

NINA MOINI: A nonprofit that aims to help immigrants find economic stability and success, has expanded its headquarters in the Twin Cities metro. Communities Advancing Prosperity for Immigrants, or CAPI, is celebrating a grand reopening this weekend. It's the end of a years long process of moving its services to Brooklyn Center. Joining me to talk about the shift is CEO Mary Niedermeyer. Thanks for being with us, Mary.

MARY Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

NIEDERMEYER:

NINA MOINI: Congratulations on this move and the growth because CAPI has been around a long time. I'm seeing here from 1982 as the Center for Asian and Pacific Islanders at the time. So I understand the name changed to reflect a wider range of immigrant communities, the organization was working to serve. Can you briefly talk about who all you do serve, and how?

MARY Yeah, so about 60% of the folks that we serve are Southeast Asian because our roots are after the Vietnam War
NIEDERMEYER: as Southeast Asians were immigrating to Minnesota, and today we serve now all immigrants and refugees. Brooklyn Center, where we are located is, I believe, the most diverse city in the state of Minnesota. And so there is a large immigrant population, a large Liberian, Latino, Southeast Asian.

We also have worked a lot in the Afghan community as folks have arrived over the past four years as well. And through our services, we really seek to meet people's needs in a holistic way. And so we look at serving immediate needs, building long-term stability, and advocating for policies that empower our immigrant communities. We have had a long standing, culturally specific food shelf, where people can access foods that are familiar to them.

We also have a Hmong seniors and caregivers program that is supporting older community members and work with newly arrived refugees, just accessing social services and the resources they need to thrive. But from there, we also look at building long term stability because that when people arrive, they have immediate needs, but they also are here to build their home in Minnesota. And so we provide workforce development. We do career training, job readiness, helping them just kind of--

NINA MOINI: Very holistic. No, indeed.

MARY Culture.

NIEDERMEYER:

NINA MOINI: Yeah.

MARY Yep, and then we also do financial education and home ownership and yeah, a lot of different holistic services.

NIEDERMEYER: Yeah.

NINA MOINI: Well that's what it's about. I mean, thinking about people's needs from really when people arrive through building a life. Because I think a lot of times you'll hear about a lot help in the very beginning when folks arrive. But some of that medium term to longer term help they are talking about is helpful as well, and of course, the food shelf, so helpful.

What does the expansion that you're celebrating this week? What does it allow you to be able to do that you weren't able to do before or more of?

MARY Yeah, it allows us to have an even bigger impact in our community. So we are doubling the size of our food shelf, **NIEDERMEYER:** which is exciting and also sad that need even exists. But we'll be able to double the size of our food shelf. We run the Brooklyn Center farmers market, and we'll be able to bring that on site to CAPI's space.

We also are opening 40 community gardens to be able to provide opportunity for residents, and also food shelf participants to grow some of their own food. We'll have a walk-in technology and resource center. So when folks are looking for support with enrolling in health insurance in job searching, they can access that service. And then we have just more space in general to provide services to the community.

We are also bringing in some different tenants into the building because it's a large space, and we want folks in Brooklyn Center to be able to really benefit.

NINA MOINI: Do you who those will be or are you looking?

MARY They are to be determined. We have several that are pending, but no one has signed a lease officially yet, so I **NIEDERMEYER:** probably don't want to announce. But one of the spaces will be a childcare provider, because that is an area that we receive feedback when we were doing the planning for this building, as just a need in Brooklyn Center is more accessible childcare.

NINA MOINI: I want to Zoom out just a little bit to talk about the work that you're doing right now. The cost of food, obviously fuel have climbed recently. There's been cuts to federal nutrition programs this month. Some immigrants without green cards lost Medicaid eligibility. How are these changes impacting the work that you are doing regularly?

MARY Yeah, I mean, we are seeing an increase in need. It also just continues to instill, I think fear in the community, as **NIEDERMEYER:** well as just the sense of not being welcome. And so with this building, the timing of us reopening after operation metro surge, after our communities have experienced so many just harmful negative experiences. To me, this is kind of a pillar of hope for our community, of where we're saying you belong here, we belong here.

Our organization has been here since 1982. We're going to continue to stand up and serve our community alongside of each other. And our immigrant community, deserves beautiful spaces and opportunities to thrive when they've chosen to call Minnesota their home. And so it's this exciting moment in a time that has been really challenging at the same time.

NINA MOINI: Mary, I wonder what you see as some of the greatest needs right now. I mean, I mentioned some of the challenges that have been emerging, but in terms of just, I mean, food is obviously a huge need you mentioned, but is there anything really standing out to you right now that you're seeing a need around?

MARY Yes. Food, legal services, just navigating very complex systems. I would say also underemployment, we know **NIEDERMEYER:** that the unemployment rates for immigrants are very low.

But we also a lot of folks are very underemployed and have a hard time navigating the workforce system and understanding how to transition the skills that they bring, which many are just very high skilled individuals but don't quite how to navigate the system. And so I think that is one of the biggest needs of just being able to provide for your family and figure out how to really fit yourself into the culture.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, and that's years long work to your point many times. Tell us, Mary, before we've got to go about the celebrations going on this weekend. If folks can take part.

MARY Yeah. We have our official ribbon cutting on Friday from 3:00 to 6:00 PM the actual ribbon cutting program is
NIEDERMEYER: from 3:30 to 4:30. And then Saturday, we have a community celebration from 11:00 AM until 2:00 PM with food and face painting and bounce house and very just welcoming the community into the space.

NINA MOINI: All right, Mary, thank you so much for stopping by the program here and sharing with us. Wishing you the best in your new space and congratulations.

MARY Thank you so much for having me.

NIEDERMEYER:

NINA MOINI: Mary Niedermeyer is CEO of CAPI.