



*Serving Somali Immigrants
& Somali Americans*

Dear Friends and Visitors, Welcome to the Somali American Community Association:

Thank you for your interest with our organization and the people we serve. This letter is intended to give you some background about the Somali community in Maryland and our organization. The Somali American Community Association (SACA) is a nonprofit, 501 C (3) organization, serving the Somali immigrants and Somali Americans in Maryland and Washington, DC.

Why was SACA established? To answer this question, I would like to share with you some of the many concerns I and many of you heard from Somalis in Maryland. As you can imagine, the barriers and issues the new comers experience during the first few years are numerous.

- Children who need help to adjust in their schools and communities and to develop a positive sense of identity, to learn their culture, traditional values and Somali language.
- A disabled and elderly Somali woman needs medical attention for her diabetes and does not have the ability to access to treatment and follow-up services.
- A refugee family needs information about Head Start and early childhood development programs for their children.
- Individuals who cannot access essential services, such as legal, health care, and human services.

The inability to communicate freely and access opportunities in their community have hindered many Somali families from participating fully in the opportunities in their communities, accessing employment training programs, attending Parent-Teacher conferences, tutoring their children, and enrolling their teens into enriching activities. These are some of the challenges many Somalis in Maryland and District of Columbia, one of the largest Somali communities in the US, routinely experience.

In the past, issues affecting Somalis were either addressed informally or did not get enough attention from the community members. Individuals took time off from their work to accompany the needy to community programs or made phone calls in search of programs. Information about community needs and concerns was frequently shared and solutions identified at homes, mosques, and coffee shops.



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Although these are unique and creative ways to help fellow Somalis, they are often inefficient. For instance, those who paid money to help someone purchase medications or contributed toward funeral expenditures cannot claim tax deduction. Furthermore, services are not delivered in a timely manner and are inadequate due to lack of follow-up, and results in a loss of productivity.

Following seven months of community meetings, which brought together Somali American expatriates from all economic, political, and social spectrums, SACA was established in May 2004. A program that serves the unique needs of Somali Americans and immigrants, and that understands their culture and language. Somali women play an integral role in the organization because they bring extensive experiences about life experiences of Somali women in the US and some of the cultural and religious issues they encounter at workplace and in their communities.

The recent community meetings underscored the aforementioned challenges and the founding members of SACA have made their priority to alleviate these concerns. Some of the programs we established with funding from Montgomery County and Takoma Foundation, include After School Program, computer classes, job development and placement, Homework 'N' Hoops Program, tutoring, mentoring, and college planning.

Without the commitment of many Somalis, particularly the founding members of the organization, who contribute their time, talent, and treasure to the organization, SACA could not implement projects successfully. We plan to build on recent accomplishments and expect to become a crucial partner to public and private sectors in developing and maintaining healthy communities and families in the Free State of Maryland.

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