individuals	4,922,410
Other Operations Expenses	312,553
Total Operations	6,683,669

DEPRECIATION/AMORTIZATION

Equipment & Building	142,570
Total Depreciation/Amortization	142,570

OTHER

Other	51,413
Total Other	51,413

Total Expenditures 19,382,288

NET INCOME/LOSS (58,425)

BALANCE SHEET

TOTAL ASSETS	
Cash	3,694,797
Accounts Receivable	116,630
Accounts Receivable - Grants	3,238,052
Prepaid Expenses	(1,491)
Due From IICDC	117,536
Investments	250,000
Other Current Assets	34,103
Total Current Assets	7,449,626
Property and Equipment	2,338,269
Less: Accum. Depreciation - F&F	(1,123,214)
Improvements to Building	2,129,264
Amort. of Building Improvement	(435,222)
Total Property and Equipment, Etc	2,909,098
TOTAL ASSETS	10,358,724
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable and accrued expenses	1,330,790
Accrued Vacation Payable	209,032
Deferred Revenue-Grants	283,646
Payroll Taxes withheld	(4)
Total Liabilities	1,823,464
LONG-TERM DEBT	557,937
NET ASSETS	8,035,749
Net Income and Loss for the period	(58,425)
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	10,358,724

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\$50,000-\$99,999

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