

## St. James Cathedral

Annual Report  
July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

## IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE

*We work to promote an inclusive society and advance justice for immigrants through education, advocacy, accompaniment, and by helping immigrants to learn English, become citizens, and connect to community resources.*

*From the Desk of the Director*

Over the past year, immigrants and refugees have been some of the communities hardest hit by the pandemic. In response to the challenges we all have faced, we have looked for new ways and opportunities to make a difference in their lives. Our tutors responded by pivoting to remote sessions via Zoom. We instituted online tutor training, virtual field trips, on-going support calls, and help accessing financial and other assistance. Due to these and other changes, we were able to avoid a decrease in services. This coming year, we are expanding legal services and forming a welcome team for newly arrived refugees. Read on to find out more about the people we served and what we were able to accomplish with the support of our volunteers, donors, and allies. Thank you!

*Christopher J Koehler, Director*

*Grant that migrants in search of a dignified life may find acceptance and assistance.*

Pope Francis, 12-25-13

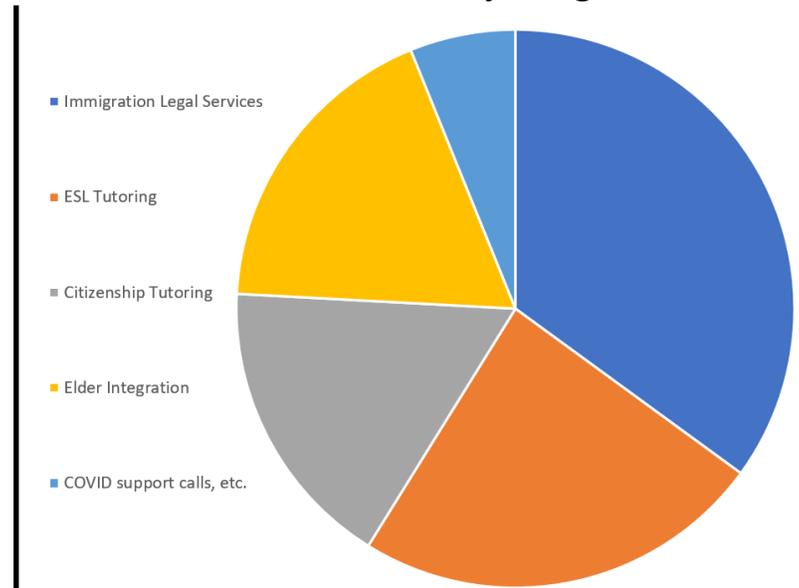
**276**  
**Immigrants Helped**

**53**  
**Countries Represented**

**35**  
**Languages Spoken**

**99**  
**Volunteers**

**Enrollment by Program**



- |           |           |           |          |            |          |            |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|----------|------------|
| Amharic   | Cambodian | Eritrean  | Korean   | Mandinka   | Russian  | Tagalog    |
| Arabic    | Cantonese | Ethiopian | Kunama   | Moldovan   | Somali   | Taiwanese  |
| Bari      | Chinese   | Farsi     | Lingala  | Mongolian  | Spanish  | Tigrinya   |
| Bengali   | Dinka     | Fulani    | Laotian  | Persian    | Sudanese | Ukrainian  |
| Bulgarian | English   | Japanese  | Mandarin | Portuguese | Swahili  | Vietnamese |

# Immigrant Stories and Quotes



## A Man of Many Talents

*Lisa Casterella, Freelance Writer*

One Christmas Eve, Ralph came to St. James to celebrate Mass. He prayed for help after the theft that had taken so much from him. While sitting in a pew, looking at a bulletin, he found St. James Immigrant Assistance listed. He called Monday morning and had an appointment with Patrick Suhrbier, Legal Services Coordinator. Going through Ralph's history with him, Patrick and SJIA spent many hours requesting records and immigration files to help clarify Ralph's immigration history. While Ralph began the process of citizenship, Patrick was there at every step, helping to make sure Ralph understood the process and was able to navigate the application and the interview in order to avoid any unnecessary delays or confusion. Always patient and kind, Ralph tells me of the day of his interview and oral exam. "Patrick fought for me." Ralph says proudly. "Patrick sat with me and I passed my citizenship exam!" *Read about Ralph's 36 year journey to U.S. Citizenship, the terrible theft that almost derailed his ambitions, and his resiliency throughout his journey at [Stories \(stjames-cathedral.org\)](https://stjames-cathedral.org)*

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A woman came to our program in early 2021 with very limited literacy skills. She could not write the alphabet at all without looking at a chart, and she could not identify the phonemes of the letters. After being matched with a tutor in March 2021, with whom she meets twice a week, she is now able to produce the phonemes of each letter, write all of the lowercase letters and most of the uppercase letters. She can write the first letter of a word sounded out to her in either lower or uppercase, such as man, yan, Tacoma, Vancouver. She can read 53 sight words at 100% accuracy as well. This is a huge accomplishment for both the student and tutor. Her tutor reports: "[She] is a very enthusiastic, eager and willing student and it is so exciting for the both of us to see how she has progressed. I think she is very happy to see how far she has come. Apparently her teenage sons have complimented her on her improved writing! I absolutely love tutoring her."

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".....the main thing for learning a language is practice, so we talk a lot. I am not afraid and do not hesitate to talk to her. With other people it is more difficult for me. But the experience of talking with Sylvia helps me a lot. Now I notice that I understand almost everything that is said to me. [I have] only had a few lessons with Max. This was enough to realize that Max is a friendly and interesting person. He studies Spanish himself and understands my difficulties with English well. We're talking about American history, which he knows well, about pets, whom we both love. All this helps a lot to adapt in a new country for me. Without such help, it would be very difficult for me to live here."

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A legal services client came to us after being unsuccessful at her first three naturalization interviews. With only a few months to prepare for her fourth interview, she received intensive tutoring support almost every day for 2–3 months. Legal services staff and volunteers met with her weekly for two hours to review her citizenship application, and give her time to get familiar with the application questions. She had arrived as a refugee in the 1970s as a young teenager with her older sister, but both parents had passed away. She never had the opportunity to become literate in her first language. She completed only one year of middle school in the U.S. and was never able to develop fluency in English. After forty plus years, she qualifies for an English language exemption, but at this point her spoken English is stronger than her first language, and she preferred to complete her interview in English. She needed intensive and personalized tutoring and interview preparation services in place of an interpreter. She successfully completed her interview and is now a U.S. citizen enjoying the confirmation of something she has long since felt, that of being a US citizen.

# Our Work

## Citizenship Preparation

To pass a citizenship interview, applicants need to learn answers to over 100 questions! We provide tutoring using a standard curriculum, including everything needed to pass a citizenship interview.

## Elder Integration

These groups offer older refugees and immigrants an opportunity to connect with their peers and become more involved in the local community. They learn about emergency preparation, health issues and services, community attractions, social services, and more.

## ESL Tutoring

Immigrants and refugees enrolled in our ESL Tutoring program receive individualized instruction tailored to their specific situation and needs – whether that be employment skills, transportation, navigating their children’s school, the grocery store, or the healthcare system. In addition to ESL skills, volunteers are welcoming and supportive companions in an immigrant or refugee’s life.

## Legal Services

We help clients to complete their N400 citizenship application. We work to ensure clients have everything they need to file. This can include, for example, legal services, health services, and even transportation to the appointment

## Advocacy and Education

We promote justice for immigrants through immigration alerts, webinars, visits with elected officials, presentations, bulletin inserts, sharing the stories of immigrants, and a *Justice for Immigrants* advocacy team.

### Advisory Board

Ana Mikel  
Gina Kuypers  
Joe Varano  
Joyce Mork-O'Brien  
Rex Warlaw  
Tom FitzMacken

### Staff

Patrick Suhrbier, Immigrant Legal Services Coordinator  
Sayuko Setvik, Tutoring Coordinator  
Tammi Murry, Program Assistant  
Tania Rzhondkovska, Client Liaison  
Christopher Koehler, Director