

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



ENHANCE.
ENRICH.
EMPOWER.

About Us

The Asian American Center of Frederick provides vital services to assist low income, minority, and immigrant groups in reaching their full potential through workforce development, access to health insurance, interpreter/translation services, ESL classes, mentoring, housing, education, employment, and business development services.



ENHANCE

Improve access to service through community outreach and support

EMPOWER

Teach, train and enable community members to increase their capacity

ENRICH

Understand and appreciate different cultures among those we serve



REFLECTION FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My letter for the annual report is always an opportunity to look back over things accomplished while looking ahead to exciting prospects. For example, the coming year will find us continuing to make solid progress with our Workforce Integration Service for Empowerment (WISE) apprenticeship program. We are also overhauling our Language Resource Services by expanding the number of interpreters while gearing up for a specific marketing campaign to remind the business community of the impressive language resources available for their use.

The past year has been successful in so many ways, but 2025 started with AACF having to face several challenges. Challenges are not new to AACF but with changes in federal funding we find it necessary to take a different

approach than we've done over the past few years. With two decades of successful service to the community AACF has developed a resiliency and stands ready to face whatever may come our way. We are fully committed to doing whatever it takes to continue to offer a variety of services to those in need.

2024 was a very successful year with our community events such as Lunar New Year, Asia on the Creek, and the Frederick Community Health Fair. While unfortunately circumstances at the present time are such that we are unable to hold the health fair this coming year. At the same time, we are carefully reviewing other small events that will give us opportunities to share a variety of cultural experiences with the community, continue to provide services to those in need, and stay to our mission of Enhance. Empower. Enrich.

With this firmly in mind, we look forward to continued growth in the coming year.

Elizabeth Chung
Executive Director



A Message from the President of the Board

As I began my presidency in 2024, I did so with deep enthusiasm and a passionate commitment to further the mission and vision of the Asian American Center of Frederick (AACF). From the outset, my goal has been to build on the foundation laid by my predecessors and to lead our organization with a forward-thinking vision—one that affirms the invaluable gifts of our dedicated employees, tireless volunteers, and trusted community partners.

Over the past year, we have taken meaningful steps toward this vision, achieving tangible progress in our shared mission. However, the early part of 2025 brought with it a new set of challenges. Federal budget cuts had a significant impact on the broader economy, including the nonprofit sector. Like many organizations, AACF was not immune to these constraints. Yet, in the face of these financial hardships, our resolve has only strengthened.

Resilience has become our enduring strength. Guided by our values, we continue to make strategic decisions and structural adjustments to ensure our sustainability without compromising our commitment to the communities we serve.

This year, we have also proudly deepened our engagement with the Frederick community through the celebration of various cultural festivals. These events have not only showcased the vibrant diversity of our region but have served as a reminder of the dignity and respect that every human life deserves. Our cultural programming affirms the rich traditions that define our communities and highlights AACF's commitment to honoring and uplifting all cultures.

Looking ahead, our vision for AACF is to become a self-reliant and self-sustaining organization. We are exploring alternative development models that will support long-term stability, economic viability, and innovation. These efforts will enable us to launch new programs, expand our services, and, most importantly, create growth opportunities for our staff—professionally and personally. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to lead AACF during this time of transition and transformation. I remain deeply grateful to each member of our community for your continued belief in our mission. Together, we will move forward—resilient, united, and inspired by the strength of our shared purpose.

Rev. John Ponnala, President, Board of Directors

AACF's Board of Directors

Rev. John Ponnala, *President*
Dr. Cynthia Macri, *Vice President*
Mr. Kang Lee, *Treasurer*
Dr. Dawei Yang, *EC at Large*
Ms. Charlotte Davis, *Secretary*
Dr. Lakshmi Darbha, *Director*

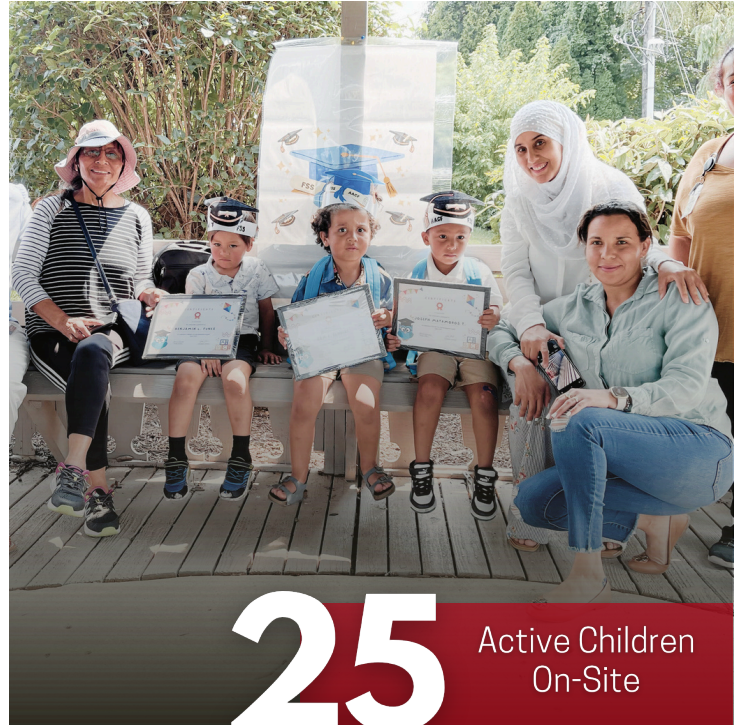
Mr. Jordan Foley, *Director*
Dr. Amit Kumar, *Director*
Dr. William Reid, *Director*
Ms. Theresa Smith, *Director*
Ms. Patricia Simons, *Director*
Ms. Hongwei Xu, *Director*
Ms. Michelle Beadle, *Administrative Support*

Growing Together: Family Support Services

The Family Support Services (FSS) program—launched less than two years ago has already become a cornerstone of support for families in our community. In 2024 FSS proudly served more than 75 families, providing comprehensive assistance that reflects our mission to build a healthier, more resilient Frederick.

Each month, our “Welcome Baby!” event creates a warm, welcoming space where expecting and new parents can access essential resources, educational materials, and thoughtful giveaways in a home-like environment. These gatherings are not just services, they are celebrations of new beginnings and community connection.

To meet the growing demand and extend our reach, AACF invested in a 15-passenger van this year. This critical addition enhances our mobility and ensures families have reliable transportation to and from FSS programs, expanding access across a broader area.



Our work is made stronger through valued partnerships with local organizations, allowing us to offer:

- Legal and financial literacy sessions
- English language classes
- Nutrition and wellness workshops
- Professional development for parents

All while providing quality early education and care for their children.

At AACF, we believe that strong families build strong communities. Family Support Services is at the heart of this belief—ensuring every family has the tools, knowledge, and support they need to thrive.

Workforce Integration Services for Empowerment

In 2024, AACF marked a major milestone in workforce development with the launch of our Workforce Integration Services for Empowerment (WISE) program. WISE connects apprentices with local employers, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience and earn wages while employers build a workforce tailored to their needs. This innovative approach strengthens career pathways and addresses workforce shortages—especially in the healthcare sector.

Building on our legacy of workforce training, and with support from HRSA and EARN grant funding, AACF has trained and certified over 300 Community Health Workers, Geriatric Nursing Assistants, Certified Nursing Assistants, and medical interpreters. Our graduates now serve in hospitals, clinics, senior care facilities, and county health departments across the region—and many return to support AACF's growing healthcare education programs.

Through WISE, AACF is proud to modernize the tradition of apprenticeships and empower individuals with the tools they need to thrive in today's job market.



WISE is all about empowerment, by offering training for certified CHWs, and CNAs, apprenticeship opportunities, and interpreter training. We make connections for a healthier future for all.

Empowering New Beginnings: Citizenship Integration Services

For over 20 years, Citizenship Integration Services (CIS) has been at the heart of AACF's mission—helping individuals achieve the life-changing milestone of legal residency and citizenship.

In 2024, we served more than 400 community members, guiding them through complex immigration processes with compassion and care. Each case represents a personal journey, supported by our dedicated ESL instructors, case managers, and staff.

CIS thrives thanks to the generosity of our donors and community partners, allowing us to continue providing essential support during uncertain times.

At AACF, we know that when individuals gain stability and status, the entire community is strengthened—and we're proud to walk alongside them on that path.

AACF MISSION:



To enrich the future of Maryland by equipping and empowering all immigrants to become independent and self-sufficient contributors to their communities and American society.



432

Clients
Helped



240

ESL Students
Enrolled

The rewarding feeling of success

Throughout the year we hear success stories again and again. Helping immigrants become new U.S. Citizens is indeed rewarding. Here are just a few examples from dozens over the past year.

Carlos Cedillos is a young gentleman born in El Salvador. He came to CIS from our outreach event in Hagerstown. Carlos called us as soon as he completed his interview with USCIS. He was so happy and almost crying as he said, "I understand the meaning of the pursuit of happiness."

Mrs. Aviles also from El Salvador was referred to our office by a previous CIS student. Mrs. Aviles took the CIS civics classes online as her work schedule prevented her from attending classes in person. After passing her citizenship test, she called AACF to say thank you for all the assistance she received.

Roxana Alvarenga from El Salvador, Norelis Carranza from Honduras, and Alba Rodrigues from Guatemala came with her two daughters to an AACF ESL and Civics Class specifically to celebrate their successfully becoming U.S. Citizens.



AACF is proud to have assisted all to become citizens who give back to the community!

Language Resources Services

In 2024, our Language Services Program supported 10 organizational clients across healthcare, education, community, and private sectors, completing a total of 142 interpretation jobs. Frederick Surgical Center emerged as our largest client, accounting for 68% of service requests, followed by Canam Steel Corporation at 13%. Other partners included the Asian American Center of Frederick, Sheppard Pratt, YMCA, and Frederick Health Hospital. Interpretation was delivered in a wide range of languages, with Spanish, ASL, French, and Burmese being the most frequently requested. Despite occasional geographic and availability challenges, service continuity was maintained through partnerships with trusted external providers, AdAstra and Keystone.



\$14,831.50
Earned from
Interpreter Services
with 7 NEW CLIENTS

Our interpreter roster currently includes 41 individuals, with 29 actively serving requests. Languages represented include Spanish, French, Russian, Mandarin, Vietnamese, ASL, and more. A key development this year was the strong interest in expanding services to include remote voice and video interpretation via the Propio platform, demonstrating a shift towards a more flexible, technology-enabled service delivery. These efforts reflect our commitment to responsive, high-quality language access and position us to better meet growing and evolving community needs in the year ahead.

AACF Program Outcomes

COUNT	PROJECTS	DETAILS	OUTCOME
31,004 reached 14,888 Engaged	MULTILINGUAL OUTREACH CONNECTION AND CONTACTS	Enhanced integration of emotional wellness in early learning spaces.	- Reduced stigma and increased help-seeking behavior. - Timelier access to developmental and behavioral support.
642 Students 250+ Hours	ENROLLED IN LEARNING PROGRAMS FAMILY CONNECT, CHW CLASSES ESL CLASSES	Interactive, inclusive learning spaces to positively address barriers for our families with the youngest learners, non-English speakers and workforce seekers.	- Greater access to trauma-informed, culturally relevant mental health resources. - Increased parent knowledge and empowerment.



Financial Updates

Grants Funded \$5,217,969	Donations \$40,109.64	Interpreter Services \$14,831.50
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

\$14,831.50 EARNED FROM INTERPRETER SERVICES INCREASED CLIENT NUMBER

A profit margin of \$7K from 7 clients.

Volunteers are the Heart of AACF's mission

In 2024, AACF volunteers contributed over 37,000 hours of service—an incredible testament to their dedication. From supporting our 17th annual Frederick Community Health Fair on October 5th to providing ongoing help at Frederick Health Hospital, Thurmont Food Bank, and AACF's Citizenship and Integration office, their impact was felt across the community.

A standout story comes from Lori Littrell, an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer who has been teaching English to Chinese-speaking seniors in Urbana. Lori's lessons focus on essential communication, such as how to describe symptoms or call emergency services. Recently, she also helped her students deliver handmade blankets to the Community Table in downtown Frederick.



Our volunteers continue to drive AACF's mission forward, teaching English, leading fitness classes, distributing food, and building a stronger, more inclusive community. Thank you to each one for your service and heart.

Empowering Seniors Fostering Connections

In 2024, AACF remained committed to supporting seniors through wellness and connection. Programs like yoga, tai chi, English classes, and community gardening promoted physical health and social bonds. The AmeriCorps Senior Companion Program furthered this mission by pairing volunteers with older adults in need of companionship and support, helping them maintain independence and feel a strong sense of belonging. AACF continues to meet the unique needs of immigrant seniors with care and compassion.



Advancing Health Equity: 17th Annual Community Health Fair

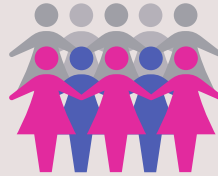
In 2024, AACF reaffirmed its commitment to health equity with the successful launch of the Lifting All Voice campaign. This initiative addresses ongoing gaps in healthcare access, particularly among new immigrants and low-income families by delivering accurate health information, coordinating outreach, and gathering vital community data.

Complementing this effort, AACF hosted its 17th Annual Frederick Community Health Fair on October 5 at Frederick High School. With strong partnerships from Frederick Health, the U.S. Public Health Service, and dozens of local organizations, the fair welcomed over 1,200 attendees. It featured 73 registered vendors and mobilized 390 volunteers, underscoring the community's deep investment in public health.

More than 700 individuals received direct health services at the fair, from screenings to consultations, making it one of the most impactful events of the year. The success of both the Lifting All Voice campaign and the Health Fair reflects the shared dedication of AACF staff, volunteers, healthcare providers, and community partners to building a healthier, more informed Frederick for all.

206

referred for women's
cancer health
screening



282

screened for
Alzheimer's and
related Dimentias



733

Referrals
2024 Community Health Fair



Lunar New Year 2024: Welcoming Renewal, Wisdom, and Community Spirit

In January 2024, more than 500 community members joined the Asian American Center of Frederick at Urbana Regional Library to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

As we welcomed the symbolic Dragon—known for its robust, unyielding energy—we were reminded of the strength and spirit needed to uplift our community and empower those in need. The Dragon's dynamic presence inspired hope, courage, and unity as we embarked on a new year together.

AACF is grateful for your continued support. Together, with resilience and shared purpose, we look forward to a peaceful, joyful, and prosperous year ahead.



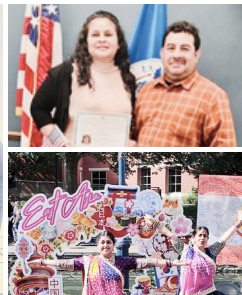
Asia on the Creek 2024: A Celebration of Culture, Community, and Honor

On June 1st, the Asian American Center of Frederick proudly hosted our annual Asia on the Creek celebration at the Carroll Creek Amphitheater. The event once again transformed the heart of downtown Frederick into a vibrant showcase of the rich traditions, cultures, and heritage of the Asian continent.

Drawing over 3,000 attendees, the festival was filled with captivating performances of music and dance, authentic cuisine, and cultural displays that brought together individuals and families from all walks of life. A special moment of the day was dedicated to honoring AANHPI veterans who served during the Vietnam War—recognizing their courage and contributions to our shared history.

Each year, Asia on the Creek continues to grow—building momentum, deepening connections, and strengthening our commitment to inclusion and diversity. At AACF, we remain steadfast in our mission to create a more welcoming, united, and culturally enriched Frederick for all.





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**Asian American
Center of Frederick**