

# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

a place of hope

## Executive Summary

Dear Asha's Refuge Community, Volunteers and Supporters,

In the ten plus years that I have served the refugee community, I have faced a myriad of challenges. God has remained steadfast. My love for Jesus and compassion for people has helped me to stay focused on the ministry and vision of Asha's Refuge. I feel honored to lead the organization, yet humbled as this past year has been one of the most unpredictable, trying and most rewarding times in my life. It has also been a time of enormous change both for the organization and our larger community.

Thriving through such turbulent times has taken an amazing amount of commitment, discernment, and unity at all levels. We were faced with some tough choices over the past year. We were able to keep expenses low while continuing our programs and services, something we were only able to accomplish by the hard work of our extraordinary team. However, we continue to seek additional resources and support to ensure our work is sustainable over the long term.

Looking ahead, we know that positive changes for the refugee and asylee community will only come when those affected by the issues are centered in the solutions. We are committed to grassroots advocacy, with a renewed focus on building partnerships within our community of professionals to help us break down the myths that surround refugee and asylee immigrants which unnecessarily keep them in oppressive situations longer. Our volunteer programs invite individual citizens, organizations, churches and businesses to be an integral part of the Asha's Refuge family and amplify our shared voice to welcome the sojourner among us. We extend that invitation wholeheartedly to you as well.

My family and I are so blessed to be a part of the great work we believe God is doing in the culturally diverse city of Memphis and its surrounding areas. Thank you for all of your support over the 2020 year. We cannot wait to see what the new year brings!

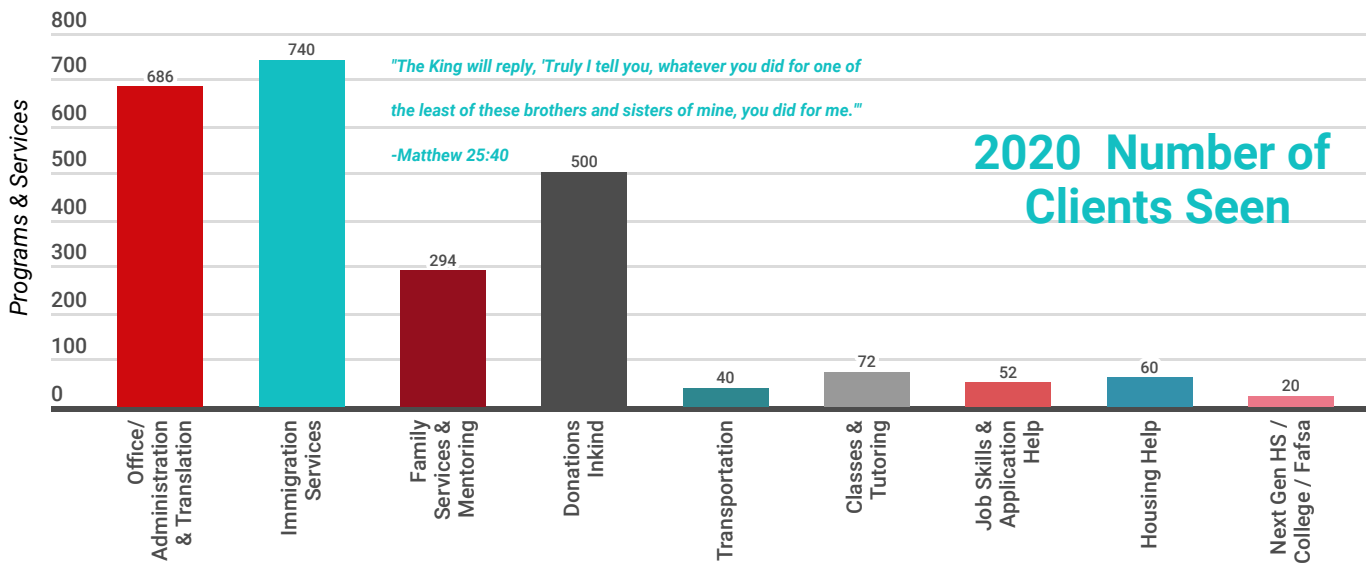


*Jamie Jones*

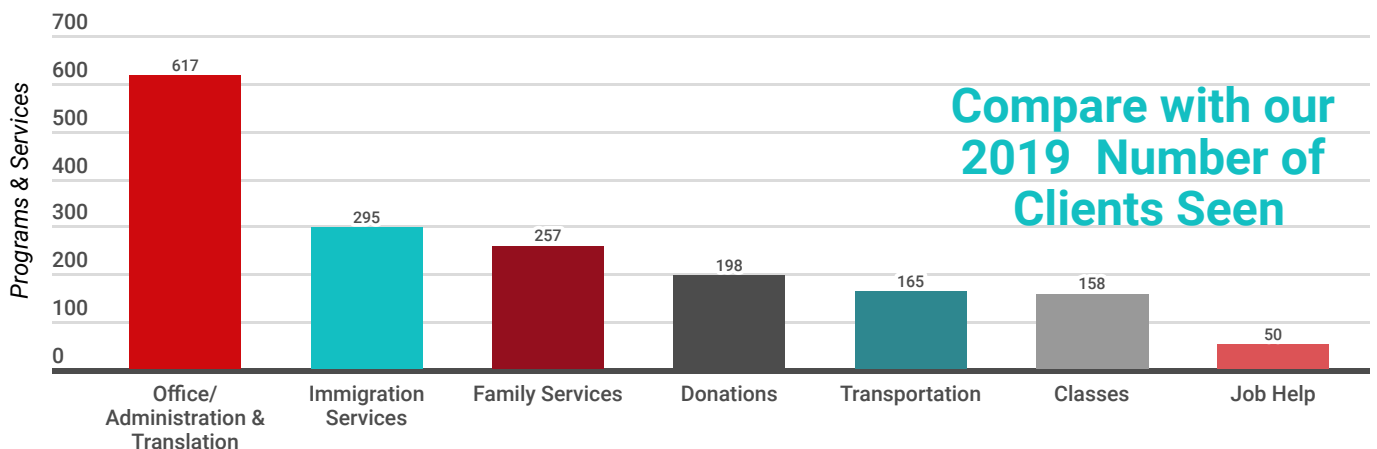
Jamie Jones  
Executive Director

# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

Comparisons of 2019 and 2020 certainly provide interesting insight to the impact of the current Covid health concerns on the refugee and asylee community and Asha's Refuge. We developed a variety of programs and services to meet specific client needs in 2019 and throughout the years of our existence. We worked to sustain those programs and services throughout the 2020 year. Our office and volunteer staff assisted refugee and asylee clients with more than 680 various needs. The office team is crucial to our success as it works as a clearing house to sort out the needs of incoming clients then professionally route them to the volunteer or staff member with the appropriate training and skills necessary to provide the help needed. Our office team works together to enroll new clients, update family information, interpret, keep flows of important paperwork processes moving forward and to keep our busy office organized.

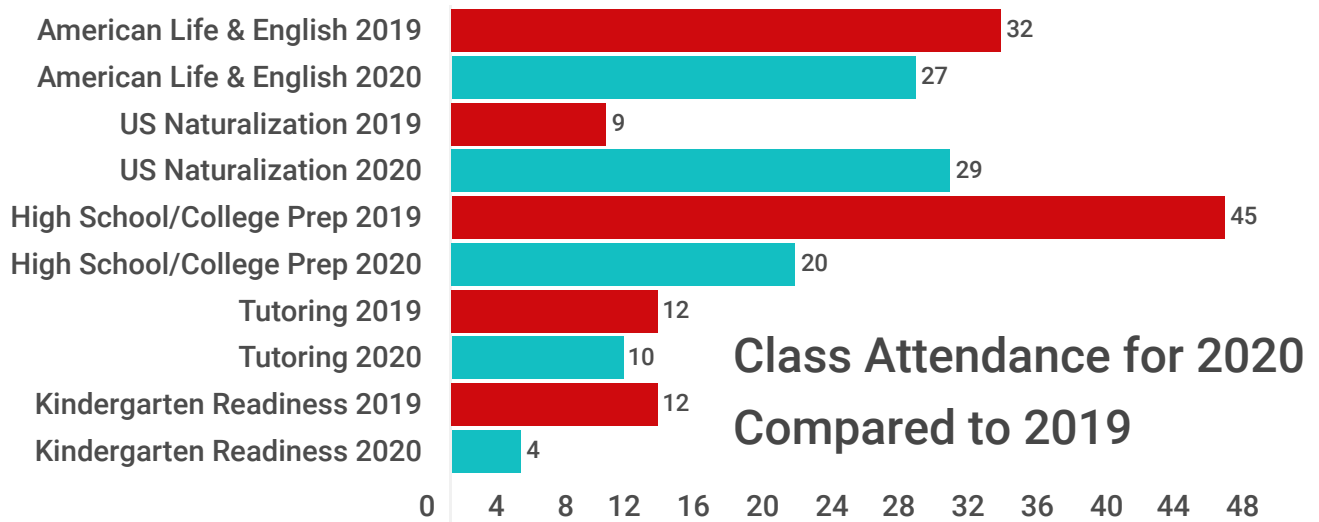


The majority of our client visits were for assistance with immigration processing for permanent residency, family reunification or US Citizenship. Our partnership with Community Legal Services, interpreters, volunteers, office staff and Civil Surgeon, Dr. Joseph Weems, helps us to make this possible for clients. Refugees and Asylees are approved immigrants that have been given a pathway to US Citizenship, but they must follow many steps such as taking classes, completing medical screenings, attending USCIS interviews, biometrics, family background screenings and submitting a series of complex legal forms. Asha's Refuge works hard to ensure our clients stay on schedule and are informed. Clients additionally came in for job search help, healthcare assistance, housing needs, educational pathways, mentoring, tutoring and accessing childcare. A number of our clients sought help with getting educational supplies, food, clothing, toiletries, and rent or utilities assistance while consistently working to improve their education and job skills.

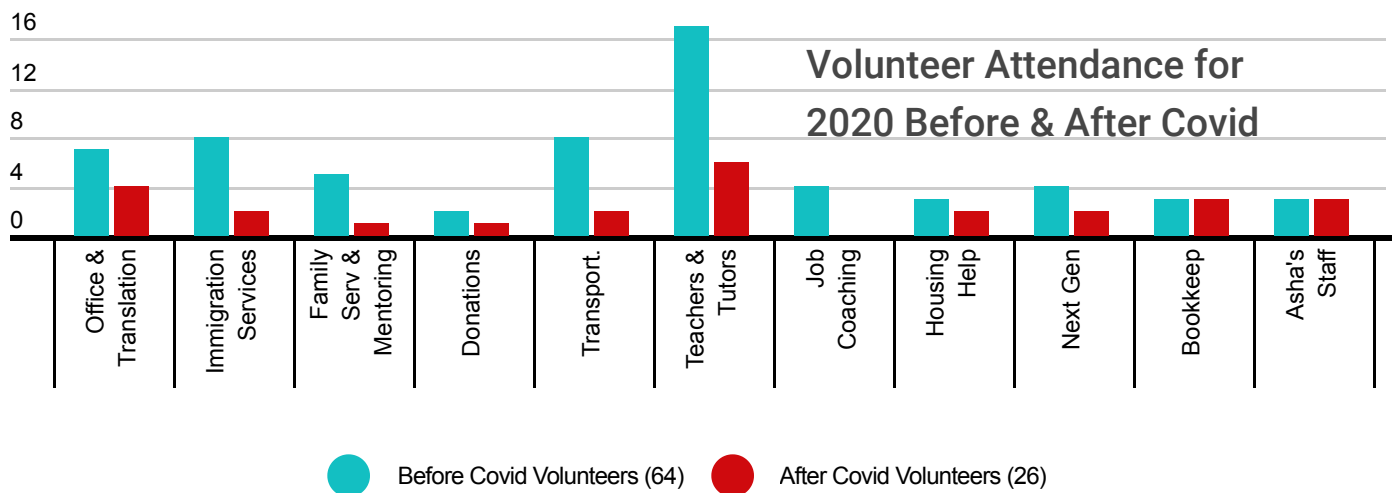


# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

## How Covid19 Affected Us



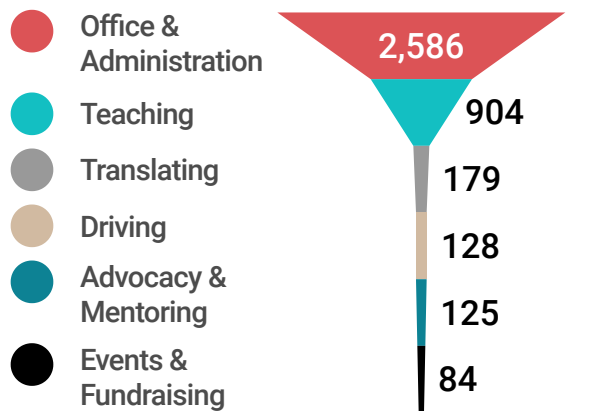
We moved into our new building space inside First Baptist Church at 200 East Parkway North in February 2020. We had just gotten the classrooms and office space open for services when March hit us with the very beginnings of our city's virus concerns. We were careful to respect the well being of others and chose to drastically reduce our class sizes. The 2020 numbers include the numbers we had newly enrolled in our classes from January 2020 to March 2020. Our students were just getting familiarized with our new classroom location, so our class attendance numbers had not yet picked up to the larger class attendance we had at the end of 2019, before the move and before the increased concerns about Covid19. Asha's Refuge quickly assessed our community's health situation and chose to hold smaller classes with more individualized tutoring. With many volunteers and clients needing to stay home to care for their family or school aged children, we were faced with a real challenge. If our clients ever needed us, they certainly need us to stay on the ground to work with them during this pandemic. We were not about to abandon them.



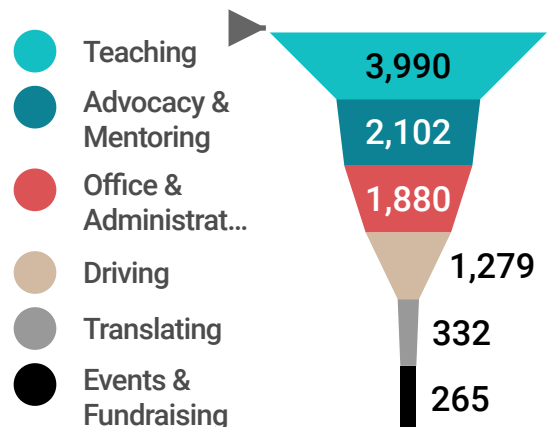
Even though we've had fewer volunteers available to serve during the 2020 year, God has allowed us to be even more intentional with our clients. We were very blessed to take more time with fewer clients which enabled many of them to progress a little faster and allowed us to build stronger relationships. The volunteer positions we have filled have often been accomplished by a single volunteer serving to cover more than one position. Before Covid we had about 48 volunteers helping us with 64 positions. After Covid, and to date, we have about 9 volunteers serving in 26 positions! We still have an overall organizational need to fill about 70 volunteer positions if we were ever able to be back to the way it was.

# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

Our total number of Asha's staff has remained the same three in number, but each staff member picked up more hours to help cover the various positions required to handle client needs. This also helped us to keep our total number of people in the building low. The office & administration department also included our hours of time served with immigration, family services and advocacy. The third quarter of 2020, Asha's Refuge functioned with only three staff members and about three or four volunteers who were able to serve in person on a regular weekly basis. We also worked well with about six volunteers who were available to commit to serving several hours viturally throughout the 2020 year. Additionally, we believe God gave us a strong backbone of support from our board, our partners, other organizations and the community in which we serve. As US health concerns allow us to get back to "normal," Asha's Refuge will require more volunteer and staff support. We foresee more opportunities for refugees and asylees to make their way to Memphis the coming year. Adequate staffing to provide advocacy necessary for the success of these newcomers will be important.



2020 Total Volunteer Serve Hours = 4,006

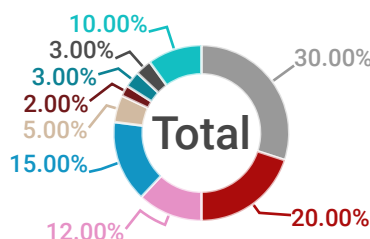


2019 Total Volunteer Serve Hours = 9,848

## Donations and Job Situation

The inkind donations that have helped our clients continue to be a true testament to God and how He works through the kindness of His people. The beginning of the US health concerns (March 2020) caused several supply chain and cleaning companies, in which our clients worked, to have a sudden increased need of employees. At first, job security was good for the majority of our clients who worked in "essential" jobs at warehouses, with shipping companies or in janitorial positions. Some companies even increased the pay rate by a couple of dollars per hour and offered overtime in order to help their employees and the economy. The longer the pandemic period lasted, however, more businesses, such as hotels and restaurants, struggled to stay open. Additionally, schools closed and children were at home in need of parental supervision. About 50% of our clients found themselves at home, most of them with children, unable to work and headed towards financial distress.

### 2020 Inkind Donations Given Out



- Groceries
- Educational Supplies
- Baby Items
- Cleaning Products
- Toiletries
- Bedding & Furniture
- Kitchen & Household Supplies
- Coats, Clothes & Shoes
- Toys

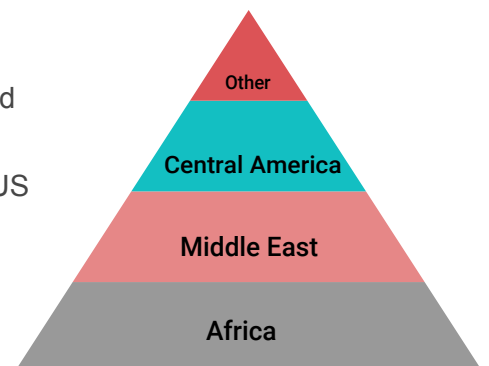
# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

The Memphis community quickly supported Asha's Refuge with food, toiletries, housing items and educational supplies for preparing children for virtual school. Refugee Empowerment stepped up even more during the 2020 school year to assist children with enrolling in school and signing in to their classes virtually. With more children at home, Asha's Refuge did a book and toy drive to help some of our parents provide things at home to keep their children from being as bored. Large companies, such as Amazon, Fedex, Mckesson, William Sinoma, Home Depot, Technicolor, Service Master and TJX hired more employees during the pandemic and have been crucial for the financial stability for many during this time. Asha's Refuge helped many that lost their intitial job apply for and secure positions from these large warehouses. The community also supported one another transition into new jobs.



According to the UNCHR, mid-2020, there were over 80 million forcibly displaced people around the world which surpasses the 70.8 million from the previous year. 26.3 million of the total number of displaced people have gained refugee approval. 30 - 34 million (38-43%) are children below the age of 18. UNHCR reported that 67% of the refugees come from the following five countries: Syrian Arab Republic (6.6 million), Venezuela (3.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.3 million) and Myanmar (1.0 million). The top five host countries are Turkey (3.6 million), Colombia (1.8 million), Pakistan (1.4 million), Uganda (1.4 million) and Germany (1.1 million). It is interesting to me that developing countries host 86% of the world's refugees with the least developed countries providing asylum to 28% of the total. Of the 26.3 million refugees, the 2021 US Congress Report indicates a plan for only 15,000 refugees to be admitted into the United States through the resettlement process 2021. The Congress Report also indicates a heightened concern for the backlog of asylum claims and, therefore, plans to open up additional offices to help in the approval processes of approximately 285,000 asylees.

In 2020, Asha's Refuge served over 400 Memphis area refugees and about 50 asylee individuals. Most of the clients we served are from various areas of Africa, the Middle East and Central America. The US may decrease the number of incoming refugees, but increase in the number of asylees, particularly from the areas of Central and South America. We believe it is our responsibility as believers in Jesus to welcome our neighbor, including refugees and asylees.

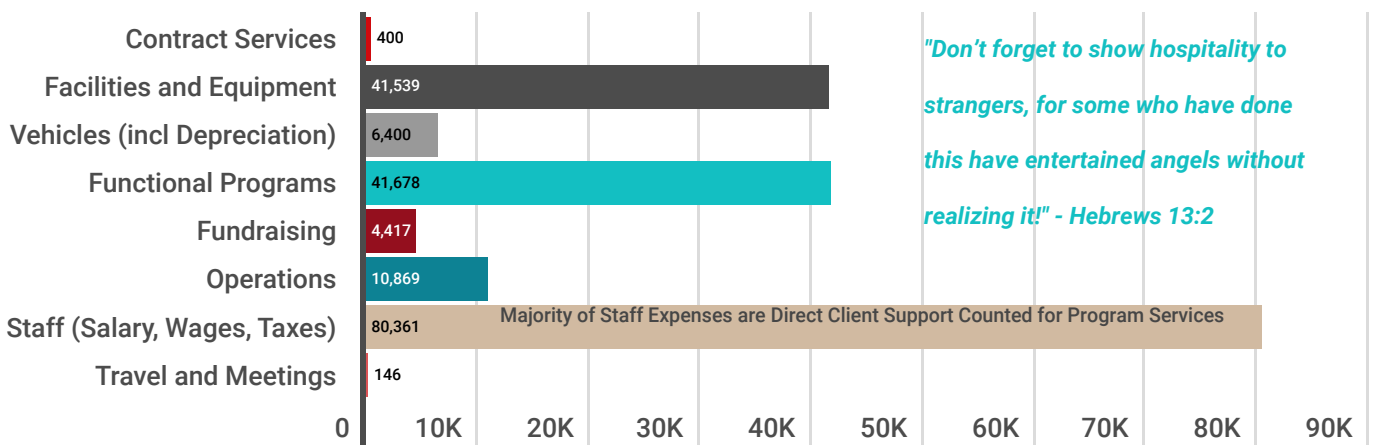
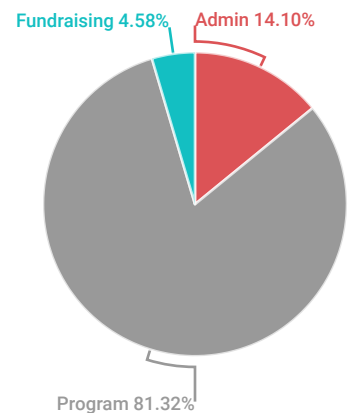


# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

## Financials

Asha's Refuge continues to apply a significant amount of funding directly to programs and services that ensure clients have opportunities and resources needed to successfully resettle in our city. Our current staff consists of one executive director, two full time employees, one contract driver and two part-time volunteer office and administration helpers who primarily work to provide 20-30 hours of leadership for the programs and services we offer. Our organization still functions primarily with the help of dedicated weekly or as needed volunteers: three financial staff members, one consistent office helper, one nurse and one doctor on our medical team, and about six translators that help as needed. We also have three dedicated volunteer classroom teachers, a small immigration services team and a few client advocates. The pandemic required our organization to hold smaller classes and provide less transportation to class for safety reasons. Our new location at Poplar Avenue and East Parkway North is closer to the majority of our clients and helps us connect even better to clients who might have otherwise needed transportation. It was, unfortunately, necessary for us to pause our Kindergarten Readiness program in order to shift our services to be more intentional in serving our clients during the Pandemic. Paid staffing was imperative for us in 2020 to help during the unexpected time of the US health crisis where fewer volunteers were available.

We anticipate 2021 will be challenging for us as we balance serving the expected influx of asylees, new refugees, and established clients with continuing needs for volunteers. Our focus has been to make the best of every moment, giving quality time and attention to each client that we face. Even though our smaller staff has been very busy, we believe that the 2020 season has allowed us to slow down and take our time to become more relational and very focused with our services for the betterment of our clients and volunteers. Additional paid staff may be necessary to continue to serve clients well in the absence of our full volunteer cadre. The large majority of staff time is for direct services to clients, so additional staffing will add to that expense rather than administrative expenses. With the Covid19 Pandemic in 2020, the amount of actual programs and services for clients decreased based on client and volunteer availability. We will continue to work hard to keep our administrative expenses minimal. We hope to continue to share our story to engage our community in welcoming refugees and asylees well and erasing myths that create fear and division among people.



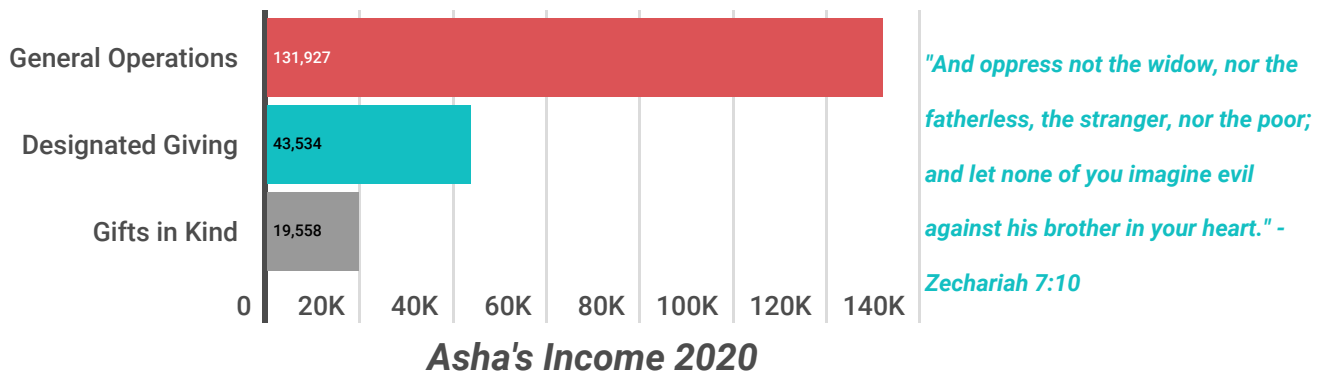
*"Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!" - Hebrews 13:2*

Majority of Staff Expenses are Direct Client Support Counted for Program Services

**Asha's Expenses 2020**

# Asha's Refuge 2020 Report

Every year we are reminded how God provides for us through the support of others. We are grateful to have individual, corporate and church support that provides lower cost space, financial resources and a lot of people eager to serve which helps us keep overall costs very low. All of our programs and services benefit the refugee, asylee and Memphis community working together to assist newcomers. Asha's Refuge works in partnership with our client leaders, local schools, organizations and businesses to raise awareness about refugee and asylee situations through various speaking engagements. We continue to break down unfortunate and negative myths that often create unnecessary fear and division among people.



Asha's Refuge is thankful to First Baptist Church Memphis and those previous churches such as Hope Apostolic, Highland Heights Baptist and New Bethel Missionary Baptist of Germantown for sharing space with us at zero cost or a lower more manageable cost as we grew the ministry of being the hands and feet of Jesus while welcoming the nations to our city. There are many churches, foundations, schools, organizations and businesses who have helped Asha's Refuge to serve others better over the years. Our 2021 budget has increased slightly to maintain current programs and services in the intentional way we are currently serving. We recognize that increased immigration may drive more need for service, increasing our funding needs, and we trust God will provide what is needed at the right time. We are pleased that our overall budget has remained quite low considering the amount of impactful programs and services we are able to provide. We thank those who make in-kind donations, volunteers for their time and the support from churches and our community who help us to keep our annual budget so low. With the newest administration, we do expect increases of asylees and refugees in the US and trust that God has already planned for their and our good as they make their way into our city. It will be a real blessing to see many families finally reunite. If our US government has approved and admitted refugees and asylees, we believe that we must consider them adopted and as part of our American family. We are reminded that everything that happens has already been filtered through the hands of God and are trusting in Him to guide us all as we make new friends seeking to love God and others well.

We thank you for your continued monthly commitments of financial support. Donors can easily give through our app or through our website at [www.ashasrefuge.org](http://www.ashasrefuge.org).

