



CARECEN

Central American Refugee Center

# 2023 Annual Report



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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Since 1983, CARECEN has served as a beacon of hope for immigrants across Long Island. It is an honor for us to be able to help thousands of immigrants each year, and nothing we do would be possible without the dedication of our donors, volunteers, staff, and board members, who work tirelessly to advance our mission. We are deeply grateful for your support.


### 2023 was a year of **transformation**.

We witnessed significant shifts in Long Island's immigrant community: what immigrants were arriving to Long Island, why they were coming, and what support they needed upon their arrival. Seeing that the needs of Long Island's immigrants were rapidly evolving, we recognized that in order to meet these needs we, as an organization, would have to change. This change meant offering new services and offering existing services in new, more effective ways. We undertook this challenge while maintaining the steadfast commitment to mission that has characterized CARECEN for the past 40 years. With that mission as our north star, this year saw astronomical growth in our programs and impact. This report tells that story.

On behalf of everyone at CARECEN, thank you for your ongoing support and belief in our mission. Thank you for being part of this transformation.



Blanca Villanueva, MPH  
President of the Board



Elise de Castillo, Esq.  
Executive Director

# Our Mission

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CARECEN empowers immigrants on Long Island through legal services, community education, and advocacy.



# 2023 was a year of **TRANSFORMATION**

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As the needs of Long Island's immigrants transformed,  
CARECEN transformed to meet those needs,  
and we transformed the lives of those we served.

# 2023 by the Numbers

## LEGAL SERVICES



TPS/DACA  
applications filed



Asylum Seekers  
Assisted



Legal  
Consultations

## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Received Social  
Support Services



Learned  
English



Received Career  
Coaching

## ADVOCACY



Impact  
Litigation Cases



Sign-On Letters



Advocacy  
Initiatives



# Transformative Legal Services

With an influx of asylum seekers, and an increase from those seeking safety from countries like Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti and Peru, 2023 saw significant shifts in the legal needs of immigrants on Long Island.

In response, **CARECEN expanded all of our legal programs** to fill gaps in representation in our underserved region and grew our legal team **by 117%**.

To ensure that we stayed true to our mission, **we launched two new legal programs** to provide much needed representation to some of the most vulnerable sections of the immigrant community: asylum seekers and immigrant children.



# Transformative Community Programs

We transformed our community programs and **expanded our social services** to ensure that all immigrants on Long Island have access to the resources they need to make our region home, **growing our community programs team by 120%.**

As we have done for four decades, CARECEN responded with urgency and compassion to show newcomers that they are welcome on Long Island.



# Transformative Advocacy

From coalition work to impact litigation, CARECEN's advocacy takes many forms. Despite this, the focus is always the same: to transform our region, our state, and our country and to ensure that the voices of immigrants are heard by decision makers.



This year, from a lawsuit against the Nassau County Police Department for its failure to provide adequate language access to Long Island's limited English proficient residents to speaking up against measures by the Suffolk County Legislature to block immigrants arriving to our communities, **CARECEN spoke truth to power** in defense of Long Island's immigrants.

# Transforming Lives Together

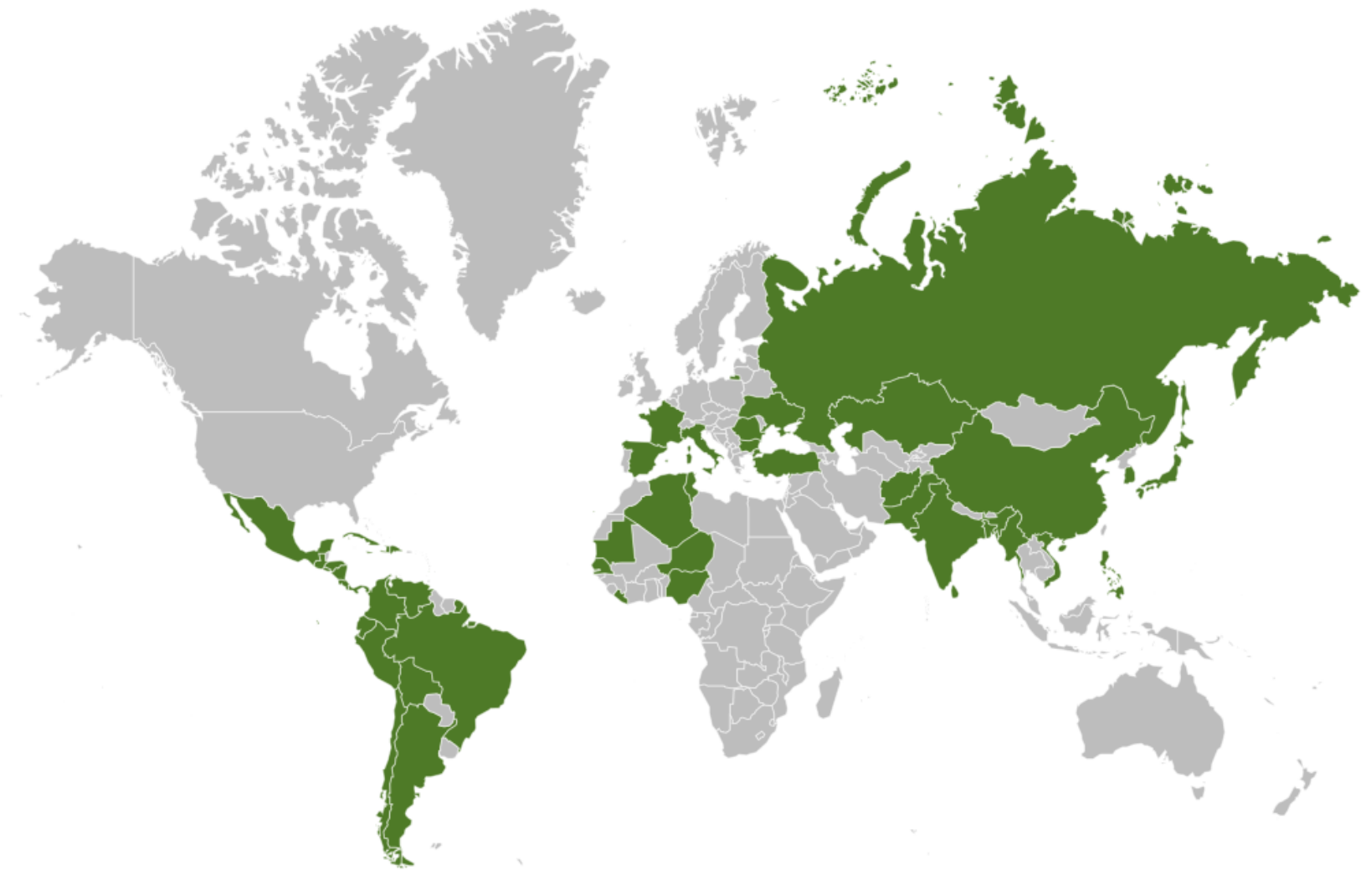
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Like Kalani and her parents, our clients' needs are complex and urgent. Having traveled 3,600 miles from Venezuela, crossing jungles and deserts to reach safety in the United States, Kalani's family arrived on Long Island with no one to turn to for help.



## Then they found CARECEN.

Our interdisciplinary team jumped into action immediately, getting Kalani and her parents food, clothing, shelter, and the legal services they need to rebuild their lives on Long Island.



## Global Impact

The transformation characteristic of 2023 affected all aspects of our work, including the communities that we worked with.

**This year, we served immigrants from 50 different countries.**

In fact, we helped newcomers from more countries across Europe, Africa and Asia than in the Americas – a testament to our transformation.



# 2023 Gala

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At our 40th anniversary gala, we were honored to recognize community leaders who dedicate their lives to transforming Long Island and making it a more just and welcoming place.

In addition to their deep commitment to our region, our three honorees are themselves immigrants to the United States, symbolizing the profound contributions to our nation made by newcomers.

# CARECEN Staff

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Karina Aguilar, Paralegal  
Beatríz Alemán Cisneros, Paralegal  
Antonella Banegas, IJC Justice Fellow  
Melanie Creps, Community Programs Director  
Anthony Cruz, Low Bono Supervisor  
Elise de Castillo, Esq., Executive Director  
Carl Denaud, Nassau Volunteer Coordinator  
Márton Diószegi, Community Educator  
María Dominguez, Community Programs Associate  
Megan Elman, Esq., Supervising Attorney  
Mohammad Nasir Erkin, Finance Director  
Julianna Goyzueta, Paralegal  
Jessica Greenberg, Esq., Legal Director  
Cindy Gutiérrez, Nassau Office Coordinator  
Mayra Interiano, Paralegal  
Christin Jackson, Development and Communications Coordinator  
Pablo Jiménez, Esq., Supervising Attorney  
Karen Andrea Krokowski, Paralegal  
Gianela Liendo Fuentes, MSW, Social Worker  
Claudia Lobos, Suffolk Office Coordinator  
Krischia López Martínez, Legal Programs Associate  
Andrea Madrid, Esq., Supervising Attorney  
Austin McCabe, ESOL Coordinator  
María McCourt, Suffolk Volunteer Coordinator

# CARECEN Staff

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Alejandro Mendoza, Social Work Associate  
Julia Miller, Esq., ONA Legal Counsel  
Vivian Morales, LMSW, Lead Social Worker  
Raquel Morote, ONA Legal Counsel  
Laura Mustakos, ESOL Teacher  
Bridget Navas, Paralegal  
Anna Nuñez, Legal Coordinator  
Ferida Osman, Law Clerk  
Andrea Parejo, Esq., ONA Legal Counsel  
Leslie Pérez, Job Coach  
Bryan Pérez, Paralegal  
Fernando Ruiz, Director of Operations  
Andrea Sacasa, ONA Legal Counsel  
Mónica Sánchez, Esq., Staff Attorney  
Katie Sandoval, Paralegal  
Richard Santamaria, Case Manager  
Andrés Santamaria Cortés, Esq., ONA Legal Counsel  
Karen Silva, Law Clerk  
Marcia Suárez, Paralegal  
Areeba Thakir Chicvak, Esq., Supervising Attorney  
Jerreka Turner-Lewis, Operations Associate  
Donna Vargas, MSW, Social Worker  
María Zoco, Immigrant Resource Coordinator

# CARECEN Board of Directors

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Jonathan Cantarero, Esq.

Gabriela Castillo, Esq.

Amy Flores

Juan Martinez

Syed Naqvi

Bill O'Shea

Ruth Silverman, PhD

Luis Vázquez

Blanca Villanueva, MPH

Lauris Wren, Esq.

# CARECEN Volunteers

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Amy Vega

Atreya Tadepalli

Bryan Perez

Carnaniola Benjamin

Cristian Castillo Díaz

Carl Denaud

Cristina Diaz

Cristina Javens

Daniela Vidal

Daryl Gordon

Edgar Dominguez

Eileen Granados

Jean Widzer

Jessica Yao

Juan Medina

Karina Prudencio

Margarita Verdejo

Molly Siebert

Nadia Contreras

Nicole Grig

Olivia Berin

Sandra Pulgarin

Sister Jane Quinlan

Solhaine Thera

Soraya Cuvilly

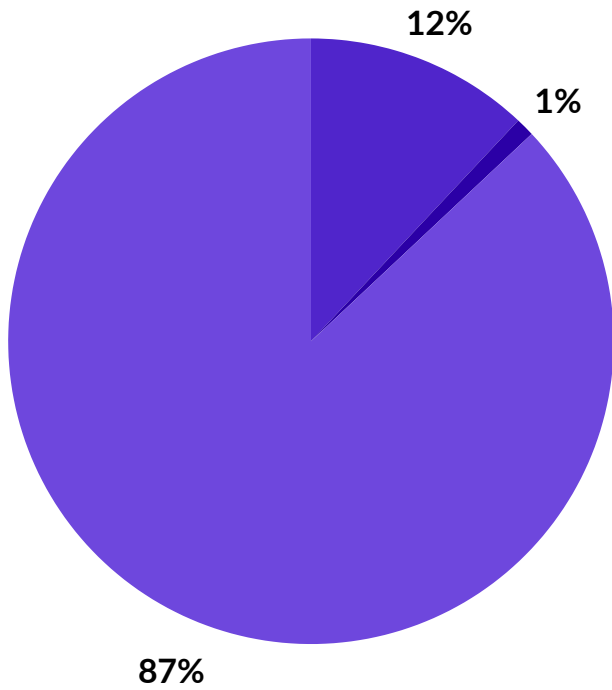
Whitney Lynn

William Eckert

Yenixa Galvez

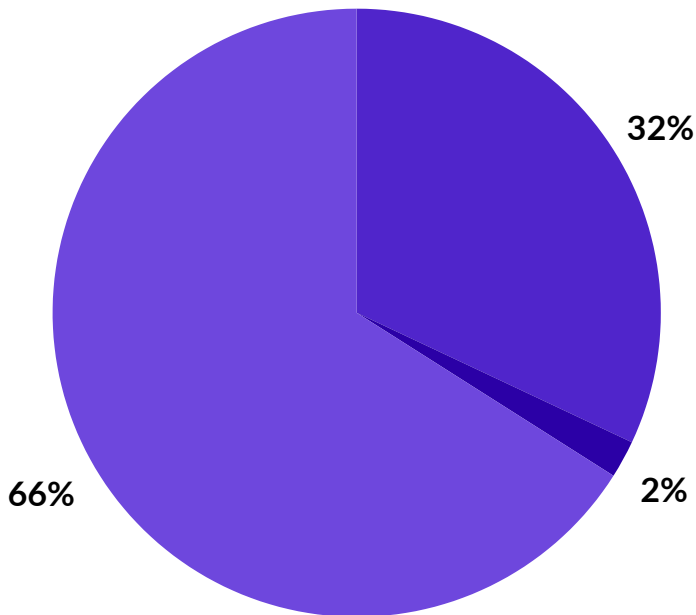
# FINANCIALS

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## Expenses

- Program ▲
- Administrative ▲
- Fundraising ▲



## Revenue

- Government ▲
- Foundations ▲
- Individual ▲



# Thank you to our generous supporters

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Adelphi APO  
Bethpage Federal Credit Union  
Catholic Charities of Long Island  
Claudia Slovinsky & Associates  
East Meadow Jewish Center  
Fidelity Charitable  
The Fred and Gilda Nobel Foundation  
FurtherJustice  
Garganigo, Goldsmith & Weiss  
Give Lively Foundation  
Givinga Foundation  
Hispanic Federation  
IBM  
Immigrant Justice Corps  
The J.M. Kaplan Fund  
Law Office of Eric Horn, P.C.  
Law Office of Miriam Chocron, P.C.  
Local 338  
Long Island Community Foundation  
Long Island Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
Marroquin Law, P.C.  
Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University  
Mother Cabrini Health Foundation  
Nanos, Gomez & Associates, P.C.  
National Counsel for Community Foundation  
New York State Division of Community Services  
New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services  
New York State Interest on Lawyer Account Fund  
New York State Office for New Americans  
New York State Office of Court Administration  
Oak Street Health  
PKF O'Connor Davies  
Terezakis Law Firm, PLLC  
Terra Firma National  
The Sisters of St. Dominic of Amityville  
St. John's University  
Tortora Sillcox Family Foundation  
Tortuga Charitable Foundation  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock  
1199/SEIU

# Thank you to our generous supporters

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Frank Fumelli  
Emily Moore  
Abel Nunez Aguilar  
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Violeta Flores  
Juan Martinez  
Amy Flores  
Blanca Villanueva  
Luis Vazquez  
Lidia Cespedes  
Julian Martinez Rincon  
Margarita Verdejo  
Eleanor and Bob Juceam  
Elise de Castillo  
Hamza Farah  
Irshad Wahed  
Samael Lobos  
Osman Canales  
Karina Aguilar  
Elisabeth Fiteni  
William Romero  
Juan Medina  
Eda Lopez  
Erick Marroquin  
Monte Devendittis  
Nelson Salmeron

Robert Fuentes  
George Terezakis  
Ever Martinez  
Andrea Sacasa  
Judith Loeb  
Ruth Silverman  
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Margaret Liendo  
Julia Miller  
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Karen Andrea Krokowski  
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Carmen Cassinelli  
Jose Carranza  
Bridget McPhelin  
Mauricio Ramirez  
Chuck & Patsy Koppeis  
Sigrid Meinel



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As we turn the page on 2023,  
we feel an immense sense of pride.  
Pride in our impact, pride in our community,  
and pride in the transformative power of our work.

**We don't just believe in our mission.  
We live it.**

And we hope that you will  
continue to live it with us.

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