SOFT LANDING MISSOULA 2020 IMPACT REPORT

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## WHAT A YEAR...REFLECTING ON 2020 IS A CHALLENGE IN AND OF ITSELF!

For many, including some of the families we work with, 2020 brought unforeseeable heartache: lost jobs, lost loved ones, crushing isolation, anxiety about the future. For many others, it brought out incredible generosity, giving time and resources to alleviate some of the year's hardships. This year pushed us to grow in ways we never would have in an easier year. You will see in the pages that follow that we rose to the challenge.

The pandemic also opened our eyes wider to systemic inequities in our country and our own community and reminded us to keep putting racial equity and social justice at the forefront. 2020 also brought to a close a four-year attack on the foundation of the United States' humanitarian welcome to those seeking safety through refugee resettlement and asylum. It was a rough year—but there was joy as well. There were high school graduates and new babies. There were kids mountain biking and whitewater rafting for the first time. There was college, delicious food, and dancing. In November, there was the promise of a renewed national commitment to welcoming refugees and immigrants into our communities.

While in so many ways there is incredible light at the end of the tunnel, we know the work is not yet done. But if anything has prepared us for the job to come, it is the challenges that 2020 brought and the guts, grit, and generosity that got us through.

In love and gratitude,

Mary Poole, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOFT LANDING MISSOULA

THE CRISIS

We're honored to work with both refugees and immigrants from many countries across the world including Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Syria.

War, continued conflict, violence, mandatory military service, and the threat of persecution continue worldwide. These situations are long-term, complex, and exacerbated by the pandemic.

With Missoula's doors open for refugees, asylees, and other immigrants to find a welcoming home, our new neighbors finally live in safety. Many continue to be worried about their loved ones still living in dangerous conditions in their home countries. The challenges they face are made a bit easier with you, their friends and neighbors, standing beside them.



THE MISSION

Soft Landing Missoula strives to help Missoula, Montana be a welcoming, supportive and informed community that can assist refugees and immigrants to integrate and thrive. In 2020, Missoula welcomed 36 individuals through resettlement by the International Rescue Committee, bringing the total number of resettled refugees in Missoula since 2015 to 381. We also work with asylees, other immigrants, and refugees that have been resettled elsewhere but who have moved to Missoula to join family.

The number of resettled refugees is drastically lower than in previous years. This is due in part to the pandemic but also to a devastatingly low 2020 national admissions "ceiling" for refugees of 18,000. This is down more than 600%, from 110,000 four years earlier.

While the restrictive policies and travel bans of the last four years were increasingly heartbreaking, in 2020, Soft Landing was able to work more closely than ever before with roughly 50 families that have found a new home in Missoula.



At the Community Resource Center new neighbors are valued and supported. This space provides a warm welcome, a "soft landing," and a place to gather. It's home to an emergency food pantry, a household donations room, and is where families can come for one-on-one support and access to community resources.

Following a brief closure during the shutdown in March-April, the Center reopened in May with **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND SANITATION MEASURES IN PLACE.** 

Soft Landing offered MORE ESSENTIAL SERVICES in response to the growing, changing, and unique needs of each family due to the pandemic. Soft Landing was one of the only organizations serving refugees and immigrants that CONTINUED TO OFFER IN-PERSON SUPPORT.

More than **145** individuals volunteered almost **2,000 HOURS** of their time to support refugee and immigrant families. CORONAVIRUS RELIEF In response to the pandemic, Soft Landing Missoula provided additional support, advocacy, and resources to families.

# **18** adults RECEIVED COMPUTERS, LAPTOPS, AND TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT to attend Lifelong Learning Center's

online English language classes, and to access other virtual services from their homes.

## 19 individuals received help at our community

**RESOURCE CENTER** navigating virtual and telephone interactions with other service agencies they rely on.

### **244** FOOD AND SUPPLY DROPS

to all families in need between March and December.

#### Drops included:

- Culturally appropriate foods like teff flour, pistachios, dates, and cornmeal
- Masks, sanitation supplies, hand sanitizer, and diapers
- Flour, lentils, and goat meat from Montana Food Providers Project
- Fresh produce from Garden City Harvest's Youth Farm and other local farmers
- Beef from Thunder Road Farm

Worked with partners to help nearly all families ACCESS AND APPLY FOR OTHER FORMS OF EMERGENCY COVID-RELIEF.



### soft landing distributed \$20,000 IN DIRECT FINANCIAL RELIEF TO **44** families

thanks to a special COVID-relief grant.

**DRIVER'S EDUCATION:** Obtaining a driver's license is an important step toward independence. Soft Landing offers driver's education classes to help prepare for the written exam.

**21** *Clients* **ATTENDED** Soft Landing's driver's education classes.

**8** *Clients* **were Assisted** in navigating the vehicle registration process.

## 1 CON RECEIVED A FULL SCHOLARSHIP for Missoula

County Public Schools Traffic Education Course.

8 families received gifted cars from

community members.



**ADULT EDUCATION & OTHER OPPORTUNITIES:** Soft Landing pairs new residents with community volunteers and local organizations for friendship and support in pursuing interests and achieving goals. This mentorship helps new neighbors feel connected and thrive in their new community.

## 38 mentoeship paies

established with 24 volunteer mentors.

#### Mentorship pairs included:

Support from a life coach, guitar lessons, preparing for CDL license test, help translating a children's book from French to English, soap making, mountain biking, and working on a photojournalism project.

#### FEBRUARY FIRST FRIDAY EXHIBITION

at the Zootown Arts Community Center featuring artists from the Democratic Republic of Congo.





Soft Landing collaborates with local organizations to connect youth and their families to activities and experiences in and around Missoula, providing opportunities to have fun and create memories. This year, Soft Landing got creative and spent even more time outside due to the pandemic.

#### 2020 OUTINGS:

- **Skiing** at Discovery Ski Area (pre-COVID)
- University of Montana Griz Basketball Game (pre-COVID)
- **Swimming** and water sports at Big Sky Lake and Holland Lake
- Mountain biking in the Rattlesnake Wilderness with MTB Missoula
- **Tie-dyeing** in Bonner Park

- Whitewater rafting through Alberton Gorge with Montana River Guides
- **Private party** at The Roxy Theatre to watch a movie
- Swimming in Rattlesnake Creek
- Pottery workshop at The Clay Studio
- Oula dance class outside

ACADEMIC Mentoring & Higher Ed First-generation youth often face unique challenges on their educational path and have adult-sized burdens placed upon them as children. To support them, Soft Landing offers academic mentoring to elementary, middle, and high school students virtually and in-person. Soft Landing also began offering support to high-school graduates and GED/HiSet earners in exploring options for higher education.

**913**/OURS OF ACADEMIC MENTORING during the school year for 20 middle and high school students with the help of 35 volunteers.

**ADDED VIRTUAL ACADEMIC MENTORING** to help youth navigate remote learning in partnership with Missoula County Public Schools.



### 3 Seniors graduated high school!

#### HOSTED TWO COLLEGE 101 NIGHTS

where high schoolers learned about higher education, as well as a digital literacy workshop, and a holiday zoom party.

### **14** MIDDLE AND ELEMENTARY

**SCHOOL STUDENTS** attended a nine week summer book club.

**RECRUITED 1 MTCC AMERICORPS LEADER** to lead the academic mentoring program.

**18** *elementary students* **RECEIVED 165 HOURS OF TUTORING FROM 16 VOLUNTEERS** thanks to State of Montana coronavirus relief funds, which helped hire a Youth Engagement Coordinator to expand academic mentoring in the fall. ECONOMIC Opportunity United We Eat creates opportunities for refugees and immigrants to earn supplemental income while introducing Missoula to rich and flavorful cooking traditions that serve as a cultural bridge.



**14 weeks of United We Eat @home serving 1740 TO-GO MEALS** after re-launching in September. 13 chefs and bakers earned more than **\$25,000 IN SUPPLEMENTAL INCOME.** 

Supper club
 VIRTUAL COOKING CLASS
 dessert sales

#### 2 NEW STAFF WERE HIRED:

a Program Manager and a Kitchen Manager.

673 UNITED WE EAT customers

26 volunteers contributed384 HOURS in the kitchen.





Soft Landing remains committed to promoting a better understanding of refugees and the resettlement process in Missoula and throughout Montana, as well as knowledge and appreciation of the many positive contributions refugees and immigrants make in our communities.

Many events, gatherings, and community conversations were put on hold due to the pandemic. In lieu of the World Refugee Day Soccer Cup & Community Celebration in June, we hosted a soccer shoot-out during a mostly virtual Welcoming Week in September.

Join us in celebrating and thanking volunteers and community partners who generously lend their time, talent, and expertise in support of refugees and immigrants in Missoula:

- First United Methodist Church
- Garden City Harvest
- Lifelong Learning Center
- Missoula Alliance Church
- Missoula City-County Health Department

- Missoula County Public Schools
- Missoula Job Service
- Missoula International Rescue Committee
- Missoula Soccer Community
- University of Montana

## FINANCIALS

- Individual Donations: 33%
- Businesses: 5%
- Foundation Grants: 44%
- United We Eat: 4%
- State of Montana Coronavirus Relief Grants: 14%

### expenses

- Core Mission Support: 30%
- United We Eat: 23%
- Youth Programming: 11%
- Community Resource Center
  & Coronavirus Relief: 36%



36% **30%** 11%

Soft Landing Missoula is fiscally sponsored by Social & Environmental Entrepreneurs, a 501 c 3 non-profit that provides administrative, fiscal, and programmatic oversight for projects like ours. Your generosity in 2020 gave Soft Landing the stability to adapt, the ability to add innovative ways to support families, and ultimately helped get us through an incredibly challenging year. Everything in this impact report was possible because of you. THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS!





#### SOFT LANDING MISSOULA STAFF

Mary Poole, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER Molly Cottrell, DEPUTY DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER Greta Bates, FAMILY RESOURCE MANAGER & CO-FOUNDER Maria Netzloff, DONOR ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT DIRECTOR Beth Baker, UNITED WE EAT PROGRAM MANAGER Katie Kirwan, UNITED WE EAT KITCHEN MANAGER Heather Molloy, YOUTH ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR Katie VanCleave, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Natalia Boise, MTCC AMERICORPS TEAM LEADER 2020-2021 Lorraine Gardner, SUMMER AMERICORPS TEAM MEMBER Mabel Gardner, SUMMER AMERICORPS TEAM MEMBER

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020**

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