



ANNUAL REPORT

N.I.C.E.

Nashville International Center for Empowerment

2015  
a decade of service

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# 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATING 2005 TO 2015



# A Letter From the President And CEO DR GATLUAK THACH

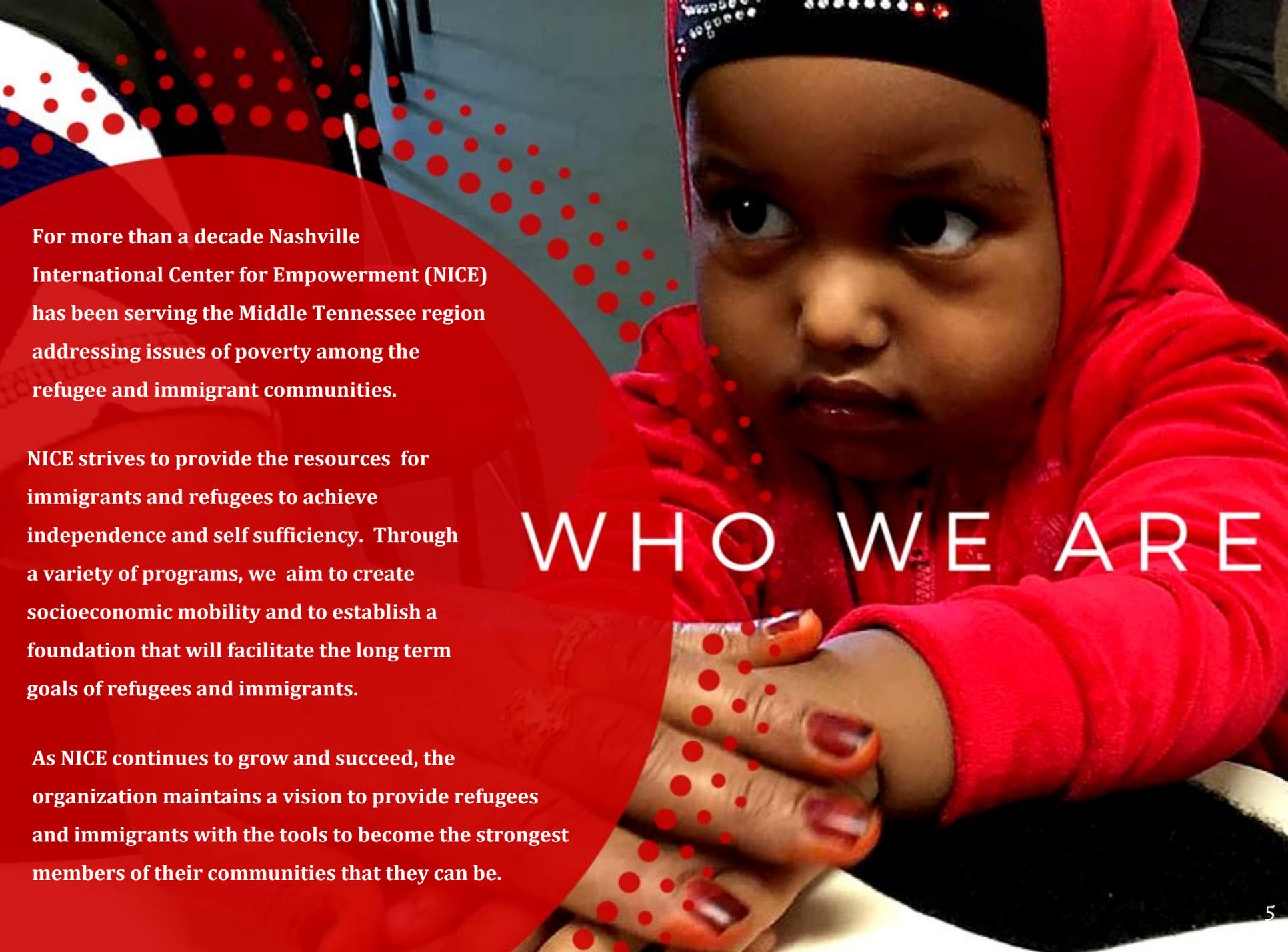
Greetings NICE family,

We celebrate the journey of the refugees and immigrants to overcome barriers of social integration and adjustment into a new nation. The journey is not easy and it takes the dedication and commitment of a supportive community. To all of those who have been a part of NICE ensuring refugees succeed, I thank you!

I believe we stand for our core mission to ensure refugees and immigrants achieve their full potential now and for generations to come. As a “tribe of NICE” we envision a strong, prosperous and peaceful community enriched by diversity. We should be proud of our collective efforts to make a significant difference in our vulnerable people’s lives. Our journey in the past decade is an indication of incredible accomplishments ahead. Yet, there is work to be done. When I visited refugee camps in Africa last year, I experienced how it remains true the world is still not a safe place for vulnerable populations such as refugees and internally displaced persons. Conflict and indiscriminate violence has caused unprecedented humanitarian disasters across the globe which makes our job most critical for empowering our newest vulnerable members. This is why I believe our work is outstanding because it creates hope for those who have lost their dreams.

The lives of refugees and immigrants were positively changed by your contributions during the last ten years. Thanks to your continued unwavering support to refugee and immigrant families, I am proud to share the work of the NICE team in this annual report.

Please enjoy!



For more than a decade Nashville International Center for Empowerment (NICE) has been serving the Middle Tennessee region addressing issues of poverty among the refugee and immigrant communities.

NICE strives to provide the resources for immigrants and refugees to achieve independence and self sufficiency. Through a variety of programs, we aim to create socioeconomic mobility and to establish a foundation that will facilitate the long term goals of refugees and immigrants.

As NICE continues to grow and succeed, the organization maintains a vision to provide refugees and immigrants with the tools to become the strongest members of their communities that they can be.

# WHO WE ARE

Our wonderful Dr. Gat traveled home to his motherland, South Sudan, to assist in the peacemaking process and stability in the region. We were sad to learn that many of his childhood friends from the refugee camps are still living there and raising families. Dr. Gat believes that man-made catastrophes require us to challenge mindsets of the elite in order for peace to prevail in our global community.



In June, President Obama nominated Dr. Gat a 'Refugee Champion of Change'. The White House Champions of Change program recognizes those portraying extraordinary work to empower their communities. The Thach family was welcomed at the White House to receive this lifetime achievement award. Dr. Gat is pictured here with his daughter at the White House.



Dr. Gat met President Obama again in 2015 but this time at home in Tennessee during an invitation only event for the Affordable Care Act. While shaking Gat's hand the President remarked, "Weren't you in my house last week?"



2015 BIG THINGS

A man in a blue plaid shirt is sitting on the floor, reading a book to a group of children. The children are also sitting on the floor, and one boy is pointing at the book. The scene is set in a room with a light-colored floor and some chairs in the background. Three large, semi-transparent blue circles with a white polka-dot pattern are overlaid on the image, containing text.

## Mission

To ensure refugees and immigrants achieve their full potential now and for generations to come.

## Vision

A strong, prosperous and peaceful community enriched by diversity.

## Values

Love, Unity, Respect, Trust,  
Community  
Empowerment, Equal  
Employment Opportunity,  
Free of discrimination,  
Professionalism, Support  
and Encouragement



A man reunites with his wife for the first time in years

\$1.4

Billion

Contributed to the state of TN by refugees and their descendants in last 20 years

81%

Of all TN refugees have been employed within the first year of their resettlement

\$15

Million

In federal funding is invested in TN annually through refugee resettlement programs

**“New Americans who are here, they love to be here. They want to be here. They came here because they want to be successful. They want their children to be more successful. They came here because they want to better themselves. They want to be a part of the community that allows them to be part of it. They want integration to be two-way, whereby I will come with who I am and what I have and hold on to some of the things from my original knowledge and background while at the same time integrate into a society so that I feel part of it.”**

**-Dr. Gatluak Thach**

# Journey of a Refugee

A refugee is a person who is outside their country of citizenship because they have well-founded grounds for fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and is unable to obtain sanctuary from their home country or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>



1

## Flee

Leave homeland due to fear of persecution or war.



2

## Settle

Settle in refugee camp. Refugees spend years in these camps, even decades, before being granted asylum in another country.



3

## Apply

Apply for Refugee Status through UNHCR. Refugees then go through very intensive screening and interview process.



4

## Travel

Once accepted for Refugee Status, Refugee will travel to the USA, and be paired with a resettlement agency, like NICE.

In 2015, there was an estimated 15-17 million refugees worldwide.

In the 2015 fiscal year only 69,933 were resettled in the USA and 1,578 refugees to Tennessee



**51%**  
of Refugees are Children.



**1 IN 122  
HUMANS IN THIS  
WORLD IS NOW  
EITHER A  
REFUGEE,  
INTERNALLY  
DISPLACED OR  
SEEKING ASYLUM**

**TOTAL  
NUMBER OF  
PEOPLE  
FORCED FROM  
HOMES  
REACHES UP  
TO 60 MILLION**

**15 ~ 17  
MILLION**

**REFUGEES IN 2015**

**A  
STATELESS  
CHILD IS  
BORN EVERY  
10 MINUTES**

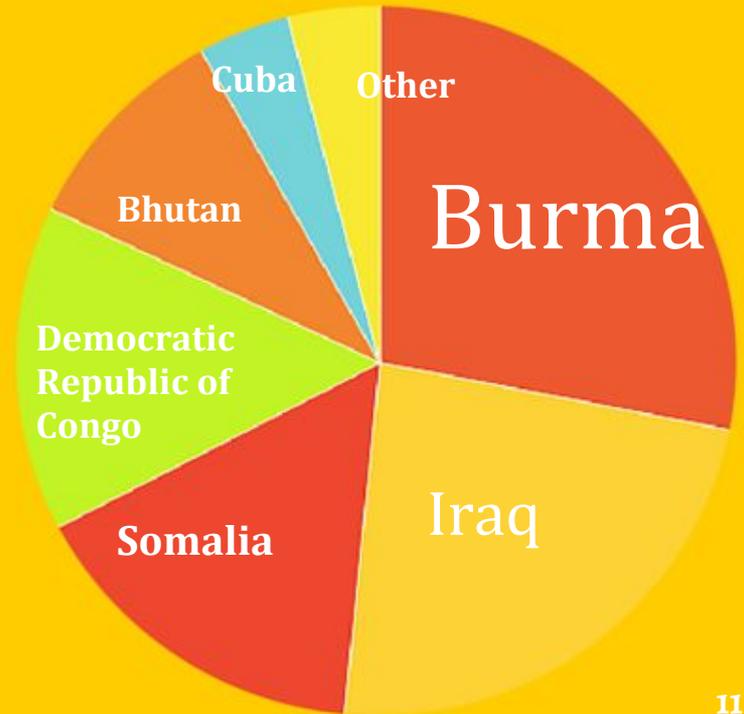
# REFUGEES AROUND THE WORLD

**“less than 1/10  
of 1% of all  
refugees are  
given the chance  
to come to the  
United States.”**

IMAGINE THAT YOUR LIFE, AS YOU KNOW IT, DISAPPEARS IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE. WAR, VIOLENCE OR FEAR FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY FORCE YOU TO FLEE YOUR HOME. AFTER HOURS OR EVEN DAYS OF A TORTUROUS JOURNEY, YOU FIND SHELTER FAR AWAY, IN A SQUALID TENT. YOU ARE DEPENDENT ON HANDOUTS OF FOOD; POSSIBLY HAVE NO CLEAN DRINKING WATER OR ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE. NOT A PRETTY PICTURE, RIGHT? BUT THE FACT IS THAT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD, IN COUNTRIES BIG AND SMALL, PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND MANY NATIONALITIES, HAVE BEEN LIVING IN SUCH DESOLATE AND PRECARIOUS CONDITIONS FOR YEARS. THESE PEOPLE ARE CALLED REFUGEES OR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS.



# WHERE ARE REFUGEES IN TENNESSEE FROM?



“While every refugee's story is different and their anguish personal, they all share a common thread of uncommon courage – the courage not only to survive, but to persevere and rebuild their shattered lives. “

~ Antonio Guterres, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees



SINCE 2005  
WE HAVE HELPED  
OVER  
17,000  
REFUGEES  
FROM  
72  
NATIONS



Immigration  
337 Served



Resettlement  
210 Served



Health  
435 Served

# PROGRAMS 2015



Adult Education  
850 Served



Employment  
235 Served



RISE Program  
251 Served

# 2015 ADULT EDUCATION

26

Different English Education Classes

850

Served through Adult Ed

7

Levels of ESL Classes

Critical to immigrants' and refugees' success is familiarization with the English language and with American culture. Classes are offered during morning and evening hours. Students come from all walks of life with specific English proficiency skills and our curriculum focuses on addressing a wide variety of needs, including reading, writing, speaking, and life skills.

"I'm always amazed at the diversity of the students in my class and the various ways that we learn from each other. I value the relationships I've formed with my students and I always leave the class energized by them."

- Elizabeth Rose, ESL Volunteer





# 2015 EMPLOYMENT



122

Through Refugee  
Support Services

235

Served

113

Through Targeted  
Assistance Program

Our goal is to offer refugees and immigrants the means to become self sufficient. For refugees who have lived in refugee camps for much of their lives, have little prior work experience, and/or no formal education, finding a job in America is a challenge. Our employment program works to provide these refugees the opportunity for a better life by helping them find secure and stable jobs.

*"Thank you, NICE. You taught us how to catch a fish to live in American way. The road to destination is always under construction!"*

*- Deepesh, NICE Entrepreneurship Student and Founder of Central Market*

2015

# HEALTH

301	42	435	63	26
Received Medical Screening	Joined Fitness Classes	Served Through Health	Intensive Case Management	Participated in Cooking

The Health program was developed to address many of the arising health issues within the newly arrived refugee population.

The Health program assisted a family with their health care. It was soon discovered that a caretaker was needed. The team worked tirelessly to find the best option for the client while navigating the complicated healthcare system and found an insurance option that would provide a caregiver. The team also helped the family with safe home adjustments for the handicapped family member such as finding a seat for the client to sit on in the shower as well as a cane to walk with. The client and family had a successful interview with the insurance program and were offered a home caretaker.





2015  
**IMMIGRATION**

**337**

Served

The Immigration program assists immigrants in Nashville to ultimately become U.S. citizens.

Our Board of Immigration Appeals recognized staff members prepare and file many types of immigrant applications, including travel documents, green card applications, petitions to reunite families, and naturalization applications.





# 2015 RESETTLEMENT

160

Refugees Received  
Cash Assistance

189

Refugees Resettled

50

Received Match  
Grants

Our Reception and Placement (R&P) program began in 2011. Since that time, the program has developed rapidly, resettling refugees in Nashville from many nations including: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and others.

As refugees flee to America from their countries because of persecution, they often have very little to take with them. The R&P team is here to break down barriers and ensure that the transition from life as a refugee to a life of self sufficiency in America goes as smoothly as possible.





**63**

**Certified in Child-care Classes**

**251**

**Served**

**48**

**Diplomas Accredited to US Standards**

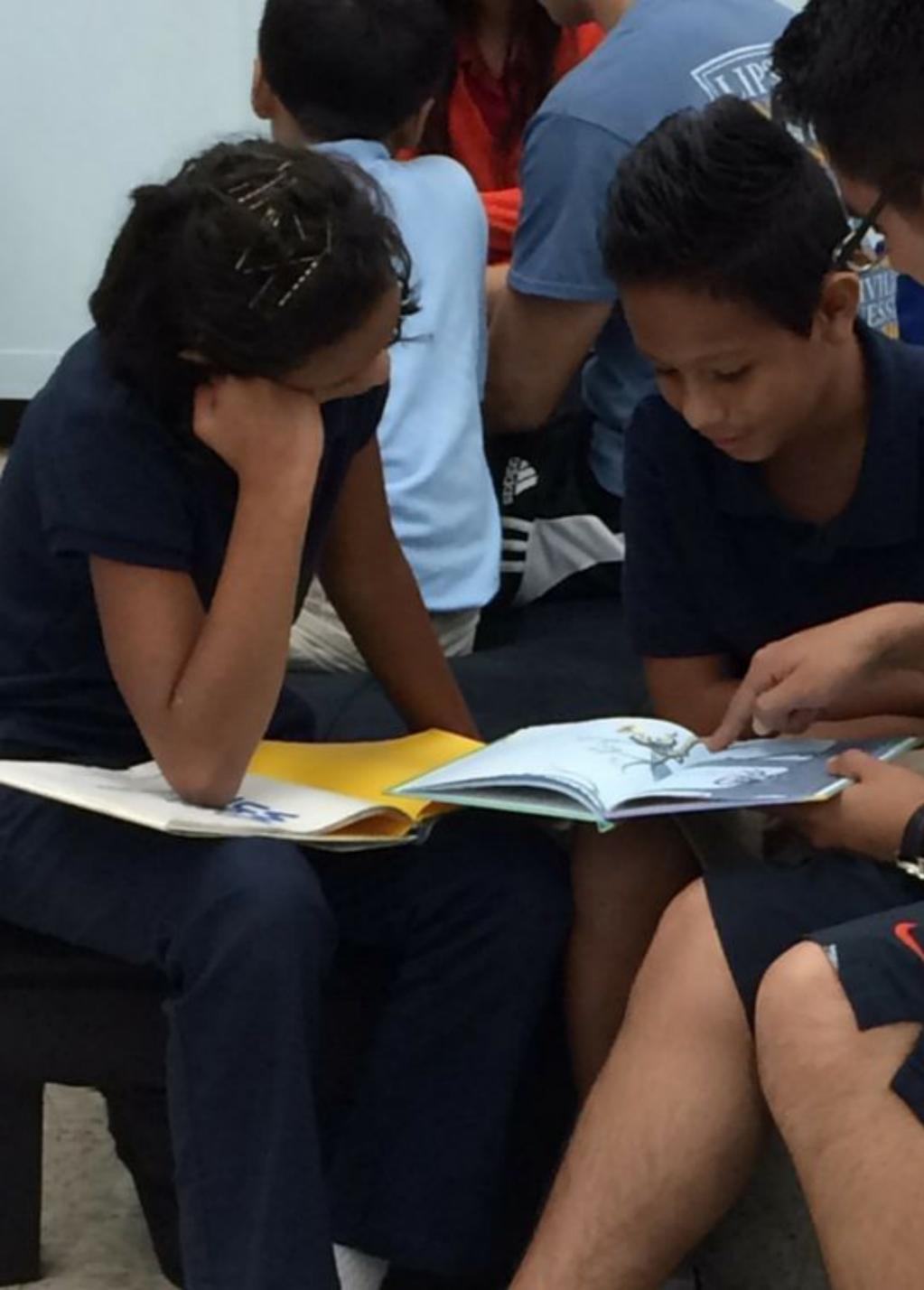
**80**

**Enrolled in English Classes**

**60**

**Received Driver Training**

The RISE (Refugee Integration Support and Empowerment) program assists in the integration of refugees into the Nashville community by eliminating the barriers to employment and fills a service gap encountered by refugees once their initial resettlement assistance has ended. This program serves refugees who have been in the country 8 months up to 5 years.



# YOUTH EDUCATION <sup>2015</sup>

99	59	304	146
Enrolled in Summer School	Teachers in Cultural Exchange Program	Served through Youth Education	Enrolled in After School Programs

We believe that educating refugee and immigrant children is one of the best ways to empower their communities.

Our Youth Education programs provide academic support to Nashville's refugee and immigrant children, with a strong focus on instilling the confidence and social skills needed to succeed. NICE works to guide students all the way through high school graduation, and to open the doors of opportunity for students.



In 2015, 8 of 9 of our High School graduates went on to college.

“When we recognize refugees as a community and as a society, we are recognizing the humans who have gone through so much. But the past does not determine the future. It is the time where they focus ahead but not behind. It is a time where they look at themselves as very resilient humans who wanted to make the world a different place, a place where opportunity can be there for them.”

– Dr. Gatluak Thach

NASHVILLE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR EMPOWERMENT AND BB&T

INVITE YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT

AND CELEBRATION OF WORLD REFUGEE DAY!

SERVING AS A BEACON FOR REFUGEE NEIGHBORS IN NEED

# PLEASE JOIN US!

COME TO WORK FRIDAY, 19TH OF JUNE FROM 8A-5P

COME TO PLAY SATURDAY, JUNE 20 FROM 10A-2P

HIGHLANDS APARTMENT COMMUNITY

4646 NOLENSVILLE RD, NASHVILLE, TN 37211



“To be called a refugee is the opposite of an insult; it is a badge of strength, courage, and victory.”



## A Beacon of Light in our Refugee Community

There's an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together" and for ten years, NICE has worked to empower the refugee and immigrant populations of Middle Tennessee by providing direct social services and educational programs. With community partnerships, NICE continues to make tangible, positive changes in the lives of refugee and immigrant families we serve. This year NICE was fortunate to be selected by BB&T for their Nashville Lighthouse service project. The BB&T Lighthouse Project, held May and June of each year, gives the opportunity to put the BB&T mission into action, doing their part to improve the communities they serve. Raising awareness for the plight of the refugees we serve is a worthy cause. We are extremely proud of our Lighthouse project and the partnership with BB&T.

Together we do great things for our community!



**SAVE <sup>the</sup> DATE**  
 Nashville International Center for Empowerment  
 ★★★★★★ PRESENTS ★★★★★★  
**ONE WORLD  
 ONE DREAM**  
**CELEBRATING**  
 10 YEARS OF EMPOWERMENT FOR  
**NASHVILLE'S NEW AMERICANS**  
 & Our Sponsors  
 November 5th, 2015 6:00 – 8:30 pm  
**HUTTON HOTEL**  
 1808 West End Ave. Nashville, TN 37203  
 For more information: [information@empowernashville.org](mailto:information@empowernashville.org)



# CLIENT STORIES



Rosa came from Cuba to the US and was forced to leave her two young sons behind. She lost hope of ever seeing them again. She remarried and had a son. This year the 2 boys in Cuba were granted refugee status. They traveled alone to the US as minors, now aged 7 and 12. They arrived at the airport with just one backpack between them. They were happily reunited with their mother, stepfather and met their younger brother for the first time. NICE is reuniting families.



Rasha, a NICE ESL student desired to create opportunities to increase the quality of her family's life. She enrolled in our Child Care program. Rasha's English skills and childcare knowledge made her a candidate to work in our ESL child care program - the first paid job that Rasha has ever acquired! Rasha has exhibited an ongoing sense of empowerment. Once unsure in her language skills and role, Rasha's uncertainty has been replaced with a sense of pride as an English speaker, and as a new American with a hope and a future.



Dil was the first NICE client hired at Belmont University through our employment program. His job in Facilities Management came with high pay, generous benefits and best of all, free tuition. Not long after, our RISE program was able to get his degree from his home country accredited so he could continue his studies. A few weeks later, NICE found his daughter a job at Dell. The family bought their first car and within weeks of arrival, Dil and his family were self-sufficient!

# CLIENT STORIES



Jabreel and Basima are a Kurdish couple who moved from Mosul, Iraq. They left their country after being repeatedly threatened for being Christian. It was not an easy decision and the process took over two years. They both left behind their families, friends and all their belongings. NICE enrolled them in English classes, childcare training and our driver's training class. They are happy to be on the road to success and living the American dream.



Jeanty was a school principal who taught students through music. Now in the US, he is the one who learns through music, having teachers evaluate his song lyrics written in English. He loves the NICE USA slogan that means You Start Again!



Gustave and Angelique are a Congolese family who lived in a Uganda refugee camp for 18 years before being granted refugee status. All five of their children were born in the camp. Upon arriving in their new home they joyfully sang and danced of finally having a place to call home. Their children could not wait to go to school. At Christmas, a generous donation gifted them a brand new washer and dryer for their new home in Nashville.

“Refugees and immigrants receive a haven at NICE as they seek to be part of the ‘New American Dream’. But this dream makes it difficult; if not hard, for refugees and immigrants, and I myself, to quickly adapt to its trend. This is what NICE does, help overcome numerous challenges and thereby integrates us fully into their ‘New World’.”

-Martin George, US State Department Fellow

“Thanks again for all you do for our students and the community!”

Tim Stewart, Director of Service-Learning Belmont University

“Spending time at NICE was amazing. It was a pleasure getting to know so many inspiring people that I will never forget. I am grateful for all the chances I have and appreciate the care free world I got to grow up in. I deep respect for the employees at NICE who dedicate their lives to helping people and they inspired me to do more for others.”

-Dominique Van Keekan, Netherlands

## SERVICE LEARNING



### US STATE DEPARTMENT FELLOW

NICE was a host site for a US State Department Community Solutions Fellow from Sierra Leone. This program is a professional development program for the best & brightest global community leaders around the world. During the program fellows work with US host organizations on projects of mutual interest and the host site provides training and coaching to the fellows in order to maximize their ability to affect change in their home communities.



### UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities. NICE placed service learning interns from many local universities such as Belmont, Cumberland, Lipscomb, MTSU, TSU and Vanderbilt, as well as students from across the country at University of Maryland, Northwestern, University of Miami, Emory, Columbia and more.



### INTERNATIONAL INTERNS

We welcomed two honor students from the HZ University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands to NICE. Their goal was to discover how NICE helps refugees to develop themselves towards a life that includes self-sufficiency, economic stability and most of all a better future for their families. How wonderful students from around the world are learning from us and sharing our work.

# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS!

**WE WOULD NOT BE THE SAME WITHOUT YOU!**

"Each year NICE supports hundreds of individuals as they strive to create a better life for themselves. This work is invaluable in our community."

- Angie Harris





# FRIENDS OF NICE



THANK YOU TO ALL  
OF OUR DONORS,  
SPONSORS, AND  
BOARD MEMBERS!





2015

# Staff

22 Staff

9 Nations

37 Languages

**“We will work to further invigorate that welcoming spirit for which we are well known. Like so many of our refugee and immigrant clients, I too feel very grateful to work alongside our incredible team.”**

**- Ashley Coleman, Adult Education Coordinator**



# Board of Directors



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WE ARE GRATEFUL  
TO ALL OF THOSE  
WHO MAKE STORIES  
LIKE WALEED'S  
POSSIBLE.



NICE is...Becoming Self-Sufficient



In 2000, Waleed, a 20 year old refugee from Myanmar (Burma), fled his village in Myanmar after death threats from soldiers, walking to safety in Thailand. He stayed in Thailand for a short period, so he could make some money to go to Malaysia. The trip to Malaysia was long, arduous, and dangerous. Over 28 days, Waleed and his fellow Burmese walked, and took cars and a boat to Malaysia. When they finally reached land in Malaysia, they were turned back and forced to swim from Malaysia back to Thailand. He made the trip again and entered Malaysia on this second attempt, catching a bus to the southern Malaysian state of Johor Bahru. Having arrived in Johor Bahru with almost nothing, Waleed found work at a welding shop that would train him to be a welder. With no money and making only \$10 a day, he slept in a local mosque for 8 years and cooked at work, unable to save for an apartment or a car. In 2009, when he got married, he moved in with his wife and in-laws. In 2012, the family moved to Kuala Lumpur, the capital city, but more importantly, Waleed and his family wanted to be closer to UNHCR, where he had appointments for the resettlement process. In Kuala Lumpur, Waleed was hired by a big Malaysian company and welded in government a residential building in the heart of the city.

Waleed arrived in Nashville in December 2013, anxious to continue welding. After a few initial jobs, he got a position as a welder. Waleed did not know that a chance encounter with NICE's RISE Liaison Imad, first at Siloam, and then at their mosque, would mean so much for him and his family. When Waleed told Imad that he wanted to become a certified welder, he recommended NICE's RISE program. We enrolled Waleed in the Recertification component of our RISE program, found the closest welding certification test site (in Elizabethtown, KY), and made an appointment for him to take the test. We even called the testing site to ensure that Waleed knew exactly what he would be tested on. On January 29, Waleed took his test, deciding to test for a 3G certification, which requires you to create welds in three positions, and is considered one of the most difficult welding tests. On his way home after the test, he called to say that he had passed his 6 hour test and received the 3G certification, completing flat, horizontal, and vertical welds! He explained that a machine banged about 20,000 pounds on his welds, and because they didn't break, he passed his certification test! As a certified welder, instead of a salary of \$10 per hour, he can make at least double his current salary! Waleed's dreams don't stop here. He wants to get another certification and open up his own welding shop! We look forward to attending the opening of his shop! What a difference 7years make: from living in a mosque to a certified 3G welder in Nashville with an apartment and car, and his first baby on the way!

PROFILE

# WALEED: LIFE OF A REFUGEE

"NICE is giving  
a better world  
for our  
children."  
~Waleed

# Income

**Government  
Grants**  
\$1,113,582  
73.5%

**Foundations**  
\$198,880  
13.1%

**Private  
Donations**  
\$43,611  
2.9%

**Other:**  
\$159,773  
10.5%

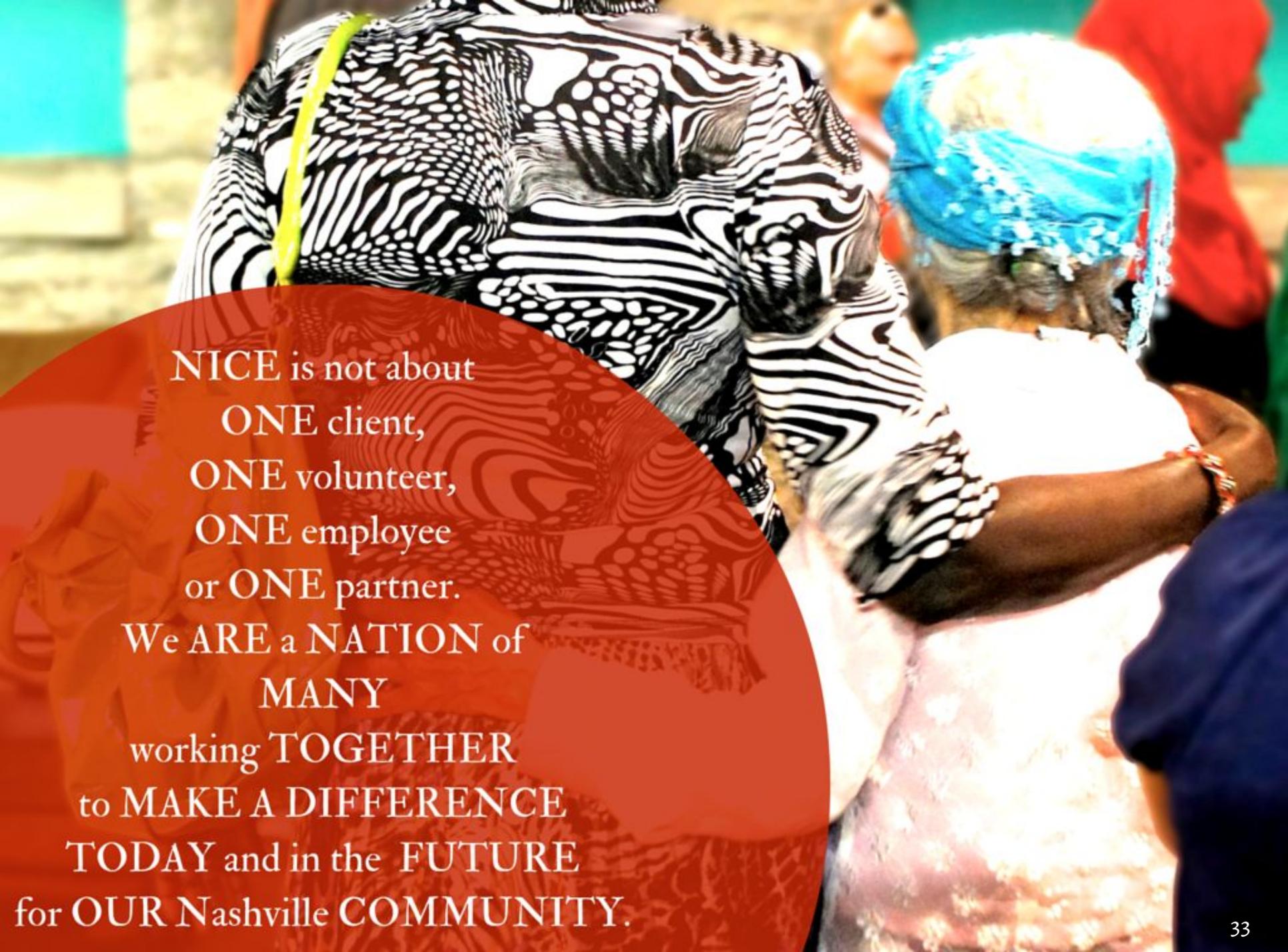
# SUPPORT

# Report

**Program**  
\$1,279,795  
89%

**Administration  
& Fundraising**  
\$158,889  
11%

# Expenses



NICE is not about  
ONE client,  
ONE volunteer,  
ONE employee  
or ONE partner.

We ARE a NATION of  
MANY

working TOGETHER  
to MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
TODAY and in the FUTURE  
for OUR Nashville COMMUNITY.

2016

JOIN

[www.empowernashville.org](http://www.empowernashville.org)

US



**Volunteer**

*Be at the heart of what we do*

**Supply Donations**

*Our team is in need of household supplies for our arriving refugees.*

**Monetary Donations**

*Donations can be made on our website.*

**Community Partnerships**

*Partners strengthen our programs*

**(615) 315-9681**

**417 Welshwood Dr #100, Nashville, TN 37211**