Annual Report

2022
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The Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio started 2022 focused on our commitment to help rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic onset, to strengthen our communities and to support Bhutanese and other South Asian immigrant and refugee populations across central Ohio. The year 2022 marked ten years of BCCO working as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio has come a long way in ten years, from working with a small community in Columbus, Ohio to making its debut on the White House steps. This has been a year of transitions, new partnerships, and re-introducing pre-pandemic cultural events and services that empower and strengthen the communities we serve.

Peace Initiative Bhutan (PIB) and BCCO advocating for family reunification, long-term solutions for the remaining Bhutanese refugees living in camps, and freedom for political prisoners at the White House. The PIB team shared personal stories, successes, and concerns to key representatives in D.C.
The Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio continued its focus on the most vulnerable members of the community and worked on developing tailored support services to engage community members and strengthen resilience factors. In 2022, BCCO partnered with Columbus Public Health and AARP in implementing peer support programming to support older adults who are typically isolated from the greater community and struggle with unresolved mental health issues and trauma. Being a refugee-led community non-profit organization with the majority of the staff and board, representing the broader refugee community it serves. BCCO has the experience and team to fill in service gaps and develop culturally and linguistically appropriate social services, like the AARP program, that yield effective and lasting outcomes.

BCCO received their first grant from AARP in 2022 to engage, empower, and connect older adults in its community. BCCO teamed up with COTA to provide training for program participants and help demystify the public transport system.

BCCO continued to deliver vital case management, client advocacy services, and educational programs to individuals and their families through HSS Office of Refugee Resettlement funding and the Catalyst program funded by Franklin County Board of Commissioners. Both projects ended in 2022. HSS ORR-supported RISE program supported case management and organization-building efforts from 2019 through the fall of 2022.
RISE assisted a total of 150 new clients this year alone and welcomed two new board members. A major objective for the RISE program is to build sustainability for the organization. The BCCO’s efforts resulted in being awarded national, local and federal competitive grants -- ranging from the Franklin County Catalyst grant, to City of Columbus CARES Act funding, to the AARP Community Challenge one-year grant, to the City of Columbus Elevate capacity building grant, to a Columbus Public Health/CDC community engagement and mental health grant, and an HHS Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program competitive grant awarded in Fall of 2022.

We look forward to 2023 committed to continue to support community members and to increase opportunities for Ohio’s growing immigrant and refugee community.
Meet the Team

Sudarshan Pyakurel
Executive Director

Soma Thapa
Program Manager

Mani Biswa
Outreach Coordinator

Yamuna Adhikari
Program Manager

Keshara Adhikari
Columbus Public Health Liaison

Haley Crook
Communication Coordinator

Board of Directors

Jhumanath Acharya, Board Chair
Youth Mentor, CRIS

Rohit Subedie, Treasurer
Real Estate and Business

Dr. Binaya Subedi, Secretary
Associate Professor, Ohio State University

Michael Fusco, Legal Committee
Attorney at Law

Dr. Taru Saigal, Health Committee
Physician

Dilli Sharma, Member
System Analyst and IT

Kamal Subedi, Member
Professor, Columbus State Community College

Jody Korte, Member
AVP Community Partners, Caresource

Jacklyn Kirsch, Member
Social Worker, PHD

Advisors, Consultants, and Interns

Rebecca Nelson
Arati Maleku
Udhav Kharel

Gary Snyder
Sarmila Khatiwoda
Bidya Kharel
RISE provided case management services for 525 families in the three years BCCO managed the program.

Refugee Impact Services and Empowerment Program (RISE)

In September 2019, BCCO was awarded a three-year Ethnic Community Self-Help (ECSH) grant from the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement. This opportunity has proved to be one of the most significant grant-funded programs in the 10-year history of BCCO. The Bhutanese Refugee Impact Services Empowerment (RISE) program was developed to expand culturally appropriate wrap-around case management services to ECSH-eligible clients, assist the Bhutanese refugee community in Central Ohio to become active community members, and to continue to strengthen BCCO's board, staff, and sustainability. In 2022, RISE provided direct services to a total of 150 families, and 525 families in the entire 3-year project. The RISE program allowed BCCO to maintain and make new strong community connections and partnerships that helped the BCCO’s mission and objectives for RISE. Though 2022 was the last year for the RISE program, the work and sustainability efforts RISE provided has resulted in new opportunities such as obtaining a new HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement grant. In the next three years, BCCO will be managing a community-focused gardening project through the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP).
Bhutanese Education and Engagement Success (BEES) Catalyst Grant

The Bhutanese Education and Engagement Success (BEES) Program, supported by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners Catalyst Grant, aims to provide direct services which accelerate and deepen parent and student engagement in the public school system and help develop positive life coping and community engagement skills that contribute to student success. Through the BEES program, BCCO acted as a bridge between the public school system and the Bhutanese community while breaking down barriers that prevent Bhutanese families and their children excelling in school.

In 2022, BEES embarked on several community engagement projects that strengthen student engagement and success. BEES partnered with Columbus Metropolitan Library, helping identify 47 families in need of internet access. The program provided each family with a Chromebook and hotspot. In the summer, BEES managed 7 students through the TANF Summer Youth Employment Program. Through this program students were able to gain internship experience through several sites such as home health care agencies, museums, and pharmacies. BEES also coordinated and organized BCCO’s first Cultural Graduation Ceremony since the 2020 pandemic. All Bhutanese high school and college graduates were encouraged to attend, where they received a special recognition from the community and provided higher educational resources.
Partnerships and Community Impact

The BCCO attributes a great deal of their impactful work to strong collaborations and partnerships. As a community-led organization, BCCO often acts as liaison between the community and mainstream services. Bhutanese refugees often face cultural, linguistic, and systematic barriers to connecting to health, government, educational, and other services. The BCCO strives to fill in service gaps that prevent social equity. In recent years, the community has witnessed an influx of community members moving to surrounding counties due to employment and educational opportunities for their children. In 2022, the BCCO secured strong partnerships with Licking County, connecting and educating new Licking County community members to public services while educating and training different county agencies on better practices when serving Bhutanese Americans.
In 2022, BCCO made a big shift in developing and implementing innovative programs to support older adults in the community. BCCO identified a vulnerable sub-group within the Bhutanese community in Central Ohio. This sub-group was Bhutanese refugee women above the age of 50. BCCO recognized women above the age of 50 bearing the biggest burden in the community and spent a large portion of their productive lives residing in refugee camps. Many of these women experience barriers in language and transportation and rarely have the opportunity to practice independence or participate in the community around them. Extreme isolation and lack of purpose contributes to the compounded mental health burden that many older Bhutanese refugees bear.

BCCO was one of only 260 awardees nationally out of 3,200 AARP Community Challenge applications in 2022. BCCO’s AARP Community Challenge project supported three groups of Bhutanese women 50 years and older and helped guide them through their community. AARP state representatives shared that BCCO’s application was one of the most exciting projects of the year.
Each project participant completed four weeks of weekly classes and educational field trips. Every week would feature necessary activities and information that contributed to confidence and a safe social environment for all participants. BCCO facilitated partnerships with COTA, (Columbus bus transit), libraries, parks, museums, and more to enrich the project. The participants learned how to access public transportation, discover free resources like libraries and public parks, learn to shop on their own, have fun at museums and restaurants. The classes and field trips were designed to help demystify these activities and demonstrate how to participate in the community as American citizens. The Community Challenge grant paved the way for these women to develop confidence to be more involved and independent, while confronting disparities.

The success of AARP Community Challenge encouraged the transition to the CDC-funded and Columbus Public Health-supported Pathway to Wellness program. The purpose of Pathway to Wellness is to foster independence and life skills amongst peers. The environment allows older women who are typically separated from their counterparts, a place to share and connect. The program offers supportive services, mental health education, and referrals. Pathway to Wellness employs creative outliers like weaving and crocheting to improve mental health and provide opportunities of income. The Pathway to Wellness program funding will run until the end of 2023.
Health and Wellness Fair

For the first time in nearly three years, BCCO hosted the Health and Wellness Fair in honor of Minority Health Month in April. The Health and Wellness Fair had been an annual event for BCCO since 2017. The Health and Wellness fair was one of many health outreach efforts BCCO participated in this year. BCCO also worked with the Ohio Department of Mental Health on a project educating community members about COVID vaccines and resources. The Health and Wellness fair brought together new and established community partners and provided fair-goers with free health screenings, an opportunity to network with community resources, and activities for the family. BCCO recognizes the importance of on the ground community outreach for vulnerable populations like the South Asian refugee communities we serve. BCCO is happy to bring back such an important event to the community.
Advocacy

Peace Initiative Bhutan (PIB) with the guidance of Global Citizens Circle (GCC) met with elected officials and federal agencies in Washington D.C. BCCO supported the initiative by inviting 15 Bhutanese Americans to exercise their rights as New Americans to (1) call for accountability for Bhutan’s atrocities committed during the ethnic cleansing of the Bhutanese-Nepali people, (2) call on the UNHCR to expedite the repatriation, assimilation or resettlement of the remaining 6,500 refugees still living in UN camps in Nepal, (3) advocate for family reunification and visitation rights to Bhutan, and (4) demand Bhutan end its inhumane treatment and incarceration of Nepali Bhutanese “political prisoners”. There were a total of 17 participants, including BCCO’s Sudarshan Pyakurel, Haley Crook, and Mani Biswa. The PIB team was represented by Bhutanese-American youth and community leaders, who shared their personal experiences, highlighted positive refugee impact in resettlement, and voiced current community concerns to evoke urgency on these important issues. The trip helped establish crucial relationships in the federal government and laid the foundation for Peace in Bhutan.

BCCO and the PIB team speaking with Senator Brown’s staff. The team paid special attention to Ohio and New York representatives, two states with significant Bhutanese populations.

“There is an artwork to advocacy and you guys nailed it”

-- Howard Ou, AAPI & LGBTQ Deputy Director for the Biden Administration

The PIB team managed to organize a last-minute meeting with Senator Bernie Sanders and his team. The PIB team met with a total of 10 representatives, advocacy groups, and government departments to tell the Bhutanese story.
Financial Snapshot

The BCCO’s important work would not be possible without our supporters and funders. In 2022, we received funding from new partners, as well as continued support from HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement, Franklin County Commissioner’s, and Columbus Public Health. The BCCO is grateful to all who support our efforts. Every new dollar or partnership helps make our refugee community stronger.

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<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>94,241.27</td>
<td>119,251.89</td>
<td>311,514.50</td>
<td>394,959.93</td>
<td>$303,096.55</td>
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<td>Expenditures</td>
<td>93,136.92</td>
<td>99,530.89</td>
<td>312,721.92</td>
<td>275,923.60</td>
<td>$356,941.82</td>
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Thank You!
To our major funding partners

Franklin County
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

The City of Columbus
Andrew J. Ginther, Mayor
Columbus Public Health

AARP Community Challenge

To our community partners and supporters

CareSource
Franklin Co. Job and Family Services
Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS)
Amazon
United Way of Licking Co.
Ethiopian-Tweahedo Social Services (ETSS)
Lifeline Pharmacy
Ohio Asian American Health Coalition
Asian American Community Services
OSU College of Social Work
Freedom Daycare
Namaste Financial Solutions
Qualls Law, LLC
Franklin University
NAMI Franklin Co.
Senator Brown Office
A Kid Again
Ohio Family Counseling

SAMHSA
ADAMH Board of Franklin Co.
Licking Co. Job and Family Services
Arogya Wellness
Franklin Co. Auditor Office
The Breathing Association
Everest Lending
OSU James
National Veteran Memorial and Museum
Almis Home Healthcare
24/7 Home Healthcare, LLC
Excel Home healthcare
Columbus Metropolitan Library
YMCA Central Ohio
Ohio Dept. of Health
COTA
Peace Initiative Bhutan (PIB)
United Way of Central Ohio
Mission Statement

Every day, the Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio supports refugees and immigrants with essential, culturally appropriate social and health services and empowers them through education and advocacy. The BCCO serves as a resource to local and state agencies and organizations, and as a national model for other non-profits which serve New Americans.