



ACE African Community Education

embracing culture | building community | creating change



FY 2023 Annual Report

A Letter from ACE Leadership



Dear Friends of ACE,

Thank you for making 2022-23 yet another remarkable year for African Community Education. We are excited to share all that we have accomplished over the past year in the following pages.

This year was particularly special for ACE as we moved all of our programs and services to our organization's new home at 51 Gage St. in January. When ACE began in 2006, we envisioned one day owning a space that was truly ours; a permanent location that would serve as a second home for ACE students, families, and community members. After 16 years and several moves, we have finally made that vision a reality.

This move immediately proved fruitful as we welcomed record numbers of students and families to our programs, hosted several community events, and brought in new partners to our space, helping us to serve Worcester's immigrant and refugee communities in new ways.

We enrolled 115 youth across our After School, Saturday, Mentoring, and Summer Programs. Our Family Education Program enrolled 146 adults, and 45 young children as part of our Early Literacy Playgroups. Our Outreach team provided wraparound services to 167 families, more than double served in the previous year. Seeing the need in our community, we welcomed our newly arriving Haitian neighbors to ACE, serving 81 families in total. Across all of our programs and services, we directly served over 2,000 individuals, more than we ever have before.

We helped 15 seniors graduate high school and have now helped 296 ACE students graduate over the past 16 years. For the first time, all 15 ACE graduates will be attending college this fall.

We are excited to renovate our new facility as we continue to expand our programs and services and serve as a cultural and community hub for ACE families and the African, immigrant, and refugee communities of Central Massachusetts.

These accomplishments would not be possible without the dedication of our hundreds of volunteers, the generosity of our donors and funders, the talents of our partners, the tireless work of our staff and board, and, most importantly, the passion, resilience, and determination of ACE students and their families.

Every sign of support we receive shows that more and more people believe in the work we do and in what we are building at ACE. We cannot thank you enough for that belief.

With deepest gratitude,

Kaska Yawo

Executive Director & Co-Founder

Biodun "Mr. B." Akande

Chairperson, ACE Board of Directors

Our Mission & Vision

The mission of African Community Education is to assist African refugee and immigrant youth and families in achieving educational and social stability through access to academic support, leadership development, cultural expression, and community outreach.

Our vision is a community where African refugees and immigrant youth and families are empowered, self-sufficient, and secure.





PROGRAMMING

Programming Overview

After School Program

In total, 70 students attended the After School Program during the 2022-2023 school year. Attendance was increased during the second half of the year thanks to ACE's new location and ability to provide transportation with our new passenger vans. The majority of student time was spent on homework assignments with the help of ACE staff and volunteers. Outside of homework time, students took part in social-emotional learning activities, gym time, art, dance and drum lessons, and swimming lessons. The program also took a field trip to see the film *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, had a holiday party, and celebrated all honor roll students each quarter.

Saturday Program

The Saturday Program had 26 sessions during the 2022-23 school year. The program served 61 different students, who took STEM and English classes and participated in the ThinkGive social-emotional learning curriculum. Students also enjoyed time spent in the gym, drumming, and dancing. Students in the program also took part in several special events, including a robotics presentation in partnership with Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a Black History Month project as part of our partnership with the Worcester Education Collaborative and WooLabs. Perhaps the highlight of this year's program, our third annual Africa Day celebration included a model summit in which students made presentations and gave cultural performances and a panel of experts discussed the theme of "Opportunities in Challenging Times."

Summer Reading Program

The Summer Reading Program was the largest ACE has had in years as 76 total students attended the program. Students in grades 3-12 had the opportunity to complete summer reading assignments, partake in project based learning initiatives, see friends, engage in arts and crafts activities, and go on field trips. The 5th and 6th grade students had the special opportunity to participate in STEM lessons at the EcoTarium and all students participated in a weekly STEM activity with a WPI student teaching intern. Students presented their project work as part of the Project Fair, which included high school students performing a play. More than 60 students attended our end of summer celebration at Rutland State Park.

Programming Overview

Workforce Development Program

Eleven students attended this year's Workforce Development Program. Lessons covered a wide variety of skills aimed to help students find success in the working world. Essential lessons included building resumes, writing cover letters, filling out job application forms, doing interviews, and identifying interview tools and techniques. Students also engaged in activities designed to get them to align their career interests with their existing passions. In addition, we partnered with Centro to put on a financial literacy workshop for students. A visit to UniBank provided a unique opportunity for students to gain a better understanding of the world of banking, the unique services of the bank, as well as human resources policies. In addition, each student participated in a paid internship working in the ACE office.

Mentoring Program

The Mentoring Program provides our students with a one-on-one mentoring relationship. Mentors and mentees spend at least one hour together a week, plus participate in several planned group activities throughout the school year. Mentors assist students with educational and individual challenges. They also provide access to opportunities students may not otherwise have. This year, we recruited more students and volunteers to this program, ending the year with 32 active mentor-mentee matches. Matches were also able to participate in special activities like a bowling day and a financial literacy workshop.

Post-Secondary Success Program

The Post-Secondary Success Program provides support to ACE seniors as they prepare themselves for the next level of education. We assist students with applications to all types of higher education institutions, attend college visits and tours with students, and assist with financial aid and scholarship opportunities. This year, 15 ACE seniors graduated high school and all of them were accepted to college. We also hosted a paid internship program in which eight ACE alumni gained real-life working experience and an opportunity to earn income to help pay for college and other expenses. Our Post-Secondary Success Liaison maintains active relationships with over 20 seniors and alumni to help them be successful as they navigate the next stage of their lives.

Programming Overview

Family Education Program

Our Family Education Program grew more than any other program at ACE this year. This program provides English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for parents of our students and other adults in the community. We provide childcare services at this time through Early Literacy Playgroups so parents can focus on learning. The goal of the Family Education Program is to improve the skills of our parents so they can better navigate their new country and gain better employment, thus providing an improved home life for their children. With the move to our new facility, we were able to increase the number of levels offered, number of classes offered per week, and accompany more students than ever. By the end of the year, we had nearly 100 students per day attending class. In total, 146 adults took classes and 45 youth attended the playgroups.

Career Development Program

Through our Career Development Program, we help individuals to career plan and goal set, search for job opportunities, craft resumes, prepare for interviews, and more. Throughout the year, our Career Development Program Coordinator assisted 47 individuals in trying to find employment and successfully found meaningful employment for 33 individuals. In addition, we partner with a cohort of local human service agencies to conduct the Human Services Career Support Program. Together, we provide a 6-month training and job placement program that guarantees graduates employment as full-time behavior counselors at its completion. The program had 26 participants this past year, including seven ACE clients.



Programming Fast Facts

2,000

Individuals served through programming and outreach services

115

Students attended ACE youth Programs

146

Adults attended ACE ESOL classes

45

Children attended Early Literacy Playgroups



83% of students in school-year programs are ELL's



19 African languages spoken at home



302 Program Sessions



931 Program Hours



17 Countries of Origin

Student Spotlight

ALLY

Ally Mwati is a rising senior at North High School and came to the United States from Tanzania. Ally goes above and beyond in all he does and excels as a student and member of the ACE community.



A dedicated learner, Ally works tirelessly on his homework every day at ACE. His efforts have made him a consistent honor roll student while being a member of the North High robotics program.

At ACE, Ally dives into all he can. This year, he participated in our "Making Worcester Home Again" project in partnership with Worcester State University, in which he helped the team gather stories about housing insecurity in their community. He also worked over the summer teaching kids how to skateboard, is a member of the ACE soccer team, and gave an impressive presentation on the Central African Republic during this year's Africa Day.

ANGELA

A rising senior, Angela come to Worcester from the Central African Republic. She has excelled as both a student and a leader in her time at ACE.



This spring, Angela was recognized as our ThinkGive student spotlight for her exemplary attitude and kindness. She is an outstanding member of the ACE high school leadership group. In addition, she was awarded 1st place for her presentation on the African Union during this year's Africa Day.

Angela provides a wonderful example to her ACE peers when it comes to hard work and responsibility. She was a dedicated participant in this year's workforce development program and works at UMass Memorial Medical Center outside of school and ACE hours.

ACE Graduates

This year, **15 students** who attended ACE during their academic careers graduated high school, bringing **our total number of high school graduates to 296!**

MICHAEL

Michael was born in the Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania. Michael's family originates from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Together, they resettled in the United States on May 2, 2018. Michael enrolled at the New Citizen's Center (NCC) and spent two years of his schooling there. After his time at NCC, Michael applied and was accepted to North High School where he excelled in academics, linguistics, and sports. He joined the National Honor Society, earned the Seal of Biliteracy in Swahili, and played on the baseball team.



Michael has been an integral part of the After School and Saturday Programs for many years. When Michael participated in ACE's Africa Day celebration 2021, we saw more of Michael's leadership skills shine. According to John Yormie, Jr., ACE's Saturday Program Coordinator and creator of ACE's Africa Day celebration, "A new rock star at ACE was revealed."

After Michael's breakthrough at Africa Day, Michael embraced his role as a leader and role model for his peers. Michael saw to the growth of the newly formed ACE Youth Leadership Council. Michael also interned in the After School Program and taught as a drumming teacher in the Saturday Program. Michael now co-leads a new, student-run initiative, the ACE Drum Team, which performs African-inspired drumming across Massachusetts. Michael continued to leave his mark at ACE, participating in the "Making Worcester Home Again" pre-college course in partnership with the Urban Action Institute of Worcester State University.

This June, Michael graduated from North High School and is now beginning his life after high school at Worcester State University as a first-generation college student. We have no doubt that Michael will continue to shine wherever he goes in life!

Alumni Spotlight

ACE's Post-Secondary Success Program ensures the ongoing success of ACE graduates as they pursue life after high school.

SHARLOTTE

Sharlotte originally came to the United States with her family from Tanzania in 2016 and speaks four languages: English, Swahili, Kirundi, and Kibembe. She was 14 years old when she came to Worcester and the language barriers made her transition to the U.S. challenging.

Soon after arriving in the U.S., Sharlotte joined ACE and focused on learning and improving her English. "At first, I didn't think I would learn English from ACE because all of the students were like me. But it was totally different. We were all from Africa, but we all spoke different languages, so we had to speak English to communicate."

Soon, Sharlotte's reading, writing, and speaking skills in English soared and she was able to be the brilliant student she always was. Though she excelled in high school, she faced a new challenge at the end of her junior and senior years as her education moved online due to the pandemic. Not only was she striving to graduate, Sharlotte was also trying to find time to complete her college applications.

"I was at home, learning school online. I had to meet deadlines for school and for my college applications. It was stressful trying to do homework, write college essays, and get information like my family's income."

Sharlotte was one of the first students to work with ACE's Post-Secondary Success Liaison, Melvin, who first connected with her in the spring of 2021. Sharlotte's persistence paid off as she graduated from Doherty Memorial High School in June and, with a little help from Melvin, was accepted to and enrolled at Worcester State University (WSU) that fall.

Two years later, Sharlotte is thriving at WSU as a criminal justice major and minor in sociology. She has also participated in ACE's internship program over the last three years, helping to support and tutor her former peers as part of ACE's youth programs. Sharlotte keeps a close relationship with Melvin as he helps her navigate college life. She is a shining example for all current ACE students.



Volunteer Spotlight

This year, **296 volunteers** contributed **2,643 hours** of service to help ACE students and families.

ERIK

Erik Bratland began volunteering in the Saturday Program at ACE this year. He is a medical student at UMass Medical School. Erik integrated into the program very quickly and established connections with the students and other volunteers in no time. Erik goes above and beyond as a volunteer not only by showing commitment and enthusiasm for the programs but also by attending annual events for the organization and supporting the ACE soccer team.

Erik eventually began mentoring as well, working with long-time ACE student Tom Mahamat. Erik assisted Tom with his college application process, homework assignments, and job search, and attended ACE soccer games to watch Tom play. Tom was accepted to Quinsigamond Community College and began attending this fall. He also spent the summer working as a YouthGrow Leader with the Regional Environmental Council and now works as Program Staff at ACE. Erik's mentoring relationship has had a profound impact on Tom.

With his busy schedule, Erik always finds the time to support ACE in any way that he can. We are grateful for his presence and dedicated help!

Mentoring Spotlight

This year, **32 mentor-mentee matches** participated in our Mentor-Mentee Programs.

MARYAN & WAMULENDA

Mentor Maryan and mentee WaMulenda have developed a true friendship and bond that exceeds a typical mentoring relationship. Maryan and WaMulenda have been officially meeting as a mentoring match for almost one year. Prior to that, they were already working closely together within the Saturday Program.



Over the past year, their relationship continued to reach new levels and grow stronger. The two of them are very consistent with their weekly meetings and in attending the various activities for the mentoring program. They rarely miss an opportunity to see one another.

Recently, WaMulenda was part of the “Making Worcester Home Again” class, part of our collaboration with Worcester State University. WaMulenda was a big part of the project, conducting interviews with community members and summarizing his findings. Maryan supported WaMulenda throughout the process to make sure he was completing his tasks, meeting deadlines, and learning as much as he could from this opportunity.

We are excited to see this match continue working together during the new school year. It is WaMulenda's senior year, which will be fun but also challenging, and we know Maryan will do her best to help him finish strong and graduate!!

DEVELOPMENT



Key Facts & Figures

31

Grant funders

\$4.84M

In grants awarded

57

Corporate & event sponsors

349

Individual donors

\$1.31M

In individual and corporate donations

Grant & Corporate Funders

Thank you to our grant funders and corporate sponsors. Without you, our work would not be possible.

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Kupanda: ACE's Recurring Giving Community

In 2018, ACE launched **Kupanda**, our recurring giving community. These donors have made a long-term, recurring commitment to support ACE. **109 donors** were members of the Kupanda community this year.

Thank you to our Kupanda Members!

Alex Mooradian
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Victoria Angelico
Zachariah Combs

Living Together: The 16th Annual ACE Gala

The 16th Annual ACE Gala took place on October 22 and was a night we will never forget. For the first time since 2019, we hosted an in-person event at Mechanics Hall. We had a record number of 330 people in attendance and raised over \$200,000 for ACE programs and families!

The highlight of the evening was the ACE Student Fashion Show conducted in partnership with the WPI Black Student Union, Eldior Sodeck Design, and Proud Nations Clothing. The event was an incredible success thanks to dozens of amazing sponsors, raffle donors, vendors, performers, and partners. We are especially grateful to UniBank for serving as our Title Sponsor for the event.

In keeping with our event theme of Living Together, we highlighted all of the ways ACE acts as a family of neighbors looking out for one another's best interests above all else.

Thank you for helping to make the 16th Annual ACE Gala the best yet!





FINANCIALS

Financial Overview

FY 2023*

INCOME

Foundation Grants	\$1,044,235
Government Grants	\$3,803,139
General Donations	\$283,422
Mission Campaign Donations	\$1,035,100
Rent Income	\$142,782
Interest Income	\$1,870

TOTAL INCOME **\$6,310,548**

EXPENSES

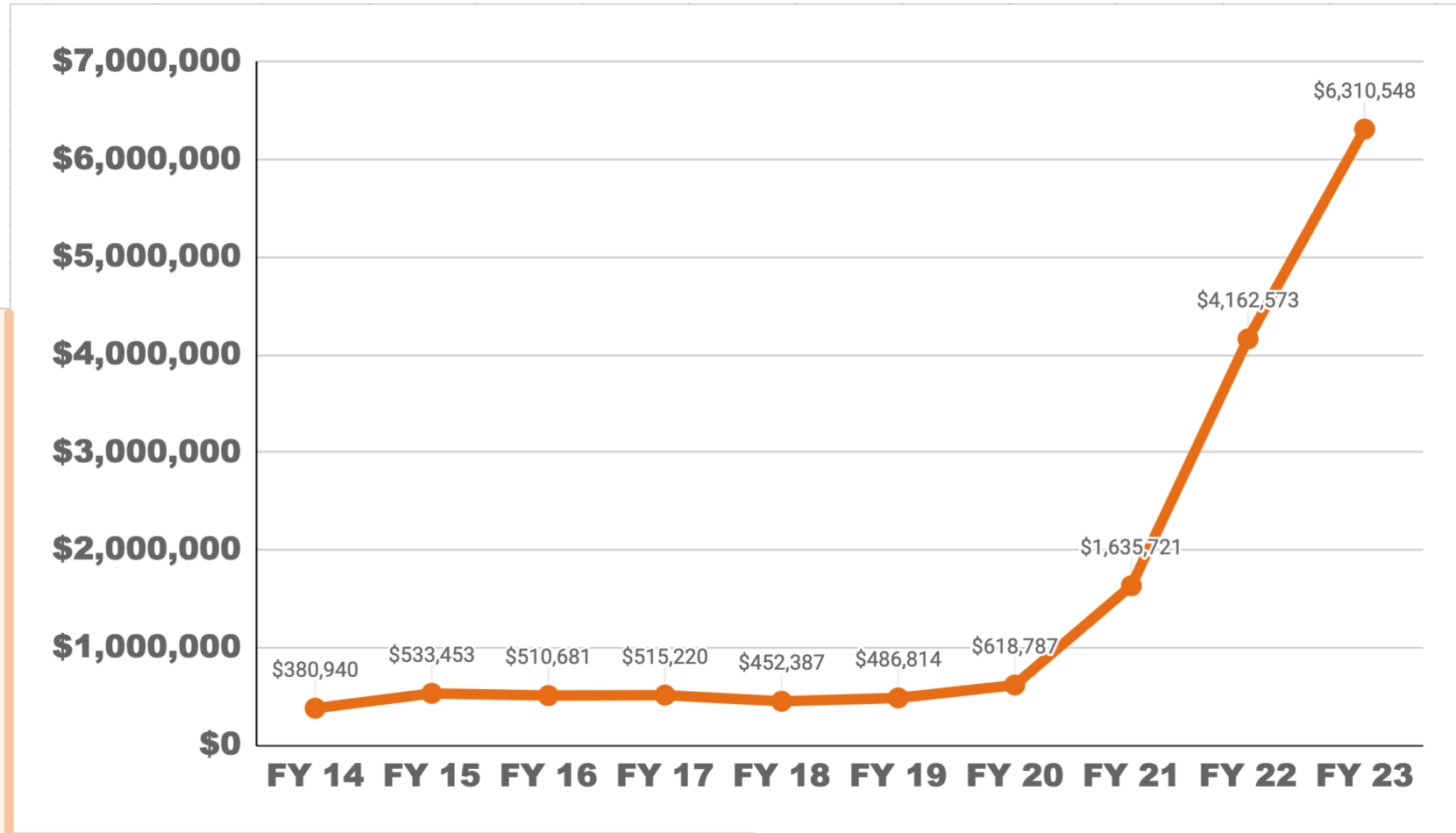
Payroll	\$1,229,330
Health Insurance	\$16,100
Payroll Taxes	\$113,359
Contractors	\$159,639
Program Expenses	\$131,133
Fundraising Expenses	\$75,461
Other Admin Expenses	\$80,783
Software Expenses	\$20,259
Transportation	\$8,654
Rent and Facilities	\$86,018

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$1,920,736**

*Financial estimates—audited financial statements will be available in November 2023

Financial History

African Community Education Income vs. Time



OUR FUTURE



The ACE Center

Since 2007, ACE has operated our youth and family programming in rented and in-kind spaces in many locations, causing inefficiencies and barriers for staff and clients, frequent moves, limited program hours and accessibility, and a lack of space to expand.

Recognizing these longstanding and critical needs, ACE purchased a 56,000-square-foot facility located at 51 Gage St. in January 2022 with the help of the leadership giving of support Daniel Ivascyn and moved into the new facility in January 2023. This facility has allowed us to consolidate all programming and offices, improve accessibility, and significantly expand programming. We are actively raising funds to renovate this space and realize a long-held dream that ACE would create a cultural and community center for the city's and region's vibrant and growing African, immigrant, and refugee populations.

Renovations, beginning in 2023, will transform this facility into the home ACE families, community members, and partner organizations deserve. Renovations will include:

- Modernizing 16 multi-use education and activity rooms through cosmetic improvements, educational technology, and updated furniture to fit the needs of each program and age-level
- Renovating the gymnasium to serve as a multifaceted space for recreation and sports, community gatherings and events, performances, conferences, and more
- Creating a STEAM innovation lab, robotics lab, and dedicated music education rooms
- Building a commercial kitchen to prepare African meals for ACE and other community events
- Creating spaces to celebrate African arts and cultures
- Reconfiguring the entrance ways, hallway layouts, and building flow to create a welcoming space
- Making needed upgrades for ADA compliance and energy efficiency modifications



Our Team

ACE STAFF

KASKA YAWO, Executive Director & Co-Founder
AYMAN ABDELGADIR, Volunteer & Mentor Coordinator
BEV ARCARO, Grants Manager
BADERHA BUJIRIRI, Development Coordinator
ABIL DHEE, Administrative Coordinator
TIMON DHEGO, Family Education Program Coordinator
SAINT CYR DIMANCHE, Career Development Coordinator
WINNIE DOE, Worcester Public Schools Liaison
SLY DWYER, After School Program Coordinator
REGINA ENGEL, Director of Finance & Operations
SEAN ENGEL, Information Technology Specialist
PRINCE GWEH, Building Manager
BENJAMIN KAGIGI, Outreach Manager
MELVIN KASKA, Post-Secondary Education Liaison
CECILIA LAFONTAINE, Finance & HR Coordinator
GINA LANDRIN, Outreach Staff
WIVINE MAKOKO, Family Ed. & Outreach Worker
TEREZA NGENDA HORURI, Outreach Worker
TIM O'NEIL, Marketing & Fundraising Manager
JP PERKINS, Program Director
ROSE WINE, Marketing & Development Coordinator
JOHN YORMIE, JR., Saturday Program Coordinator

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Thank you from the ACE family!



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