



# 2023 Impact Report



First Friends volunteers, staff, and Friends at our 2023 Volunteer Picnic

## A Message from our Executive Director - May 2024

Dear First Friends Supporter,

Last month, I was in a First Friends volunteer training when a previously detained Friend talked about the impact that visitation had on his life. He said he would notice a difference in treatment from the guards based on whether or not he had a visitor, and he credits First Friends with connecting him with those visitors. Last year at a conference held by Rutgers University about the history and future of the Elizabeth Detention Center, one of the founders of First Friends asked us to understand detention visitation as a form of “incremental activism”, and I really believe that is what each of our volunteers is doing. Visitation is a way for us to demonstrate care for the people inside those detention centers who are so regularly dehumanized as well as a way to show immigration enforcement agents that we're paying attention.

To that end, we have committed to redoubling our efforts to support detained immigrants in this coming year. The First Friends team has implemented monthly training sessions with volunteers to ensure that we are meeting the needs of Friends where they are. I'm thrilled to report that we've restarted in-person visitation and continue to support virtual visitation across regional detention centers, with plans to continue recruiting additional volunteers. This is particularly important right now given a recent judicial order which will allow another private prison company to open a new immigration detention center in the state of New Jersey until the current legal case concerning detention fully makes its way through the courts. Unfortunately, in the lead-up to this year's presidential election, we're likely to see an escalation of immigration enforcement and xenophobic policies as politicians seek to appeal to a growing anti-immigrant sentiment across the country. In the face of this, it's up to organizations like First Friends and our allies to create and uplift a counter-narrative. While people in power continue to stoke fear about immigration, we know that immigrants make our communities stronger and more vibrant.

I hope you enjoy reading through all that we were able to accomplish together in 2023, and that you'll join us as we build on this work in 2024. We can't provide the support we do without you, so we hope that you'll consider making your gift today by going to [firstfriendsnjny.org](https://firstfriendsnjny.org). Thank you for your continued support and generosity.

With gratitude,

Katy Sastre  
Executive Director



## Our Mission and Vision

### Our Mission

First Friends of New Jersey and New York upholds the inherent dignity and humanity of immigrants who are impacted by the immigration enforcement system. We provide compassion and hope through connections with volunteers dedicated to helping them survive detention, gain freedom and rebuild their lives.

### Our Vision

A society where immigrants are welcomed, valued and empowered.

# First Friends' 2023 Programmatic Impact



**279** deposits into detained Friends' commissary accounts, enabling them to supplement their diets and purchase personal hygiene supplies and stationery



**5** immigration bonds paid for detained Friends, freeing them from detention to return to or settle into new communities as they awaited the outcome of their immigration cases



**71** individuals and families (approximately **230** people total) received gift cards for food and other emergency needs, including medicines, diapers, and infant formula



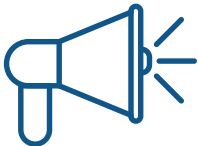
**2** immigrant families were provided with temporary housing



**22** individuals and families received rental assistance



**7** individuals were accompanied to their immigration court hearing or ICE check-in



**20+** community and volunteer engagement events, including meetings with community partners, vigils, rallies, and marches to advocate for immigrants impacted by the immigration enforcement system



**200+** newly-arrived immigrants received referrals to other services through our dedicated hotline



**5** individuals were picked up and transported home from the Elizabeth Detention Center by First Friends volunteers



# Thank you to our volunteers!

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First Friends volunteers and Friends celebrating Friendsgiving 2023



First Friends' awesome volunteer, John, greeting and assisting a Friend who was released from the EDC



First Friends volunteers and staff at a rally outside the Elizabeth Detention Center to advocate closing NJ's last immigration detention center



First Friends board member Rosa Santana speaking at the International Human Rights Day rally



Danuska, a previously detained Friend, speaking at a rally in Trenton



First Friends volunteers, board members, and supporters on First Friends Food Tour

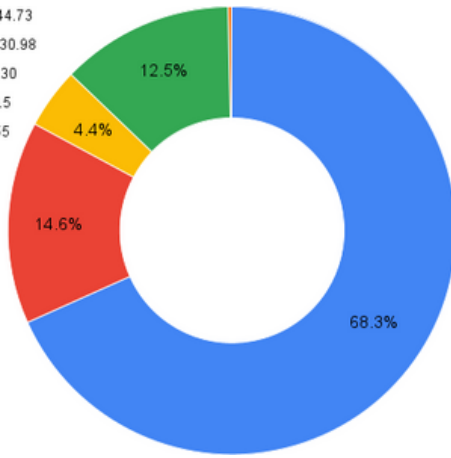
# 2023 Financials

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## 2023 Income (in thousands)

● Individuals:	\$144.73
● Religious Organizations:	\$30.98
● Foundations:	\$9.30
● Grants:	\$26.5
● Other:	\$0.55

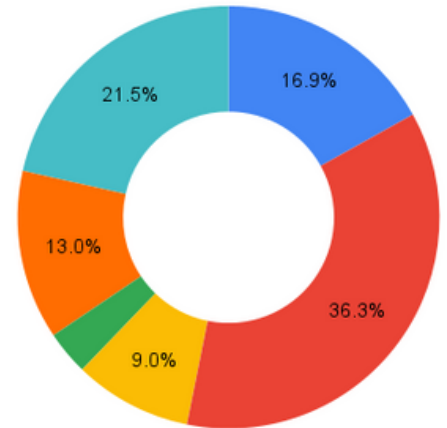
Total: \$212.06



## 2023 Expenses (in thousands)

● Detained Friend Assistance:	\$46.34
● Post-Release & Non-detained Assistance:	\$99.33
● Immigration Bonds:	\$24.76
● Advocacy:	\$9.24
● Management & General:	\$35.52
● Administrative & Fundraising:	\$58.81

Total: \$274



## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Thank you for your extraordinary generosity in support of our immigrant Friends.

### \$10,000 - \$30,000

Hudson Lutheran Charity  
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Legal Services of New Jersey  
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Tiedrich, Joan  
Tremper, Diane  
Uhl, Sr. Alice  
Wilson, Abigail  
Winter, Arthur & Judy  
Women for Progress  
Wright, Alfred  
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First Friends staff Miguel and Samantha at Friendsgiving 2023

# Spotlight on Friends



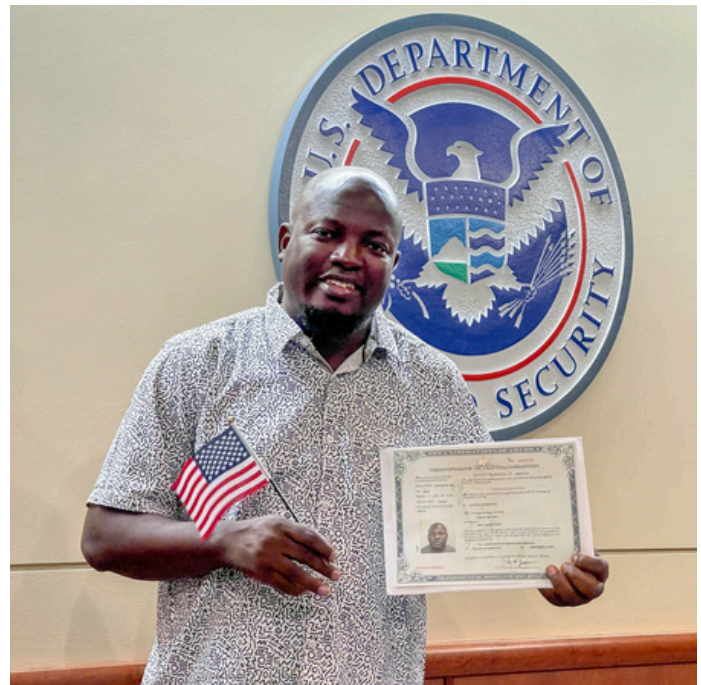
**Spring womenswear debut: Sylvian prepares to unveil custom-designed dress for the Newark Museum of Art's Art Ball**



**Enslly, with his 2 daughters, 2 sons, and visitors from Cameroon excited to attend Friendsgiving.**



**Mahmud, who recently became a US citizen, with his beautiful family**



**Hamza becomes a US citizen**



# First Friends Staff

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*Program Manager*

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**Samantha Wong**

*Program Associate*

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## FIRST FRIENDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Rosa Santana**

**Shawn Slappy**

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**Bill Westerman**

## GRATEFUL MESSAGES FROM FRIENDS

“They listened to me and they gave me hope, which I badly needed at that time. From them I began to see that there really are many good people in this country.” – Friend from Ghana

“I didn’t know anyone in the New York area to call and no one came to visit me. I was feeling low and discouraged. When the cheerful volunteer from First Friends started visiting and listening and showing interest in my situation, I began to feel some hope again.” – Friend from India

“Today, I am most thankful that I am in America where I have a job, safety and freedom. First friends gave me hope and compassion when I needed it most.” – Friend from Sierra Leone

“The love and caring compassion that First Friends showed helped me through a rough time in a terrible place.” – Friend from Peru