

The team at Columbia County Sanctuary Movement.
Photo courtesy of CCSM.



REGIONAL

Showing up for Our Neighbors

Immigrant-Serving Organizations Light the Way Forward

At a recent panel event, Inginia Jackson, cofounder of Camino al Éxito in Dutchess County, was asked, “What is it that immigrants need?” Her response was direct: “What do all humans need? We need housing, food, and healthcare ... Where are the resources we already have in a community, and how do we make them accessible for everyone?” At the heart of immigrant-serving organizations is the mission of access and a redefinition of belonging. This year, communities have been destabilized by rapid shifts in immigration policy, including increased ICE raids. Yet, organizations like Camino al Éxito, Berkshire Immigrant Center, and Columbia County Sanctuary Movement remain rooted in purpose. They continue to provide services ranging from legal support to language learning, from food access to cultural celebration.

Founded in 2021 by wife-and-husband duo Inginia and Shannon Jackson, **Camino al Éxito** improves bilingual access to education, health, and legal resources in northeast Dutchess County. Their mission empowers both youth and adults while building community engagement.

After relocating from urban Westchester County to rural Dutchess County, the Jacksons noticed a stark contrast. “We knew there were immigrants

and Latinos here, but they were behind doors. They didn’t feel like they belonged,” Jackson shared. After four years of operations, they’re beginning to see the results of efforts to integrate the community, and partnerships have been a key part of that change. “We’re collaborating with libraries, churches, and school districts to close the language gaps, and we want other nonprofits to know we’re open for partnerships. Leaders of bigger nonprofits ask us how we’re connecting so well with immigrant families.” Their answer: “A pipeline of trust.”

One of Caminos’ standout programs, Elevation of You, supports immigrant high school students through financial literacy, employment guidance, social-emotional learning, and college prep. Recently, eight teens also secured Special Immigrant Juvenile Status visas with help from a licensed lawyer arranged by Camino. “If it wasn’t for us, they wouldn’t have known they qualified,” Jackson said of this vital pathway to citizenship.

In the Berkshires, the **Berkshire Immigrant Center** (BIC) has helped immigrants navigate the path to citizenship for nearly 30 years. It is the only nonprofit in the county recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice with DOJ-accredited case workers. BIC serves over 800 individuals annually

from more than 60 countries. “Our clients are family, friends, workers, and neighbors who want to follow the law and build their lives with dignity and stability,” said Executive Director Melissa Canavan, “Many face long, complex journeys, and the support they need is not just legal, it is human.”

In response to rapidly shifting federal policies in 2025, BIC has ramped up multilingual outreach and education, offering “Know Your Rights” sessions for immigrants and allies. “Collaboration is not a luxury; it’s a necessity,” says Canavan, extending gratitude for fellow nonprofits and funders who show up “even when the path is hard.” Partnerships with healthcare providers, housing advocates, employers, and faith leaders have been critical for meeting community needs. BIC was proud to open its doors at a new, expanded location on North Street in Pittsfield earlier this year. It has been transformative for their services. “It is more accessible and better equipped for the sensitive and complex work we do,” said Canavan.

Columbia County Sanctuary Movement (CCSM) was founded in 2016 “amidst intersecting crises and attacks on immigrant communities.” Since then, the organization has steadily built its support networks and capacity to respond to constituent needs. Today, it has six core program areas: community organizing, legal support, deportation defense, accompaniment and family support, community building, and food justice. CCSM hosted a virtual Emergency Funders Briefing in April that spotlighted its deportation defense program and a key innovation: building a decentralized training model to expand Rapid Response capacity. Co-Executive Director Bryan MacCormack shared that CCSM’s new Safety and Security Team has expanded workplace preparedness. “We’ve trained close to 300 individuals from nonprofits, businesses, and interfaith institutions to create business protocols for immigration enforcement activities,” he said. “That includes knowing the rights involved if ICE arrives, recognizing administrative vs. judicial warrants, what signage should be up, and who the point person is.” Demand for this kind of training continues to grow.

A regional leader in immigrant rights, CCSM has led rallies and trips to the state capital in support of the New York for All Act, which the NYCLU says “draws sensible limits between local government and

Photo by CCSM Multi-Media Organizer Tony Ramirez.



immigration enforcement.” “Now more than ever,” said MacCormack, “CCSM and immigrant-led organizations need community support to navigate the political landscape safely and effectively.”

Even in difficult times, joy and cultural pride are central to building community. In 2020, CCSM organized the county’s first-ever Latinx Parade and Festival. “This year will be our fifth,” said MacCormack, noting changes ahead. “Due to security concerns, the 2025 Festival will go on tour. We’re shifting to smaller private events that allow for controlled entry and expanded reach into new communities.” CCSM also launched a Caribbean Festival in 2024, which returns this year. Similarly, Camino al Éxito hosted its first Hispanic Heritage celebration in 2024, “Over 100 families were walking in town, proud of their culture. We even had government officials visiting us,” said Jackson. ■

Learn more about these organizations:

caminoalexitopfa.org,

@caminoalexitopfa

berkshireic.org,

@berkshireimmigrantcenter

sanctuarycolumbiacounty.org,

@ccsmny

The vital work of these immigrant-serving nonprofits is supported by many mission-aligned donors at BTCF, and three funds have had an exclusive focus on immigrants: the New World Fund of the Berkshires, the Northeast Dutchess Fund and its NEDCorps Immigrant Support Grant program, and the New Americans Fund.

Visit berkshiretaconic.org/immigrant-support to learn about BTCF’s newest Immigrant Support Funds that will provide direct financial assistance and program support.