Our Mission...

is to help refugees **rebuild safe, sustainable** lives in Denver through supportive **networks** of people, services and **community** activities.

Our Vision...

is to be an **integrative** center of multicultural exchange where community members feel a sense of **belonging** and actively **contribute** to an inclusive society.

Our Values...

- The richness of community, celebrating all cultures, religions, ethnicities, languages, sexual orientations, genders, abilities, generations, beliefs, traditions, and customs.
- The voices and contributions of each member of the community
- The process of learning together
What is the African Community Center?

The African Community Center of Denver is a program office of the Ethiopian Community Development Council Inc. (ECDC), a community-based non-profit organization headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. ACC’s Refugee Resettlement program welcomes newcomers who have had to flee persecution within their home country to Denver. Many of our clients arrive in the United States with little material goods but possess great experience and hope about their new lives in United States.

With a diverse staff and the help of faithful volunteers and interns, ACC conducts educational and social service programs that help newcomers rebuild their lives in their new communities, navigate US systems and cultures, recover from past trauma, gain personal independence and economic self-sufficiency, and become able participants and productive, contributing members of American society. The Outreach Department also organizes events and develops materials to promote awareness about refugee resettlement in Denver as well as the issues and challenges faced by newcomers as they move through the resettlement and cultural adjustment process. ACC engages newcomers and members of the wider community to enhance cross-cultural communication and integration.

Our Story

The African Community Center of Denver was created in May 2001 through our parent organization, the Ethiopian Community Development Council which was established just outside of Washington D.C. Beginning with only 3 staff members resettling 60 refugee, we have grown into a staff of over 30 competent, compassionate employees serving over 500 refugees, asylees and secondaries each year! We are a well-equipped bilingual and multicultural staff determined to assist newcomers from diverse cultural heritages become self-sufficient, contributing members of the community. We assist people from countries as diverse as Bhutan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Burma, Congo, Sri Lanka, Eritrea and others.
We offer a variety of refugee resettlement services during the first 12 months of their arrival:

- **Case Management Services**
  Our case managers act as advocates and strive to support the needs of newly arriving refugee families and individuals. Services include welcoming clients upon arrival at the airport, helping to find safe housing, referring them to medical assistance, enrolling their children into the public school system, registering the families with federal, state and local assistance programs (social security, food stamps, Medicaid, etc.) as well as simply being there to listen and and bring comfort.

- **Housing**
  ACC provides housing assistance to clients by securing appropriate living arrangements prior to their arrival in the U.S. and providing all initial furnishings & household items they need. ACC provides education and support to refugees navigating the U.S. housing system, including connections to options for subsidized housing and home-ownership.

- **Employment Services**
  ACC’s Employment Team supports and supplements community members’ efforts to become self-sufficient and productive members in the greater Denver community. Understanding that gainful employment is vital to this goal, Employment Specialists help prepare refugees for the American workforce, locate opportunities, apply to jobs and help clients retain their positions. Referrals are made to various internal and external job-skills training programs which increase possibilities of employment within specific fields. Additionally, Employment Specialists collaborate with local employers to locate and hire well-qualified, hard-working and creative individuals. We have developed productive relationships with various employers, who recognize that refugees have developed qualities essential to business success: determination, focus and a toughness of spirit. Our employment services include applicant screening, referral and follow-up.

- **Employment Training Programs**
  The African Community Center recently begun a program to help our most vulnerable refugees—**Safari Thrift**! Through community donations, ACC has provided comfortable, warm and welcoming ‘homes’ to over 4000 refugees since 2001. Many of the refugee groups arriving in Colorado arrive with numerous barriers preventing them from finding employment and therefore independence. Safari Thrift provides tools for refugees with low levels of English and literacy, helping them become successful through employment and economic stability.

- **Cultural Adjustment**
  Adjusting to a new home land can be very stressful. ACC helps refugees overcome culture shock through cultural adjustment workshops as well as by matching the clients with American friends through our **First Friends program**.

- **Community Outreach**
  ACC works with community-based organizations to provide technical assistance to develop leadership capacities within local ethnic populations. The Outreach Team also promotes awareness to the general Denver community about issues and challenges faced by newcomers as they move through the resettlement and cultural adjustment process. In addition, we engage newcomers and members of the wider community to enhance cross-cultural communication and integration.