Dear Friends:

As we closed 2016, Neighbors Link Stamford renewed our focus on serving the local community by preparing to take on a new name, Building One Community (B1C), and a new identity line, The Center for Immigrant Opportunity. Although, as of January 26, 2017, we are no longer part of the Neighbors Link network of organizations, we continue to share their dedication to immigrant integration, and we look forward to maintaining the good relationship we have always had with the organization.

We will not change what we do – our name simply clarifies our purpose of helping immigrants join and enhance our local community. Our city of Stamford is a welcoming place that values diversity and encourages the contributions of every resident, and we at B1C are proud to support that work. We are excited to move forward with our new identity as we fulfill our mission of bringing passionate people together to help immigrants and their families succeed in the community.

To support the creation of opportunities for these new arrivals, our programs educate, employ and empower them, and engage the entire community in this process. In this report, we highlight the successes of our Skills Development Program and our Parent Organizing Program. In partnership with Norwalk Community College, we have graduated our first home health aides, many of whom already have found work as full- or part-time professionals. Our Parent Organizing Program helps parents of children in Stamford Public Schools learn how to become advocates for their children as they move through the American educational system.

We also are expanding many of our other services. We provide support to immigrants who are settling into a new life here; in 2016, we served new arrivals from 56 countries. We offer all levels of classes in English as a Second Language (ESL), as well as sessions on citizenship requirements and financial literacy, along with individualized tutoring for adults and children. The ESL program saw a 28.7% increase in students during 2016. Our Worker Center, which helps facilitate job placements for B1C clients, also has grown significantly, with a 24.8% increase in the number of workers.

A key measure of our community impact is the number of “touch points,” or individual services, we provide to our clients. In 2016, our touch points increased by 52.9% over 2015. This ability to reach out to the community is a tribute to our staff and to our more than 450 volunteers, who do everything from teaching classes to facilitating study groups to serving dinners on Family Nights. We are very grateful to these dedicated people who give so generously of their time and talents.

Of course, we are also thankful for our financial supporters, our partner organizations, and all who are involved in working with us. We look forward to continuing and growing these efforts with you at Building One Community: The Center for Immigrant Opportunity.

A note on our new name and logo: Our ultimate goal is one community for all, and “building” suggests our ongoing efforts to reach this goal. In our new logo, the large circle represents community, and the individual shapes represent a diverse group of people coming together to create that community. As “the center for immigrant opportunity,” we intend to represent a welcoming place for all immigrants and to be a part of the solution to informing immigrant policy on the local, state and national levels.
Students in the second class of home health aides practice CPR.

Homework Club pairs youth tutors with younger students.

Attendees at the naming ceremony for Building One Community wrote what B1C means to them.

Valedictorian Marina speaks at the home health aide graduation.

A student and her volunteer ESL tutor show enthusiasm for their progress.

A volunteer tutor joins his students for a Family Night Thanksgiving dinner at Building One Community.

Culinary students present the fruits of their labor after a hands-on training.
Success in a job requires not only professional knowledge, but also “soft skills” for achieving personal success. To help our clients gain this background, we offer three tracks of industry specific, certificate-based training in our Skills Development Program – Home Health Aide, Culinary Services and Construction & Landscaping – along with classes in vocational English as a Second Language (ESL), computer usage, financial literacy, customer service and employability skills.

The program is based on ethnographic research among our clients and others in the greater Stamford community. Each training track reflects areas in which there is significant local demand for skilled labor and is accompanied by apprenticeships with local program partners. Some clients already have completed the programs to earn their certifications and are employed in the community in their chosen professions.

Our Worker Center continues to place clients in short-term assignments that can range from one day to a couple of weeks or longer. Through this work, our clients gain income as well as experience that prepares them for additional opportunities.

Marina, a client from Peru who graduated with this group of home health aides, noted, “On behalf of my classmates and myself, I would like to thank all the (teachers and) volunteers who assisted us on this road, and especially the group of people who are running this organization and contributors/funders for making this program possible.”
In 2016, our Worker Center generated **515 placements** (a 9% increase over 2015) for 131 workers (up 24.8%), representing 4,836 days of work (a 12% increase) during which they earned a total of $450,898 in wages (up 11.7%).

The number of clients participating in job training and employment programs in 2016 increased by 74% over the prior year.

75% of participants earned certificates from courses that demonstrate proficiency in specific types of knowledge. These certificates provide a significant difference in employment opportunities and are often a prerequisite for entry into a career and higher-paying jobs.

As part of their financial literacy training, a group of workers discusses the information provided on a paycheck and explores how to estimate job hours and costs.
A COMMUNITY FOR LIVING

1,428 clients received services in 2016.

Our Family and School Support Services connect clients with medical, legal and social services to help them thrive in their new lives. Through on-site resources, we assist clients with challenges that affect their economic and social stability – issues such as unpaid wages, immigration concerns, workers’ rights and their children’s well-being in school. We also connect clients to community-based resources for help with medical and mental health services, housing and homelessness, legal representation, domestic violence and substance abuse issues.

We provided the equivalent of $69,590 in health exams, dental cleanings, flu shots, unpaid wage recovery, translations, notary services and legal and tax support.

Our Parent Organizing Program – now a model for our work with several Stamford schools – is focused on working with parents to understand their unique barriers so that they can address the opportunity gap that persists between immigrant children and their classmates. Pictured here, parents practice for a meeting with their children’s school principal.
In 2016, we received accreditation from the U.S. Department of Justice, Board of Immigration Appeals, to provide immigration legal services. A team of certified staff and volunteers received intensive training in the very complicated U.S. immigration system and processes such as applying for citizenship, family petitions, and applying for or renewing applications under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. We also sponsor AARP Tax-Aide sessions to help our clients prepare and file income tax returns.

Beyond our formal services, Building One Community is a resource for our clients and for everyone in the greater Stamford area. Here our clients can find trusted information, connections, and a sense of belonging. Here everyone can find ways to help, from tutoring children to teaching employment skills to taking action on immigration and related issues. We collaborate with many others – local agencies, businesses, volunteers – to find our clients the support they need to succeed, and to build understanding of how everyone in our diverse community can flourish by working together.
New arrivals in a community have a lot to learn – where to shop, which service providers to use, the locations of schools, churches and other important institutions, and much more. For our clients, these challenges are often compounded by language and cultural issues and, most importantly, a fear of seeking help that may reveal their personal vulnerabilities. We help them overcome these issues by offering classes and one-on-one tutoring sessions to answer their questions and build new skills.

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are offered six days a week at all levels, including advanced classes. Individual ESL tutoring also is available. Our clients recognize that “survival English” is not sufficient for the kinds of lives they want to lead here, and they are motivated to improve their English language skills.

Other popular offerings are citizenship classes, employment-related offerings, and, for school-age children, our Enrichment and Homework Club and the Summer Reading Program.
1,318 clients participated in ESL classes in 2016, an increase of 28.7% over 2015. 74% of our ESL students improved one or more levels in ESL assessments; on average, it takes 100 hours of classes and practice to improve one level.

42.8% of residents speak a language other than English at home in Stamford. Over 90% of recent immigrants speak a language other than English at home, and almost one-third live in households in which no one speaks English very well. (Source: Bloomberg)

School-age children comprise 22% of all immigrants arriving in Stamford since 2010, versus 13% in the prior decade.

Barri, a retired teacher, works with beginning ESL students, creating all of her own teaching materials and making sure that her students are learning and using their new language.
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