



2023
IMPACT
REPORT

SOFT LANDING MISSOULA

in love &
gratitude

A GROWING FAMILY

2023 was a year of growth. In a year where we saw the number of refugees and immigrants we work with increase by 150 people, with **over twice as many visits to our Community Center** and a 50% increase in the number of kids we worked with, life felt gloriously full of both new relationships and a steady, wonderful community.

To answer this increased activity, we brought on two more staff and, once again, arranged and rearranged our little office to squeeze out as much useful space as we could. In other words our little office feels very “lived in”—in all the best ways.

I feel so incredibly proud of the SLM staff and the programs they have nurtured, fine-tuned, and passionately guided alongside the participants. To see the wide variety of visits to our office—some bringing joy and laughter, some bringing challenges and tears, **but all met with love**—is to see what it means to be a family.

We have also seen that as we have grown to meet the increased numbers of new refugee and immigrant families in Missoula, your support has also grown. This gives us courage, strength, and joy to know that Missoula will be able continue to do the very important work of welcoming for years to come.

We are excited to show you, through this snapshot of our 2023 impact report, **what your incredible support has meant to us and the refugee and immigrant families we work with**. As always, don’t be afraid to get in touch with any thoughts or questions of your own. We all get to build this welcome together- as one big messy family!

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 FY 2023 Missoula welcomed **103 individuals** as refugees.

Soft Landing also worked with **66 new immigrants** that arrived through other pathways.



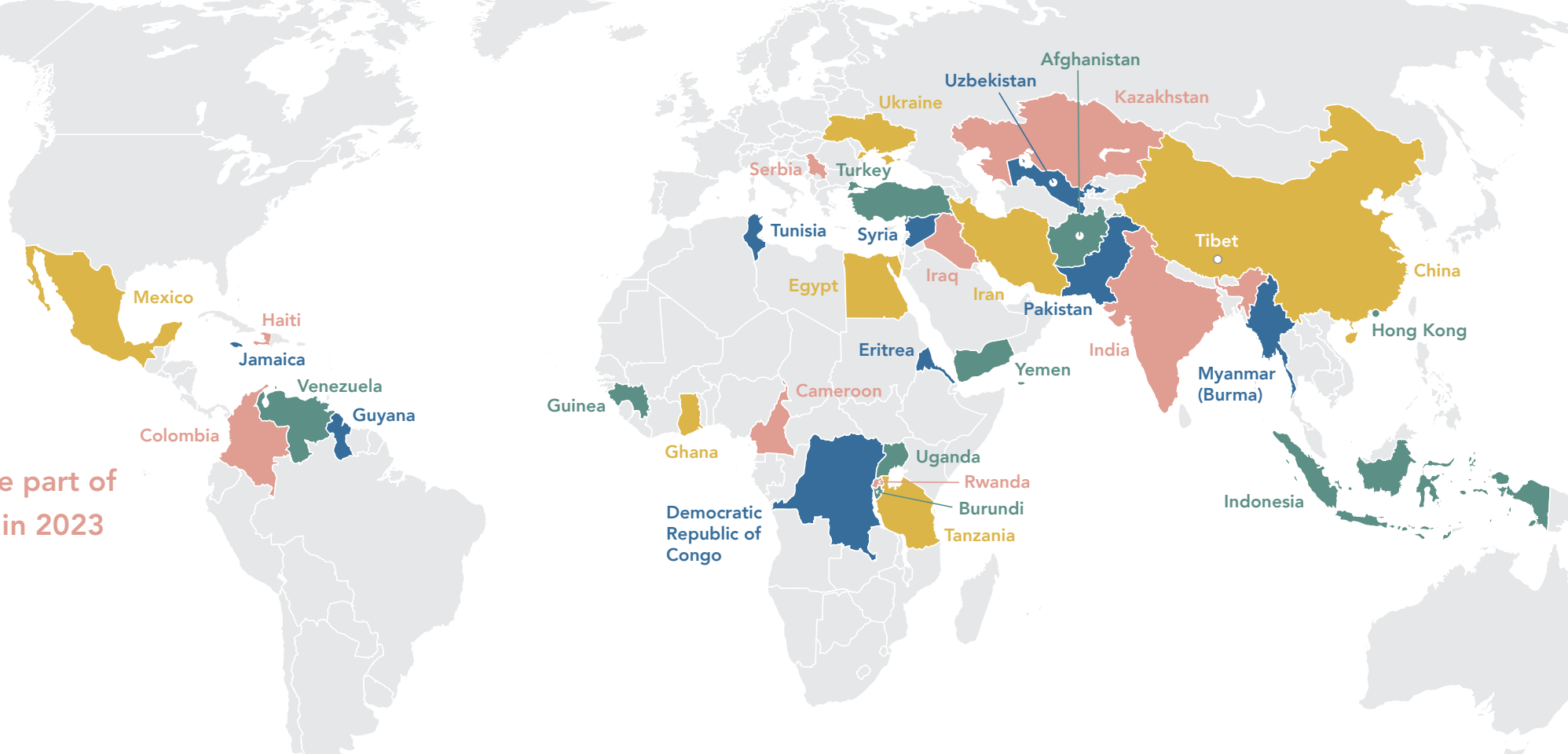
AS NEW PATHS for arrival to the United States are built, we will continue to provide the same support and warm welcome to all refugees and immigrants, regardless of the journey that brought them here.

We're also excited as other efforts around the State grow. Welcoming communities in Kalispell, Helena, Butte, Bozeman, and Billings have really taken shape over the course of 2023. It has been a honor to offer mentorship to these groups and see the statewide welcome grow beyond Missoula.

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.

520 refugees and immigrants were part of Soft Landing Missoula's programs in 2023 (a 40% increase from 2022)



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 2023, the Community Center hosted:

A 127% increase in client visits!

We saw 3,707 client visits to the Community Center compared to 1,632 visits in 2022.

2,037 visits with partners, volunteers and community members

25 orientations to Soft Landing programs for new families arriving as refugees

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:

3 Welcome Dinners to embrace newcomers to embrace newcomers in the Syrian, Afghan, and Congolese communities

11 Women's Swim Nights with an average attendance of 45 children and adults

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

DRIVERS' SUPPORT

DRIVER'S LICENSE navigation support continues to be one of the first things clients request. With a large influx of arrivals, we are seeing a larger group of clients wanting copies of the translated materials and needing driving support.

75 individuals received help with all things related to licensing and registering vehicles

63 individuals earned permits

43 became licensed drivers



ADULT & FAMILY SUPPORT

THE HOPES, DREAMS, AND NEEDS of new neighbors shift as they become more established in Missoula. Soft Landing's Adult and Family Support program 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.

Soft Landing also worked with **10 families** to get on affordable housing wait lists, successfully helping **8 families** to secure affordable housing.

80 CLIENTS were paired with volunteers for mentorship in:

- English Language Learning
- Citizenship
- Computer support
- Studying for professional certificates
- Gardening
- College
- 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.

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

18 families received 3,000 pounds of produce over the course of an 18-week summer CSA

Special thanks to our partners **Garden City Harvest, Community Food & Agriculture Coalition, Seedlings-4-Solidarity, Thunder Road Farm, Montana Food Bank Network, Tower Gardens**, and all who contributed fresh produce and meat from their gardens and farms.



CITIZENSHIP



Now that more new neighbors are approaching five years in Missoula, a growing number are ready to prepare for 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.

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

19 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.

63 middle- and high school students participated in after school academic mentoring

7 students graduated from high school!

19 students toured the University of Montana campus & 14 toured the Missoula College campus

21 students receiving college and career mentorship (college study group, college tutoring, career and higher education exploration)



YOUTH EXPERIENCES

AS A COMPLEMENT to our academic mentoring, 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.

146 youth and young adults participated in 23 social events and recreational activities, including outdoor adventures and seasonal activities

49 youth attended all summer programs: Science & Soccer Club, English Class, and New Arrivals Club

33 girls and young women joined our Girls Leadership Council and
17 boys participated in our Boys Group this year



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.

Through all UWE opportunities, **31 chefs representing 11 countries** (Afghanistan, DRC, Eritrea, Iraq, Syrian, Jamaica, Ghana, Pakistan, Korea, Guinea, and Yemen) have earned more than \$40,000.



35 weeks of UWE @home to-go meals,
serving **more than 5,000 meals**

5 Supper Clubs, **4** dessert sales, and
7 cooking classes

In the fall, UWE began piloting the use of reusable glass containers to **increase the sustainability** of the @ home program by reducing waste from disposable containers.

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.

**21 community conversations
and events reached over
700 Montanans of all ages**



In June 2023, we celebrated **World Refugee Day** to honor and uplift our new neighbors and their journeys. In addition to this opportunity for client families to gather, members from the broader Missoula community were invited to attend for the first time since the pandemic. It was a beautiful, joyous, and bustling event.

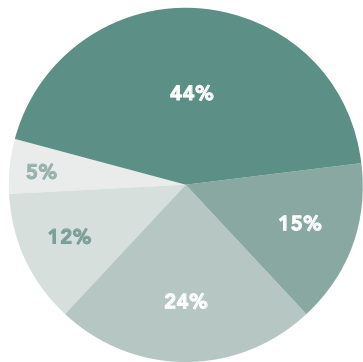
In April 2023, we partnered with the University of Montana Humanities Institute for an SLM Presents Lecture, **"The Ways We Welcome: The Expanding Possibilities for Welcoming Refugees and Those Fleeing Danger."**

In September 2023, we released **a new installment of our Stories of Home project** in celebration of Welcoming Week. Check out our library of stories here:
<https://storiesofhomemissoula.org/>

FINANCIALS

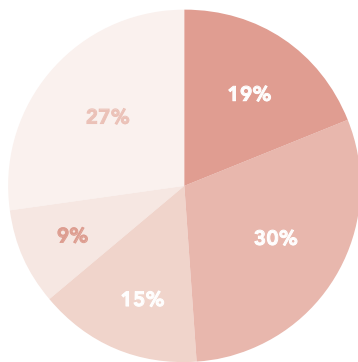
INCOME \$789,787

- Individual Donations: 44%
- United We Eat Sales: 15%
- Foundation Grants: 24%
- Federal/State Grants: 12%
- Business Donations: 5%



EXPENSES \$750,876

- Community Center, Adult Education & Mentorships: 19%
- United We Eat: 30%
- Youth Programming: 15%
- Outreach & Education: 9%
- Core Mission Support: 27%



Soft Landing Missoula is fiscally sponsored by Social & Environmental Entrepreneurs, a 501 c 3 non-profit that provides administrative and fiscal oversight for projects like ours.

520 REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS engaged with Soft Landing Missoula

127% MORE 

refugee and immigrant visits to the Community Center than in the year before



350 VOLUNTEERS gave their time to help welcome new neighbors

926 DONORS contributed to help fund our work of welcome




700+ Montanans learned about refugees and immigrants through 21 outreach & education events

\$40,000+ EARNED BY 31 UNITED WE EAT CHEFS



17 COMMUNITY-BUILDING EVENTS offered for refugees and immigrants



 **146** youth and young adults participated in dozens of social events and recreational activities

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

21 students received college and career mentorship



80 mentorship matches were made between clients and volunteers

IN GRATITUDE

We are deeply grateful to you,

our incredible community, for your dedication, support and generosity towards our organization, which has enabled us to provide a warm and welcoming environment for refugees and immigrants in our community.



IN 2023, more than 1,000 individuals, foundations, partner agencies, businesses, and United We Eat customers donated, contributed time, and helped us offer vital support services, educational opportunities, and a sense of belonging to our new friends and neighbors who've found a place to call home in Missoula. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive community where everyone can thrive. **Thank you for your compassion and commitment to welcome, and for your part in making a difference in the lives of others.**