

# SUPPORT FOR SERVICES THAT EMPOWER REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS



In 2021 and beyond, Iowa has the opportunity to carry on our long legacy of welcoming and empowering refugees and immigrants. Many of our newest neighbors make Iowa their home for the same reasons we love it here: a rich educational environment, career development options, and affordable housing. During the ravages of COVID-19, many immigrants and former refugees have served as essential frontline workers, providing direct care and critical services when our state has needed them most. We are a stronger Iowa when we are a welcoming Iowa, and we must continue to invest in the services that support new Iowans with skills, education, and training to adapt to our workforce needs and become enrichers and contributors to their communities.

## Iowa's Legacy of Welcome



SINCE 1975, IOWA  
HAS WELCOMED  
**MORE THAN  
30,000**  
REFUGEES



IMMIGRANTS MAKE UP  
**5.6% OF IOWA'S**  
POPULATION,  
WITH A SPENDING  
**POWER OF  
\$4.3 BILLION**



IN 2020, MORE THAN  
**70 INDIVIDUALS**  
SERVED BY LSI'S  
**CITIZENSHIP  
PROGRAM**  
APPLIED FOR U.S.  
CITIZENSHIP.

## A New Kind of Welcome



LSI was honored to be selected by Polk County, the City of Des Moines, and the Greater Des Moines Partnership to build an Empowerment Center in central Iowa. This project brings together dozens of refugee and immigrant-serving organizations and individuals to create a hub for accessible services and enrichment programming. Further development of this project will continue this year.

# Sama's Story

**Sama has always had a love of caring for children, and she was committed to building a career as a child care provider.**



**Despite all obstacles, spanning more than a decade and three different countries, Sama can now proudly say she has achieved her goal.**

Sama grew up in Eritrea but when she was 24, she was forced to flee to a refugee camp in Ethiopia. There, she served as a child care provider for infants, toddlers, and young children under age 5. She dreamed of going to the U.S. to start a new life and in 2017, she was accepted into the U.S. as a refugee and relocated to central Iowa.

But as a single mom building a foundation for her family in Iowa, Sama struggled to find a balance between caring for her young children and working to provide for her family. She learned about LSI Refugee and Immigrant Services and discovered she was eligible to participate in LSI's child care training program.

Sama was able to learn proper child care safety and received support opening her own business as a licensed child care provider. When COVID-19 hit last year, LSI also helped her ensure her business included additional safety precautions. Sama now cares for five children in her home, allowing more parents in her community to go to work and feel confident knowing their children are cared for by someone who speaks their language and understands their culture. At the same time, Sama can continue caring for her own family while building an in-home business for herself.

**Iowa must remain a place of opportunity for refugees and immigrants. In order to stay competitive and growing as a state, we need to attract and retain immigrants in Iowa and invest in policies and services across the state that allow newcomers to fully participate in and contribute to our communities – making us all stronger.**