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Dear friends,

In 2022 conflicts in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Cameroon, and nations across the world forced thousands of people to flee their homes and seek protection in the US. Some who arrived were forced onto buses bound for Washington, DC, and New York. Many found their way to Baltimore and arrived on AWE’s doorstep with little more than the clothes on their backs.

As demand for our services grew, you stepped in. You volunteered. You donated. You advocated. We are so grateful. Because of your support, AWE served hundreds of asylum seekers and foreign-born trafficking survivors this year.

With the return to in-person services, clients found community and connection through classes and shared meals. Our immigration legal services program helped people apply for asylum and work authorization. Our housing program gave shelter, safety, and stability to mothers and children. Our trafficking survivors program grew rapidly, doubling in size to become the largest program of its kind in Maryland. We distributed thousands of pounds of food through our food pantry, and nearly $350,000 in financial assistance.

While our growth amazes me, it also serves as a reminder of how many people need our support. Record numbers of families and children arrive at the Southern Border each day in search of safety. Meanwhile politicians in Texas, Arizona, and Florida vow to continue forcing vulnerable migrants onto buses bound for neighboring cities.

But thanks to your support, we will continue providing shelter to newly arrived families, legal assistance to asylum seekers who could not otherwise afford an attorney, medical support to children without insurance, mental health services to trafficking survivors, and a place of healing, connection, and community to people whose worlds have been upended by violence and conflict.

We will continue to create a community where those fleeing for their lives are welcome and safe, where they are celebrated and valued, and where they can finally be at home. Thank you for joining us.

Laura Brown, AWE Executive Director
The Challenges

Millions of people around the world have been forced to flee their homes to escape violence, conflict, and persecution. Many forced migrants make the uncertain and often dangerous journey to the US in hope of finding safety.

But once here, they face many new challenges, as they navigate a new culture and language, and an increasingly complex immigration system.

Asylum seekers and many trafficking survivors are ineligible to reunite with their families, prohibited from working for years, barred from accessing many mainstream support services, and face possible deportation.

Many experience extreme poverty, untreated medical and mental health needs, profound isolation, and continued victimization.
Since opening our doors in 2011 we have offered
a place of healing, connection, and community
and helped restore safety, dignity, and hope to hundreds of people whose lives have been uprooted by violence and persecution.

AWE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, supporting asylum seekers and foreign-born survivors of human trafficking as they heal from past trauma and rebuild their lives in Maryland.

Our holistic, client-centered, and trauma-informed approach combines case management, legal representation, community support, and mental and medical healthcare, so our clients can access the resources and support they need to be safe, stable, and self-sufficient.
Our Programs

CASE MANAGEMENT
We provide asylum seekers and foreign-born trafficking survivors trauma-informed, comprehensive case management services so they can access the resources and support they need to be safe, stable, and self-sufficient.

HEALTH and WELLNESS
In partnership with the HEAL Refugee Health and Asylum Collaborative, Health Care for the Homeless, and the Intercultural Counseling Connection, we connect our clients to individual and group therapy, primary and routine medical care, and forensic evaluations.

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES
We provide immigration legal services and Know Your Rights trainings so our clients have the support and information they need to pursue deportation relief and humanitarian protection in the US.

BENEFITS ASSISTANCE
We help low-income families and individuals access vital food benefits as they work towards self-sufficiency. Our benefits program helps people apply for SNAP, and tackles barriers to food access and security through outreach, advocacy, and education.

MATERIAL SUPPORT
We distribute food, diapers, baby gear, furniture, toiletries, and feminine hygiene products.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION
We provide a range of classes, workshops, and events to support clients on their path to integration within their new community.

HOUSING
We provide transitional housing to clients experiencing housing insecurity. We also help clients access rental assistance, donated furniture, and household items.

When I ran away under bombs from the war in Ukraine with my two children. When we came to the US we didn’t have money or a place to live. Then we found AWE. AWE saved me and my children. Every time I come to AWE my mood is lifted. I am greeted with a smile and warmth by staff, volunteers, and classmates from different countries. I will remember these people and be grateful to them for all of my life.

Thank you, AWE, for doing good, and for helping bring me back to life. We did it together.

Alina, AWE client

When I arrived in the US from Cameroon with my son, we had nowhere to go. AWE was our only hope. Honestly, I lack words to express what AWE did for us and is still doing today. AWE brought hope, revival, and belonging to me and my kids. We are forever grateful.

Blanche, AWE client
OUR IMPACT

Classes Taught
Classes covered a range of topics including ESL, yoga, financial literacy, and cultural orientation. In 2022, we also created the Client Ambassador Program (CAP), which gives clients the opportunity to develop and lead classes and receive an honorarium.

Clients Received Case Management Services
We provided trauma-informed, comprehensive case management services to 137 asylum seekers and 105 foreign-born trafficking survivors and their families.

Financial Assistance Provided
We helped our clients meet their basic needs through cash assistance, rental assistance, and the distribution of gift cards.

SNAP Applications Submitted
We helped 157 families apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits ("food stamps") through our newly created Outreach and Benefits Program.

Asylum Seekers Housed
We provided transitional housing to 29 clients experiencing housing insecurity. Other clients were connected to short-term housing through shelters and hotels.

Volunteer Hours Donated
Seventy one (71) volunteers donated their time and expertise to AWE in 2022. Volunteers filled a variety of roles including teaching classes, delivering food, sorting clothing donations, serving as community mentors, sharing professional expertise, and renovating the building.
OUR IMPACT

Immigration Applications Submitted
Our immigration legal services program helped clients apply for asylum and work authorization and accompanied clients to immigration interviews and court hearings.

Pounds of Food Distributed
We distributed fruit, vegetables, and dry goods to food-insecure clients through partnerships with Costco, Celestial Manna, Let’s Eat Inc, and many religious and community organizations.

Diapers Distributed
We distributed diapers, formula, and baby gear through our partnership with ShareBaby. We also provided clients with clothing, toiletries, and feminine hygiene products.
Who We Served

Countries of Origin

- Mexico: 7%
- Guatemala: 8%
- Honduras: 31%
- El Salvador: 12%
- Nicaragua: 2%
- Haiti: 2%
- Colombia: 2%
- Venezuela: 2%
- Brazil: 1%
- Peru: 1%
- Argentina: 1%
- El Salvador: 12%

Immigration Status

- Asylum Seekers: 55%
- Foreign-Born Human Trafficking Survivors: 40%
- Other Forced Migrants: 5%
A Long Journey to Safety: Diego
Story by Caryn Dayhoff, Lead TSAP Advocate

Diego* grew up in Honduras with his mom and four siblings. Life in Honduras was difficult - the country has the second highest murder rate in the world and suffers from acute poverty and rampant gang violence. After countless threats to their lives, the family decided to leave the country. Together they began the dangerous journey to the US, where they hoped to request asylum. Like most migrants forced to flee their homes, they left most of their belongings behind, taking with them only what they could carry.

During their journey they were abducted by a human trafficking ring targeting vulnerable migrants. For the next seven months the family was held in Guatemala and Mexico and forced to work for their captors under threat of violence.

Eventually, the family escaped, and continued their journey north. Finally they reached the Rio Grande River separating Mexico from the US. But Diego’s mother was afraid of crossing the river, and stayed behind with the two youngest children. Diego and his older siblings, Paola and Yanelis, crossed safely and were taken into the custody of US immigration authorities. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) placed Diego, Paola, and Yanelis in immigration detention.

After a few months, Diego, who’d just turned 18, was released, on the condition that he report regularly to ICE. He made his way to Baltimore where he was connected with AWE.

Diego was enrolled in AWE’s Trafficking Survivors Advocacy Program (TSAP), which provides case management services to individuals who have experienced labor or sex trafficking. Most of the clients served in the program are children or young adults, who entered the country via the US-Mexico border.

Over the following months, AWE worked closely with Diego. Diego didn’t have close friends or family in the US and was not authorized to work. AWE helped him obtain a social security number and health insurance, enrolled him in ESL classes, accompanied him to ICE appointments, and provided him with financial assistance to cover food, clothing, and rent. Meanwhile, because they were minors, Paola and Yanelis remained in detention.

In February 2022 Diego’s mother and two younger siblings made it safely to the US. After a brief period in detention, the government gave them permission to join Diego in Baltimore. A few weeks later, the government agreed to release Paola and Yanelis, as well. On March 11, an AWE advocate accompanied Diego, his mother, and two younger siblings to the airport, to pick up Paola and Yanelis. The family was overjoyed to be reunited.

The siblings all began receiving case management services from AWE. With AWE’s support, the family can finally begin to rebuild their lives with safety and dignity in Baltimore.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients
Home at Last: Kofi

Story by Hannah Pursley, Lead Advocate

At 17, most American teenagers are focused on graduating high school and gearing up for college. They spend their free time studying for final exams, making plans for prom, or hanging out with friends.

Kofi* didn’t have this luxury. As a transgender teenager living in Ghana, Kofi was in constant danger of discrimination and violence. Due to her sexual orientation and gender identity, she was repeatedly threatened and attacked growing up, and eventually expelled from school.

Same-sex sexual acts have been illegal in Ghana since the colonial era. Discrimination and persecution of LGBTQ+ people are common, and often encouraged by the media and religious and political leaders. In 2021, the Ghanaian government proposed sweeping new anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. If passed, individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ and individuals who support LGBTQ+ rights, could face up to five years in prison. Meanwhile, anyone who knows someone who is LGBTQ+ and fails to report them to the government, could be prosecuted and jailed.

One day, while attending a small gathering of LGBTQ+ friends, 17-year-old Kofi and the other guests were attacked by men armed with machetes. Kofi was injured but managed to escape. A few weeks later, she traveled to Ecuador – one of the few countries that doesn’t require a visa for visiting Ghanaians. From Ecuador, Kofi made the arduous journey to the US, traveling alone by foot, boat, and bus, through jungles, rivers, and darkness.

Four months after fleeing Ghana, Kofi made it to the US.

Like those of so many asylum seekers, Kofi’s journey did not end after she reached the US. People seeking asylum face numerous challenges once they arrive in America, as they navigate a new culture and language, and an increasingly complex immigration system. Unauthorized to work for months and sometimes years after they arrive and barred from accessing public benefits, many asylum seekers struggle to meet their basic needs.

Because she was a minor, Kofi was placed in a juvenile detention center for seven months after she entered the country. Upon release, she traveled to Baltimore and began receiving services from AWE. Over the next few months, Kofi started to adjust to her new life in the US. An immigration attorney helped her apply for asylum, and AWE connected her with secure, transitional housing. She picked out gender-appropriate clothing from AWE’s clothing closet and received regular food deliveries through AWE’s food pantry. She attended AWE Day Program classes, began receiving therapy, and started studying for her GED. Eventually she found a job and AWE helped her move into her own apartment.

In August 2022, six months after her twentieth birthday, Kofi was granted asylum. Now she can focus again on what she loves most: running, riding her bike, reading at the park, cooking, and exploring Baltimore. Reflecting on how AWE supported her in her journey, Kofi shares, “When I first came to this great country without any family, friends or hope, AWE helped. They gave me food, clothing, [money], and a place to call home.”

*Names changed to protect the privacy of our clients
Financials

Income
$1,293,379

Expenses
$1,161,244

Our Funders

The Abell Foundation
The Annie E. Casey Foundation
The Baltimore Civic Fund
The Baltimore Community Foundation
Baltimore’s Promise
The Catonsville Presbyterian
The Goldseker Foundation
The Grace Foundation
The Hilton Foundation
The Jewish Women's Giving Foundation
The Krieger Fund
The Miles White Beneficial Society
No Kid Hungry
The Sisters of St. Joseph
The Straus Foundation
The Stulman Foundation
The Mayor's Office for Neighborhood Safety & Engagement (MONSE)
The Mitzvah Fund for Good Deeds
The Office of Refugee Resettlement
The US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)
The Weinberg Foundation
Welcome.US
Our Team

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Our Board of Directors

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Our Partners

Thank you to our wonderful partners for making our work possible!
HOW YOU CAN HELP IN 2023

You make our work possible. No matter the method, we need your support.

**DONATE**  Your donation helps asylum seekers and survivors of human trafficking access the services they need to heal from past trauma and rebuild their lives in Maryland.
- **Online:** Visit asyleewomen.org and click the donate button
- **By mail:** AWE, 4500 Frankford Ave, Baltimore MD 21206

Donations are tax deductible.

**PURCHASE**  Purchase items from our Amazon Wish List! Wish List items are delivered to our office and distributed directly to clients. Visit our website for more details.

**JOIN THE CONVERSATION**
Follow us on social media
- @asyleewomen

**VOLUNTEER**  Volunteers help asylum seekers and trafficking survivors adjust to their new lives in Maryland.

**ORGANIZE**  Organize a fundraiser or food drive at your work, school, or church on AWE’s behalf! Contact us at info@asyleewomen.org for additional information.