



2022 IMPACT REPORT

SOFT LANDING MISSOULA



in love & gratitude



Each new year brings new challenges, new opportunities, new joys. In 2022, we saw all of this and more. In a year marked by increased arrivals, both through traditional resettlement paths and new, short-term Humanitarian Parole programs for Afghans and Ukrainians, Missoula was busy with the work of Welcoming. It was incredible to see our community of organizations, businesses, places of worship, and individuals come together and do exactly what our city aspired to do seven years ago when we started this adventure—provide a soft landing to families in their new home.

THAT SAID, a soft landing isn't without a few bumps and as always, we find our way in this landscape through listening and responding to client and partner needs. With many new arrivals dealing with incredibly recent chaos and trauma, the need for mental health resources was at the forefront. At first, unsure of our role in responding to mental health needs, **we quickly realized the beautiful and simple power of intentional gathering and community-building was what we could offer.**

This realization taken to heart created a “Year of Gathering” for Soft Landing Missoula! We gathered over food, around all types of sports, through music and dancing and outdoor adventures. We gathered while laughing, while crying,

and while snuggling new babies. All along the way, more folks from all walks of life were brought into the fold and there were more and more hands to hold each other up.

With all of the challenges of 2022, gathering brought togetherness, belonging, and joy. Now we go into this coming year with those lessons and experiences; confident in the role we play and excited for more gatherings to come!

In love and gratitude,



Mary Poole, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

mission

Soft Landing Missoula partners with our community to provide supportive services and welcome for refugees and immigrants in Missoula, working together to create a home where new neighbors can integrate and thrive.

vision

Refugees and immigrants have opportunity, dignity, and the freedom to build the life they wish to live as members of a welcoming community.



WELCOMING & REBUILDING

Together as a community, in 2022 Missoula welcomed:

76 individuals through the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Refugee Resettlement Program

66 individuals through the Afghan Humanitarian Parole Program, also arriving through the IRC (bringing the total number of children and adults from Afghanistan since September 2021 to 113)

Ukrainian families and individuals have also arrived in Missoula and around the state through the Uniting for Ukraine Humanitarian Parole Program, **4 of whom participated in Soft Landing's programming in 2022.**



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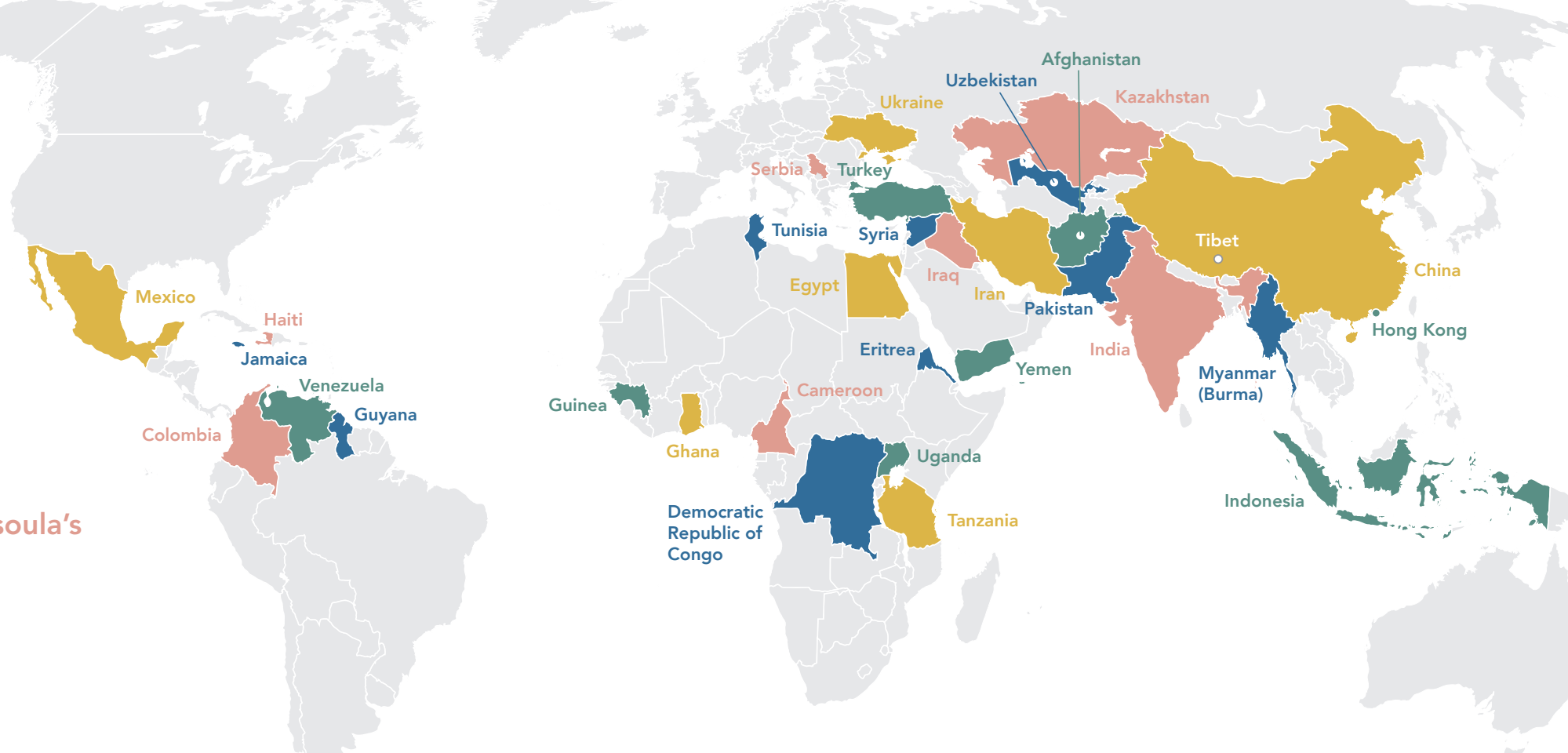
AS OUR COUNTRY works to rebuild a refugee resettlement system that was substantially dismantled during the past Administration, Soft Landing Missoula continues to be involved in national conversations through our participation in the Hello Neighbor Network that are moving the needle on innovative and creative solutions for welcoming more of the world's most vulnerable people.

As new paths for arrival to the United States are built, we will continue to provide the same support and warm welcome to all refugees and immigrants, regardless of the journey that brought them here.

GROWING COMMUNITY

MANY NEW NEIGHBORS who came to Missoula as refugees or immigrants participated in our programs, shaped the services we offer, helped us share food and stories, gathered in community with us, and guided us on our board.

372 refugees and immigrants
were part of Soft Landing Missoula's
programs in 2022



GATHERING



We often hear from newcomers that one of the things they miss most about home is gathering with friends and family.

The experiences that force families to leave their relatives and homes coupled with the loneliness that can come with building life in a new place makes community and connection essential parts of new neighbors' transitions.

Soft Landing Missoula helps neighbors thrive by offering opportunities throughout the year to gather and build community:

2 Welcome Dinners to embrace newcomers to the Syrian and Afghan communities

8 Women's-specific events including swimming, dancing, and celebrating

1 World Refugee Day celebration filled with food, soccer, music, and dance

2 Summer gatherings to build community and bring new neighbors together

2 Overnight trips where youth gathered at stunning Montana lakes

COMMUNITY CENTER

Soft Landing Missoula's Community Center is a welcoming space for community building, gathering, connection, and a hub for all of Soft Landing's programs.

On any given day, a steady stream of people trickle in to pick up in-kind donations, ask about something they're encountering in their daily lives, receive referrals to community partners who offer needed resources, meet with volunteer mentors, speak with us about a challenge they're facing, and celebrate milestones.



In 2022, the Community Center hosted:

1,632 visits with new neighbors,
providing **957 hours** of direct-service

1,660 visits with partners,
volunteers and community members

11 volunteers who contributed
728 hours of Community
Center support

DRIVER'S EDUCATION

OBTAINING A DRIVER'S LICENSE opens up employment, housing, and other opportunities for newcomers. Soft Landing's matches volunteers with newcomers to help prepare for the written exam. Drivers can also receive support scheduling appointments with the DMV and navigating all aspects of obtaining a driver's license and owning and insuring a vehicle.

2022 was a big year for driver's education! In addition to advocating so that the Montana DMV would offer the Driver's Manual translated into Arabic, Dari, and Swahili:

78 newcomers participated in driver's education mentoring

45 earned their driver's license

4 families received cars donated from community members

3 volunteers contributed more than **450 hours** supporting all things driving

ADULT & FAMILY SUPPORT

THE HOPES, DREAMS, AND NEEDS

of new neighbors shift as they become more established in Missoula. Enter Soft Landing's Adult and Family Support program, which pairs refugees and immigrants with community volunteers and local organizations for friendship as well as help in pursuing interests and achieving goals. These meaningful mentoring relationships help new neighbors feel connected and thrive in their new community.

52 volunteers contributed more than 2,700 hours mentoring adults in pursuit of their goals.

88 CLIENTS were paired with volunteers for mentorship in:

- English Language Learning
- Citizenship
- Swimming
- Computer support
- Sewing
- Studying for professional certificates
- Gardening
- Building musical instruments
- College
- Doing laundry
- Opening a business
- Making art
- Friendship and help with day-to-day activities
- Academic tutoring for elementary students

FOOD ACCESS

RELIABLE ACCESS to culturally appropriate food promotes mental health and physical well-being. Staple foods fill the emergency food pantry housed at the Community Center. In addition, community partners who make up Missoula's local food landscape work with us so that refugee and immigrant community members feel connected to their home countries and their cultural culinary traditions here in Missoula. Soft Landing staff and volunteers help facilitate involvement in community gardening and farming while also distributing food to families.

12 refugees farmed their own garden plots, planting ingredients common in their home country's cooking and giving them a taste of home

22 families received 2,000 pounds of produce over the course of an 18-week summer CSA

29 families connected with local producers of goat and beef

5 community partners generously shared their abundance:
**Garden City Harvest, Community Food & Agriculture Coalition,
Seedlings-4-Solidarity, Thunder Road Farm, Farm 51, and Tower Gardens**



CITIZENSHIP



After five years in the United States, a growing number of refugees in Missoula are preparing for and celebrating an exciting milestone: becoming U.S. citizens!

SOFT LANDING partners with the Lifelong Learning Center to provide additional support in studying for the citizenship exam and also helps new neighbors secure rides to take the test and attend naturalization ceremonies.

11 individuals were connected to volunteer mentors for help studying for their citizenship test

14 individuals received study packets and information about the process of becoming a U.S. citizen

10 new neighbors celebrated becoming U.S. citizens!

ACADEMIC MENTORING & HIGHER ED

FIRST-GENERATION STUDENTS often face unique challenges on their educational path. To support them, Soft Landing offers after school academic support for middle- and high schoolers, engages high-school graduates in exploring options for higher and alternative education, and offers support for currently enrolled college students.

49 middle and high school students participated in after school academic mentoring

5 students graduated from high school!

6 students received individualized support from staff to explore their options for higher education and careers after high school graduation

23 students toured the University of Montana campus

14 students attending college received one-on-one mentoring and academic support from staff and volunteers



YOUTH EXPERIENCES



SOFT LANDING'S YOUTH PROGRAM connects young people to activities and experiences in and around Missoula, providing opportunities to have fun and access Montana's beauty and wonder. Although summer days are especially jam-packed, these experiences happen all year long.

125 youth and young adults participated in 36 social events and recreational activities, including outdoor adventures and seasonal activities

43 youth flexed their creative muscles at year-round craft nights

30 middle-schoolers attended summer book club

19 youth attended summer coding club

20 youth attended summer cultural orientation and English class for new arrivals

103 volunteers contributed 1,150 hours to helping

run all academic, recreational, and social activities.

UNITED WE EAT

UNITED WE EAT offers opportunities for refugees and immigrants to introduce Missoula to a variety of rich and flavorful cooking traditions that serve as a cultural bridge. It also provides supplemental income that helps the chefs' families build a life here in Missoula.

There were many highlights for United We Eat in 2022. Between the long-anticipated return of Supper Clubs, adding Eritrean coffee to dessert sale offerings, launching twice-annual meetings so chefs have opportunities to learn about the program and provide input, upping the number of weekly meals available for @home (though we know it still is not enough!), and being featured in the New York Times and on NBC, so much delicious stuff happened!



Learn more at unitedweeatmt.org



\$43,727 went to United We Eat chefs

27 refugee and immigrant chefs participated—**9** were new!

5,232 meals were served during
35 weeks of United We Eat @home

4 virtual cooking classes +
1 in-person cooking class

4 dessert sales

2 Supper Clubs

2 Welcome Dinners

45 volunteers contributed
1,500 hours of kitchen help
(That's A LOT of chopping onions!)

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Soft Landing is committed to fostering an informed public with a better understanding of refugees, immigrants, and the resettlement process. We host opportunities to gather together to share experiences and celebrate the stories of the refugee and immigrant neighbors in our community.



TO GROW our capacity to create a welcoming community where all can thrive, we brought on a new staff member dedicated to leading efforts to create opportunities for residents to share and learn from one another.

24 community conversations + events reached over **1,000 Montanans** of all ages

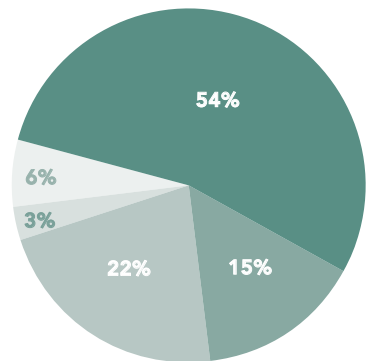
5 individuals shared some of their life experiences and perspective during the second installment of our Stories of Home project

7 press placements featuring Soft Landing Missoula in local and national press, including NBC and the New York Times

FINANCIALS

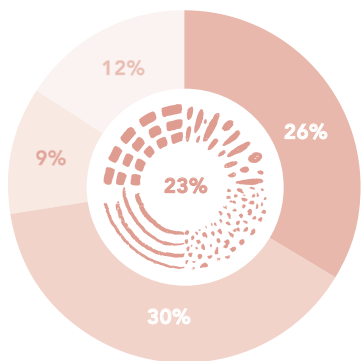
INCOME \$779,864

- Individual Donations: 54%
- United We Eat Sales: 15%
- Foundation Grants: 22%
- Federal/State Grants: 3%
- Business Donations: 6%



EXPENSES \$705,897

- Core Mission Support: 23%
- Community Center / Adult Education: 26%
- United We Eat: 30%
- Youth Programming: 9%
- Outreach & Education: 12%



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.

AFGHAN & NEW ARRIVALS FUND

AFTER THE FALL of Kabul in August 2021 and the United States' decision to welcome thousands of Afghan evacuees into the country, Soft Landing received a windfall of donations from more than 250 people in a matter of weeks.

We made the decision to use these unexpected and welcome donations to create a fund to respond to new neighbors' immediate needs for food, household items, seasonal and work clothing, and more.

100% of the fund was spent by the end of 2022

\$11,500 was used for food, clothing, translating DMV materials, community-building events, medicine, diapers, and household items.

\$25,000 was directed to the Missoula International Rescue Committee's Housing Assistance Fund to help newcomers with the cost burden of housing in Missoula.

GRATITUDE

warm welcomes that
are sustained over
time happen because
you are a part of
our community



**Working together to create
a place to call home, one
where newcomers can live
the lives they choose,
happens because you are
a part of our community.**

As we welcome a growing community of refugees and immigrants, we see so many wonderful opportunities, and we are also made aware of the challenges. We are honored to be a part of this beautiful work of welcome and we are deeply grateful to have you by our side, making our mission possible.



SOFT LANDING MISSOULA STAFF

Mary Poole, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER
Molly Cottrell, DEPUTY DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER
Greta Bates, DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SUPPORT & CO-FOUNDER
Maria Netzloff, DONOR ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT DIRECTOR
Beth Baker, UNITED WE EAT PROGRAM MANAGER
Casey Chapman, UNITED WE EAT KITCHEN MANAGER
Carly Graf, OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Rachel Baer, COMMUNITY CENTER COORDINATOR
Natalia Boise, YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Rozan Shbib, UNITED WE EAT KITCHEN ASSISTANT
Lee Winter, CLIENT ACCESS SPECIALIST
Segen Weday, UNITED WE EAT ASSISTANT
Weyni Kahsay, WORK STUDY STUDENT

2022 ADVISORY BOARD

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Tenzin Lhaze, MISSOULA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

LEARN MORE AT [SOFTLANDINGMISSOULA.ORG](https://softlandingmissoula.org)