



# 2023

# ANNUAL REPORT

The Bhutanese Community  
Association of Pittsburgh



[www.bcapgh.org](http://www.bcapgh.org)

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Photo credit: Brian Cohen

## **KHARA TIMSINA**

executive director

**Happy New Year to you.** While we are very much excited to do more in 2024, we have not forgotten how busy were in 2023.

Expanding our After School Program from two school districts to four, serving over 75 kids was definitely a huge undertaking, especially for our *Katherine Mirt* who managed the program successfully with utmost care and planning. We scaled up our Summer Camp to serving around 40 youths for six weeks. Congratulations and thank you, Katie.

Coordinating our Voter Registration work throughout the year and assisting a good number of people complete their immigration related applications on top of his regular bookkeeping work was not a light load on *Parshu Chamlagai*. We registered 126 people to vote. Much appreciation to his committed service..

*Benu Rijal's* work in visiting families in crisis and intervention on mental health was not just difficult but at times risky too. She successfully organized and hosted Mental Health First Aid training where close to 40 people attended. Congratulations to her.

*Lila Adhikari* joined us in July and handled numerous calls from within and outside the community, making sure communications flowed smoothly. A lot of thanks to her as well.

In order to make our services more accessible, we continued to remain open six days a week. Many Saturdays we were out representing our community at neighborhood events including parades and community days. These were also opportunities to our youths in showcasing their dance arts.

We had a number of Women's Support Group Sessions spread out in the year. Celebrations of International Women's Day and of Teej Festival were very well received.

I am thankful to all the board members for their time, guidance and resources to BCAP through the year.

Foundations that partnered with us, along with businesses and donors, were crucial in our progress; without them we could not do much. A lot of gratitude to all our funders.

I want to salute all the volunteers for their support in BCAP's programs and events.

And as for myself, I enjoyed working with my colleagues, board members, volunteers and partner organizations. It was a rewarding year as I got to speak at various panels or webinars and had the opportunity and privilege to serve on amazing committees, locally, statewide, and nationally, including the Vision Council of the Jefferson Community Collaborative. BCAP has become well known as an effective organization and we have received much positive media coverage and accolades this year. I am proud and humbled to serve as executive director.

It is my hope that BCAP will be able to continue to grow in its capacity to serve not just our own community but other communities at a larger scale.



# ABOUT BCAP

## VISION

A vibrant Bhutanese Community where all are enabled to reach their fullest potential and traditional culture is celebrated and shared.

## MISSION

To ensure a high quality of life for all members of the Bhutanese community in Pittsburgh and to support their integration into American Society through culturally-informed services and activities.

## Our history

The Bhutanese refugee community fled government persecution in Bhutan, and after a 20-year stay in refugee camps in Nepal, many found a new home in Pittsburgh. BCAP emerged out of the efforts of a few committed community volunteers and gained nonprofit status in 2014. The population is estimated to be over 7,000 in Allegheny County, many attracted here via secondary migration from their original U.S. resettlement city due to the reputation of BCAP and its program, and probably affordable housing and employment opportunity. While the population is dispersing more broadly as we continue to integrate, the majority is spread throughout several South Hills neighborhoods, including Greentree, Castle Shannon, Baldwin, Brentwood, Whitehall, Brookline, West Mifflin, Bethel Park, South Park Township, Pleasant Hills, Jefferson Hills, Carrick, and Mount Oliver.

# BCAP AT A GLANCE

Guided by our strategic plan, BCAP strives to mobilize resources to improve the quality of life for Bhutanese community members and other immigrant and refugee communities in the region, reaching out to families and individuals in a culturally appropriate way. In pursuit of our mission and vision, BCAP offers its services to vulnerable families and individuals without regard to color, faith, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental condition, ethnic origins or nationalities.

## Key focus areas

- Basic needs & service navigation
- Youth, women & family supports
- Citizenship & civic engagement
- Health & wellness
- Computer literacy
- Community & cultural preservation
- Partnerships & advocacy



**“Whenever I’m able to find a solution to a problem that arises in the community, it is very much meaningful to me.”**

**-Lila Adhikari**  
Administrative & Program Assistant



## SERVICE NAVIGATION STATS



Incoming Calls

**1124**

Outgoing Calls

**1033**



Office Visits

**1033**

### BY CATEGORY



Youth & Education

**862**



Information & Referral

**410**



Civic Engagement & Immigration

**183**



Program Inquiries

**423**



Basic Needs Support

**259**



Health & Wellness

**112**



## Youth & Families

# OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

The COVID-19 pandemic had especially dire consequences for immigrant and refugee families in our school systems. Interpretation and other specific supports needed by many immigrant families to navigate the online learning environment were limited, and as a result many youth fell below grade level. To address this, over the past year BCAP has invested heavily in building capacity for our youth development programs, which are specifically designed to meet the unique needs of our students so that they can advance academically, build self confidence, and develop meaningful relationships with peers and trusted adults.

## BCAP AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

We grew the after school program from serving 15 students at two sites, two days a week, to 91 students at four sites, five days a week. Youth & Families Coordinator Katie Mirt designs programming with State standards and students' social-emotional needs in mind.

Students are engaged daily in independent and small group activities. The program also provides paid employment and professional development to 15 Bhutanese high school and college students, who assist Katie as teaching aides.

## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

**94%** Agreed or strongly agreed that they felt valued & connected to the teachers & staff

**90%** Agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them feel more confident

**97%** Agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them build friendships

**“The after school program gives our kids a safe space to learn and grow. They get support with homework and have access to fun activities, games, and STEAM materials. A teacher in one of the districts that we serve [told] us that one of her students started bringing back homework once BCAP started. Small victories like this make me eager to continue my work at BCAP.”**

**-Katie Mirt**  
Youth & Families Coordinator



# YOUTH SUMMER CAMP & SPORTS

- \* 2023 was BCAP's largest ever summer camp program. 39 youth in grades 1-5 joined us for eight weeks at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Whitehall. The morning was dedicated to preventing learning loss with educational stations and hands-on activities. The afternoon was all about the arts, entertainment, and sports! The program culminated with a performance the campers prepared!

Part of this program's success was due to our 10 high school and college students who worked as camp directors, instructors and drivers: Raghu Ghimirey, Alexis Nagel, Sofia Khatiwada, Pratiksha Chapagain, Swastika Pokhrel, Ngawang Gurung, Tulasha Neopaney, Samir Kadariya, Saroj Bhandari, & Biwas Gautam



- \* We held two athletics camps this summer for youth ages 8-13. 20 youth participated in BCAP's two-week soccer camp, and 16 in our All Sport Camp!

## SUPPORTING EDUCATION & PARENT ENGAGEMENT

We continue to deepen our relationships with local schools to enhance connections, communication, and engagement with and among families in our community. This year, BCAP staff responded to over 800 phone calls from community members with questions related to education, hosted several events supporting families, and participated in various community events at our districts:

- \* Kindergarten & New Student Registration
- \* Concord Elementary's Cultural Night
- \* Concord Elementary Back to School Night
- \* Baldwin Whitehall School District's We Are Neighbors event
- \* West Jefferson School District's Interaction & Support Services event

**"I came to BCAP about a year into the pandemic. After 16 years in the classroom, I felt limited in what I could do for my students and their families. I knew that families did not have an understanding of school policies and procedures because English was not their first language. There was no one at home that could help with homework or practice spelling words with. There was a disconnect between their life at home and their life at school.**

**I am helping to bridge the gap in education and classroom/school communication. Our parents want to be there and learn about their child's education. Our children want to succeed."**

**-Katie Mirt**  
Youth & Families Coordinator



## Women & Girls

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

## WOMEN'S GROUP

The Women's group serves as a social support for Bhutanese women, helps inform our programs and services for women and girls in our community, and leads coordination of the Annual Teej Women's Festival.

## LEADERSHIP & SELF SUFFICIENCY

In response to persistent interest in learning to drive, BCAP launched a women's **learners permit training program**. 2023 was a learning year, as we found in practice that six hours of physical driving lessons were not enough for many of the women to feel confident and safe in taking the driver's test. 14 participants are still in the learning process and three obtained their license.

Additionally, nine women participated in an **Entrepreneurship Training** with the Center For Women's Entrepreneurship at Chatham University.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH

BCAP continued to grow our partnership with the Magee Women's Hospital throughout the year. One event we co-hosted this summer was a Health Fair where close to 60 women received services such as mammograms, dental cleanings, health screenings and massages were conducted.

**"Now I can drive and move anywhere I like and do no longer have to wait for or ask my husband. I started working outside my home with this opportunity."**

**"I had not touched a car steering wheel and never had confidence I would be able to learn. Now I have confidence to drive when a driver sits with me. The opportunity was very useful to me in giving me confidence."**

**-Driving Program Participants**



## New Americans

# CITIZENSHIP & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



## CIVIC EDUCATION

Although class sizes are getting smaller as more and more Bhutanese community members attain English proficiency and citizenship over time, BCAP continues to operate English & Civics classes to help people prepare to attain citizenship. This year, we enrolled 25 people in class and welcomed eight new U.S. Citizens!

## CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

BCAP also works to encourage our community to engage in the civic life of their neighborhoods. On April 1st this year, Bhutanese community volunteers joined the University of Pittsburgh, Grow Pittsburgh and Grounded for a day of service. Together we were able to secure a fence, clean-up a garden, install a picnic table, and more! In July, we continued our tradition of marching in the Brentwood 4th of July Parade.

## VOTER ENGAGEMENT

BCAP registered 126 new voters this year! We also provide important voter education resources, election reminders, and offer rides to polling places on election day.

**"I feel proud when we are able to exceed the voter registration goal in FY 2023."**

**-Parshu Chamlagai**  
Program Specialist



**25**

Graduated civics class



**8**

Attained citizenship

**126**

Voters registered



## Health & Wellness

# MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a bright light on national mental and behavioral health concerns, and the Bhutanese community is not exempt. After a successful pilot program for proactive health outreach program, in 2023 we established a new full time staff position for health and wellness coordination. Our Health & Wellness Coordinator, Benu Rijal, conducts outreach and wellness calls, helps people navigate the healthcare system, insurance, and billing, and coordinates culturally-appropriate bi-lingual programming.

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

A full-day Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Training was held in October. We are committed to continuing to build capacity for culturally and linguistically accessible mental health resources in our community; Because the only local certified Nepali-speaking trainer was unavailable, PK Subedi joined us from Atlanta, Georgia!

## SUPPORT GROUPS

Our Support Groups for older adults and for women provide sessions that build community while embedding wellness programming, such as yoga and meditation, cultural preservation (such as traditional music, singing, and storytelling), and gardening.

**“Everything we do here is meaningful. We run a Women Support Group every Saturday and it is a place for women to share their sorrows and happiness to other women. Sharing is one way that we feel relief. Doing home visits is another way we serve the community and find out the problems and show them resources where they get help.”**

**-Benu Rijal**  
Health Coordinator



# 40

New MHFA-trained  
Bhutanese community  
members!

# COMMUNITY GARDENS

The Mount Oliver Community Garden helps older members of our community connect to their agricultural roots, allows our community members to grow hard-to-find and/or affordable produce for traditional recipes, and serves as a way to pass these traditions down to the next generation. BCAP maintains the garden in partnership with Grow Pittsburgh.

# COMPUTER LITERACY

BCAP's computer literacy classes are another program that arose after the abrupt transition to remote learning over the pandemic necessitating higher levels of computer literacy among parents and guardians. These classes continue to be in high demand, with waiting lists and high levels of attendance and participation. The program not only helped parents to gain valuable computer literacy skills, it also specifically allowed for them to gain the skills and experience necessary to communicate with their children's teachers and effectively support their learning. There were 18 people who took our classes and all of them completed the training. We had about 10 folks that needed more advanced classes. They already had the basic skills.

# COMMUNITY VOICES

BCAP hosted five community conversations as part of the Jefferson Regional Foundation's Community Voices series. We gathered groups of youth, women, elders, community leaders, and municipal officials to discuss their priorities.





## Celebrating Community

# **PRESERVING & SHARING OUR CULTURE**

### **FESTIVALS & EVENTS**

We love to share and celebrate our cultural heritage in our neighborhoods and city.

- \* **Squirrel Hill Lunar New Year | February**  
We marched in the annual parade down Murray Ave.
- \* **International Women's Day | March**  
BCAP coordinated a panel discussion and dancing
- \* **World Refugee Day & World Square | June**  
BCAP served on the planning committee for these community celebrations
- \* **South Hills Community Days | Summer**  
BCAP brought cultural dances and henna in Baldwin, Brentwood, Whitehall, & Carrick
- \* **Teej | September**  
The Women's Group coordinated our annual festival
- \* **Pittsburgh International Parade | October**  
We marched in the parade alongside other cultural groups and organizations
- \* **Carrick Light Up Night | December**  
Community members performed cultural dances



Building our future

# PARTNERSHIPS & ADVOCACY



## Key Memberships

- \* Allegheny County Department of Human Services Community Advisory Board
- \* Allegheny County Department of Human Services Immigrants & Internationals Advisory Council
- \* Community Vitality Collaborative for Immigrant and Refugee Committee of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
- \* Jefferson Community Collaborative Vision Council
- \* Mayor's Office Initiative on Welcoming Pittsburgh
- \* Pennsylvania Asian Pacific Islander Power Caucus

## Additional Partnerships

- PA Voice
- Pennsylvania Immigration & Citizenship Coalition
- Switchboard: Karen Organization of San Diego

In addition to our work directly serving our community members, BCAP also plays a critical role in the local, state, and federal landscape as a partner and advocate for immigrant and refugee causes. We're grateful for all the opportunities we've had this year to participate in forums, conferences, projects, and other initiatives with our many dynamic partner organizations, examples are:

### APRIL

- Allegheny County Executive Candidate Forum: Spotlight on AAPI Communities

### MAY

- PA Governor's Office's AAPI Heritage Month Reception
- Allegheny Health Network AAPI Panel Keynote

### JUNE

- Immigrant & Refugee Leaders Panel at Chatham University's Sustainable Leadership Academy

### SEPTEMBER

- Led a Working Group at the Eradicate Hate Conference
- Partnered with Carnegie Mellon University Information System Consulting Students
- Best Practices for Developing a Community-Led ECBO Board

### OCTOBER

- Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum VOICES conference
- Culturally Informed & Fitted Approach to Long-Term Services & Supports Training

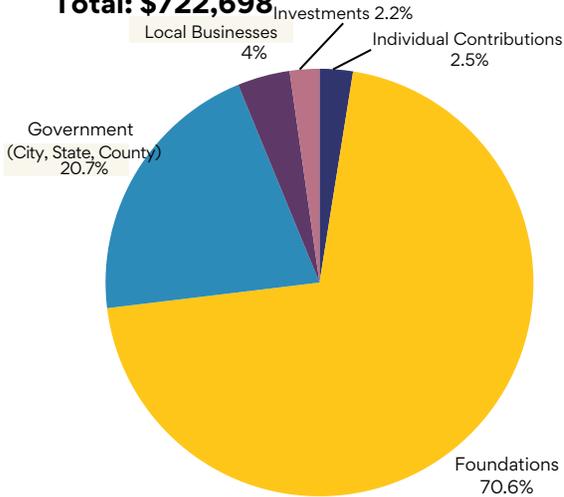
### NOVEMBER

- Immigrant & Refugee Leaders Panel at Chatham University's Sustainable Leadership Academy
- Supporting Wells of Refuge: A Trauma Care and Healing Conference

# FINANCIALS

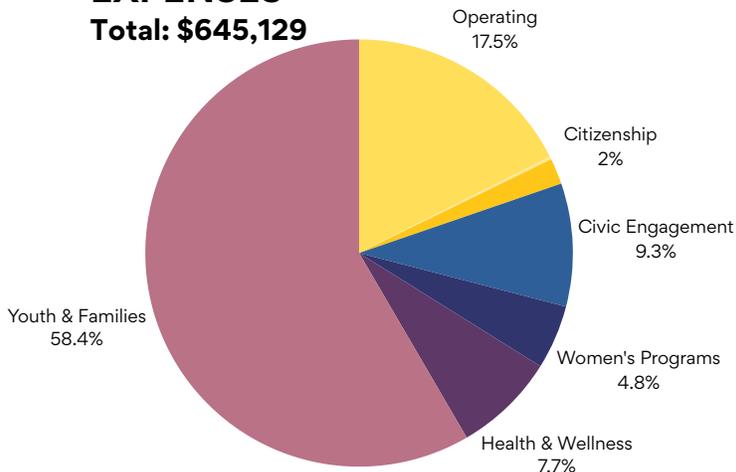
## REVENUE

Total: \$722,698



## EXPENSES

Total: \$645,129



# OUR SUPPORTERS

### PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

- United Way of Southwestern PA
- Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation
- YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh
- POISE Foundation
- Jefferson Regional Foundation
- AAPI Power Caucus
- Eden Hall Foundation
- FISA Foundation
- Pittsburgh Public Schools: ESSER
- Grable Foundation
- Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- Allegheny County Department of Children's Initiatives
- Community Development Block Grant - City of Pittsburgh
- Posner Foundation of Pittsburgh
- Duquesne Light Company
- The Pittsburgh Foundation
- Jewish Women's Foundation
- PNC Foundation
- Opportunity Fund
- Staunton Farm Foundation
- Birmingham Foundation

### SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS:

- APlus United Home Care
- Awesome Collection
- Bhagi R Adhikari
- Bridge City Home Care
- Care Crafter Home Care
- Care Zone Home Care Agency
- Carrick Pharmacy
- Dean Honda
- Desi Global Mart
- Everest Lending Group
- FreeStyle Beauty Salon LLC
- Gauley Farm
- Himalayan Asian Grocery
- Himali Kitchen
- Ideal Home Health Agency
- John F Slater Funeral Home/The Whitehall House
- Lifestyle Fashion/Jenny Justin LLC
- Monal Bazaar
- Moonlight Staffing Services LLC:
- Namsara Homecare Services LLC
- Neoly Home Care
- Nim Nim Nepali Bazar
- NIT Language Services
- Sejal and Sister LLC (51 Express Mart)
- Smile Home Care
- Steel Town Pharmacy
- TWFG Insurance
- US Independent Insurance Agency

# OUR DONORS

- Benu Rijal
- Bhim Rai
- Devi Ghising
- Denise Maiden
- Bhagi & Mon M Gurung
- Arpan Pradhan
- Andi & Baruch Fischhoff
- Aita Tamang
- Alex Walsh
- Clare Drobot
- Rabi Gurung
- Biswaz Gurung
- Andy Bartholomew & Siena Aguayo
- Barbara Murock & Carl Fertman
- Brooke Kissler
- Bhutanese Funeral Trust Fund
- Bal Magar
- Cynthia Anim
- Dawa Tamang
- Bhim Kami
- Bhavini Patel
- Bhagi Rath Adhikari
- Deu Tiwari
- Andrea Fox
- Bhanu Katel
- Bhuwani Poudel
- Diane Gallagher
- Durga Upreti
- Ganga Baral
- Pabitra Gurung
- Phadindra Niroula & Parbati Sigdel
- Pratima Maji
- Ganga R Dangal & Nari M Dangal
- Hannah E. Hardy
- Harka Rai
- Hema Bhattarai
- Jeanne M Williams
- Julia Baraily
- Khara & Bishnu Timsina
- Krishna P Pokhrel & Bhim M Pokhrel
- Kumari Rai Subba
- Laxman Maji
- Leslie Boltax Aizenman
- Lila Upreti Adhikari
- Mani Kumar Rai
- Maria Sauro Moore, CRS
- Maya Khanal
- Meena Gurung
- Purna Bahadur & Lal Maya Monger
- Raghu Ghimirey
- Raj Adhikari
- Renee Piechocki
- Robert Marin
- Rupa Gurung
- Sabitra Kadariya
- Samjhana Gurung
- Shiva Lal Sharma
- Suraj Nepal
- Susan Dawkins
- Tek N Nepal
- Tek Timsina
- Todd Fine
- Uma Devi Gautam
- Xia Chao
- Yadu Bhandari

## IN THE NEWS

Our community was highlighted in several local media pieces in 2023, the following are some examples:

[Bhutanese refugees bring a “Himalayan Highway” of unique food and culture to the Route 51 corridor,](#)  
Pittsburgh City Paper

[Bhutanese Immigrant Co-Founds Community Association in Pittsburgh that Supports All Newcomers](#)  
American Immigration Council

[In Pittsburgh’s Bhutanese community, ‘first aid’ for the struggle with mental health stigma](#)  
Public Source

[‘Band-Aid on a historical problem’: Child care providers expect slow collapse of sector without long-term aid](#)  
Public Source

[From Refugees to Yinzers](#)  
Pittsburgh Post Gazette

[Righteous Among the Neighbors: Khara Timsina, BCAP Director](#)  
Pittsburgh City Paper





# OUR TEAM

## STAFF



**Khara Timsina**  
Executive Director



**Parshu Chamlagai**  
Program Specialist



**Katie Mirt**  
Youth & Families  
Coordinator



**Lila Adhikari**  
Administrative & Program  
Assistant



**Benu Rijal**  
Health Coordinator

## BOARD MEMBERS

- Suraj Nepal, Chair
- Ganga Baral, Vice-Chair
- Gyem Adhikari, Treasurer
- Bhagi Adhikari
- Leslie Aizenman
- Julia Baraily
- Dr. Xia Chao
- Todd Fine
- Uma Gauttam
- Brooke Kissler
- Bhavini Patel
- Durga Upreti

**THANK YOU  
to all of our  
community  
volunteers!**



# STAY IN TOUCH



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