

RESILIENCE. RESOLVE. COMMUNITY.



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A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

With the completion of the Newcomer Center expansion, this past year marked a turning point for the Refugee Development Center. With support from the Michigan Community Center Grant, we expanded both our space and our ability to serve—creating a stronger, more connected hub for our community.

Each day inside the Center reflects that impact. Young children build early learning foundations while parents access support for housing, health, and stability. Students and youth engage in tutoring and leadership, gaining confidence and finding their voice. In the evenings, adults attend English classes, workforce training, and wellness programs—while also accessing legal and community resources through trusted partnerships.

Amid changing policies and growing uncertainty, many of the newcomers we serve are navigating instability in their daily lives. In response, we remain committed to providing safety, consistency, and clear pathways forward—working closely with partners to ensure individuals and families have the information and support they need to succeed and thrive.

This work comes to life through the people we serve. One young child, struggling to adjust in early learning, and his mother found guidance through consistent programming, home visits, and connections to developmental services—gaining both a plan and renewed confidence. Another participant, once hesitant to speak in class, built her English and digital skills, secured employment, and supported her daughter's early development. A high school student, unsure how to pursue college, accessed mentorship and college pathways support and was recently accepted to Central Michigan University.

These stories reflect a broader network of care—where education, family support, and partnerships come together. The Newcomer Center is more than a building; it is a place where resilience grows, stability is fostered, and community is built every day.

Together, we are creating a future where newcomers have the support, opportunity, and connection to thrive.



Erika Brown-Binion

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Erika Brown-Binion".

Executive Director





HISTORY

The Refugee Development Center (RDC) was founded in 2002 to create a welcoming place where newcomers in Greater Lansing could learn, connect, and build their lives. What began as a small grassroots effort has grown into the Newcomer Center—a vibrant space where people find resources, belonging, and community.

Today, RDC serves as a bridge across Mid-Michigan, connecting newcomers to opportunities, relationships, and support. More than a service provider, it is a place where people come together to grow and thrive.

MISSION

Our mission is to cultivate a welcoming, thriving community that collaborates with refugees and newcomers through education, engagement and support.

VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are at the heart of our work, building connection and community alongside newcomers. To get involved, contact volunteer@rdclansing.org.

DONATE

Our work is powered by community generosity. Every gift stays local, supporting newcomers and strengthening Mid-Michigan. Give: rdclansing.org/en/donate





Education

We believe in education as a catalyst for community engagement and action.

Cultural Humility

We firmly believe in the equal value of all humans and the importance of respecting and honoring each individual.

Collaboration

We are committed to working in collaboration with newcomers and community partners, knowing that we are stronger together.

Commitment

We value the passion and contributions of our staff, board of directors, volunteers, community partners and newcomers in creating a just and welcoming community.

Innovation

We are committed to responsive services and continuous learning. We are open to new ideas, discovering new and better ways to assist with emerging and unmet needs.

welcoming

We seek to engage new and longtime residents as neighbors to foster an open and inclusive community where all people's gifts are valued.

Compassion

We model empathy by encouraging and supporting people's self-efficacy and strengths.



“Beyond feeling valued by the organization, this is the most patriotic thing I do. Paying back what others did to support my forebearers when they arrived here under the same circumstances as many who are served at the RDC makes our country stronger.”

–RDC Volunteer





Program Spotlight



Circles of Support

healing together

I really like that the things that we talked about in the circle stay here...I don't feel like I'm being judged by my community."



Circles of Support (COS), launched in 2025 through a partnership with TreeTops Collective, brings newcomers together in small, culturally grounded groups to explore mental wellness, share their experiences, and build community. Led by facilitators who share language and lived experience, these circles create spaces rooted in trust, connection, and care.

Across all groups, participants have found meaningful support—processing challenges, building resilience, and forming lasting connections while navigating life in a new community

"This program helped us release the pent up pressures and problems accumulated from the days of war, migration, and the inability to provide protection for ourselves and our families. It also helped us make friends within the group." COS Participant



PROGRAMS &

K-12 Youth

The K-12 Youth Program is rooted in collaboration—bringing together students, educators, and community partners to create a supportive, enriching after-school space for newcomer youth. Each day, students come to learn, build friendships, and grow academically and socially in a welcoming environment.

This work is made possible through strong partnerships with organizations including Michigan State University, Reach Art Studio, CapCAN, Lansing Community College, Capital Area District Libraries, and All of the Above Hip Hop. Together, these collaborations expand opportunities for youth to explore their interests, access resources, and thrive as part of a connected community.



First Steps supports early childhood development by helping young children and their caregivers engage in learning from the very beginning. Through a focus on preschool readiness and parent-child play groups, families build skills, confidence, and routines that support a strong start in school.

This work is rooted in partnership, with programming delivered alongside Ingham ISD, Music with Teacher Liz, and Capital Area District Libraries (CADL). Together, these collaborations create accessible, engaging opportunities for families to learn, connect, and grow.

First Steps

Adult Education

Adult Education supports newcomers in building the English skills needed to navigate daily life and pursue their goals. Through flexible, community-based learning, participants gain confidence to both survive and thrive across multiple levels.

Partnerships with Peckham, Michigan State University (MSU), Capital Area District Libraries (CADL), CapCAN, CATA, the Global Institute of Lansing (GIL), and Lansing School District (LSD) create a stronger, more vibrant program.



PARTNERSHIPS



Pathway, our newest program, supports students through open computer labs, workshops, and classes that build practical skills for navigating daily life and reaching personal goals.

This work is made possible through partnerships with the Financial Empowerment Center, CASE Credit Union, Capital Area Housing Partnership, Consumers Energy, the Board of Water and Light, the Michigan Secretary of State, Ingham County Health Department, United Way/VITA, and many others—creating a connected network of support.

Pathway

Navigation

Navigation provides individualized support to help families access essential resources, including health care, housing, basic needs, and crisis intervention. Through daily appointments, staff offer personalized guidance to families navigating complex systems.

This work is strengthened through partnerships with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Tri-County Office on Aging, the City of Lansing, Ingham County, Catholic Charities Refugee Services, and direct connections to Pathway program partners—ensuring coordinated, responsive support.



Family Engagement supports successful integration by connecting families to schools, resources, and community systems. Through school orientations, home visits, wellness support, and language access across programs, families are equipped to navigate and engage with their new community.

This work is strengthened through partnerships with TreeTops Collective, Lansing School District, Ingham Intermediate School District (IISD), Cornerstone Counseling, CACS Head Start, and Catholic Charities Refugee Services—creating a network of support for families.

Family Engagement

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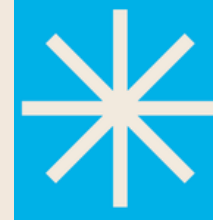
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FUNDERS & PARTNERS



- 7C Lingo
- ACCESS
- Accident Fund
- Afghan Association of Michigan
- All Faith Alliance for Refugees
- All of the ABove Hip Hop
- All Saints Episcopal Church
- Allen Neighborhood Center
- Advocates & Leaders for Police and Community Trust
- American Red Cross
- Anonymous Foundation
- Capital Area College Access Network
- Capital Area District Library
- Capital Area Health Alliance
- Capital Area Housing Partnership
- Capital Area Literacy Coalition
- Capital Area Michigan Works!
- Capital Area Transportation Authority
- Capital Region Community Foundation
- Community mental Health
- Catholic Charities of Ingham, Eaton and Clinton Counties
- CASE Credit Union
- Central Free Methodist Church
- Central United Methodist Church
- City of Lansing
- Cook Family Foundation
- Cornerstone Counseling
- Child and Family Charities
- Clarkston United Methodist Church
- Community Mental Health
- Davies Project
- Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
- Eastminster Presbyterian Church-East Lansing
- Foster Community Health Center
- Financial Empowerment Center
- Global Institute of Lansing
- Great Parents, Great Start
- Greater Lansing Food Bank- Garden Project
- Health Equity Council
- Holt Presbyterian Church
- Holt School District
- Ingham County
- Ingham County Health Department
- Ingham Intermediate School District
- Interfaith Clergy of Greater Lansing
- Immigrant and Refugee Resource Collaborative
- Immigration Law and Justice Michigan
- Islamic Center of East Lansing
- Izzo Legacy Foundation
- Jackson
- Just B Yoga
- Junior League
- Lansing Common FC
- Lansing Community College
- Lansing Arts Council
- Lansing School District
- Lansing Economic Area Partnership
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
- Michigan Immigrant Rights Center
- Michigan Secretary of State
- Michigan State University (MSU)
- MPHI - Refugee Systems of Care Project
- MSU Center for Community Engaged Learning
- MSU College of Education
- MSU College of Engineering
- MSU Residential College of Arts and Humanities
- MSU Immigration Law Clinic
- Music with Teacher Liz
- Nonprofit Network
- Office of Global Michigan
- Peckham
- Power of We
- REACH Studio Art Center
- Redhead Creative Consultancy
- Samaritas
- Southside Community Kitchen
- Summerplace Townhomes
- The Reading People
- TreeTops Collective
- Tri-County Office on Aging
- United Way of South Central Michigan
- Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lansing
- Waverly School District
- Welcome U.S.
- WKAR
- And, Many Generous Donors

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“No matter what religion, culture, race, country, or gender you belong to, you will always have an opportunity through this door.” - Omar



Resilience, resolve, and community are at the heart of this work. Each person, organization, and connection plays a role in building something stronger together. At the Refugee Development Center, we witness the resilience of newcomers as they rebuild their lives, and their resolve as they pursue new opportunities. With access to education, resources, and support, that strength grows—benefiting not just individuals and families, but the entire community. When we invest in one another, we create a network that carries us through challenges. And when we uplift others, we strengthen us all.



How to Volunteer
volunteer@rdclansing.org

How to Donate
rdclansing.org/en/donate

