

UVNR NEWSLETTER

Last month at UVNR, we celebrated community, learning, and empowerment. We held our REFRAME Coalition meeting to review Year 3 findings from our SAMHSA grant and reflected on our collective progress.

Our Tea Circle session focused on the theme *Pathways to Empowerment*, featuring a former newcomer participant who shared her inspiring journey to financial independence through entrepreneurship. Our youth in YCAC were connected directly to Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Mexico, and we continued to build local partnerships in the community.

In this month's newsletter, we also highlight Ayushi Kathuria, a UNM student, who led a meaningful session on cultural identity and mental health for newcomer students as part of the APS Newcomer Summer Program, alongside UVNR and Centro Sávila. Ayushi will be working with YCAC this coming month!

We have more amazing stories to share and exciting things ahead. Make sure to check them out!

Donate
today and
make a
difference!



APS International High School Grand Opening

On September 25th, 2025, UVNR proudly attended, tabled at, and celebrated the grand opening of the APS International High School! As part of the event, we shared resources and connected with students, families, and community partners to support the school's inspiring mission.

After years of planning, dedication, and collaboration, the school officially opened its doors in August 2025, welcoming a new generation of students. Designed specifically to support recently arrived, multilingual English-language learners from across Albuquerque, the school provides a welcoming, inclusive space for newcomer students to thrive—both academically and personally.

With smaller class sizes, supportive educators, and a hands-on, community-based learning model, the APS International High School helps students develop their English skills while growing academically and preparing for college, careers, and life beyond high school.





REFRAME Coalition Meeting

September 19th, 2025



Our latest REFRAME Coalition meeting brought together an inspiring group of returning and new members, including passionate newcomer youth participants, to dive deep into our Year 3 evaluation findings from the federally funded SAMHSA grant.

Key Highlights & Takeaways:

- **We examined survey data from both adult and youth participants to better understand program impacts on people's wellbeing.**
- **We engaged in meaningful discussions about mental health trends within the community.**
- **We identified next steps, considerations, and priorities for data collection and analysis, programmatic areas to address, and ways community members can utilize this information in their work.**

Please reach out to info@uvnr.org for more information about our coalition or data findings.



Participant Stories from the Field

Starting in September of this year, we highlighted Participant Stories from the Field to showcase the impact of our Community Advocates' mentoring (case management) work. These stories share how our programs and direct services have improved participants' lives while also driving broader systemic change.



An Afghan Participant's Heartfelt Message

Our Afghan Community Advocate and Financial Coordinator, Dilara Rajabi, shares a heartfelt message from her participant, Aziz Ahmad Ahmadi

With warm greetings and respect, I would like to sincerely express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to the honorable organization United Voices for Newcomer Rights, which has supported and accompanied us sincerely through every stage and difficulty. The presence of such an organization is truly a source of comfort and hope for us newcomers.

A special thank you goes to the respected head of this organization, who has always stood by us with caring attention and dedicated cooperation.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Ms. Dilara Rajabi, who supported us with kindness and responsible follow-ups in various areas, including:

- *Supporting me with patience and goodwill in resolving a car accident*
- *Helping prepare my wife's resume and assisting her in finding a suitable job*
- *Finding a suitable family doctor*
- *Helping us resolve rental issues*
- *Referring us to a dentist*
- *Providing continuous interpretation and translation support*

These heartfelt efforts not only resolved our problems but also reflect her compassion, commitment, and genuine spirit of helping others.

Wishing you and all the honorable members of this valuable organization continued and growing success.

Youth Community Advisory Council (YCAC) and Tea Circles

On September 20th, we had our second YCAC and Tea Circle of the season! YCAC empowers newcomer youth to build community and explore mental health, culture, and resources. Tea Circle brings newcomer adults together to connect, share experiences, and support one another over culturally diverse teas, while receiving helpful info on housing, taxes, education, and more.

The topic for this month's Tea Circle, *Pathways to Empowerment*, featured a guest speaker from the newcomer community, who shared her inspiring journey of starting a business and achieving financial independence. Participants enjoyed real-life insights, group discussions, interactive Q&A, free childcare, tea, and snacks. In YCAC, Big Brothers Big Sisters of NM shared information about their services with youth, and we practiced identifying ways feelings show up in your body, as well as breathing technique to help calm our nervous systems.

Keep an eye out for our next YCAC and Tea Circle session coming up next month on October 18th from 3-5 pm.
Email info@uvnr.org for more information.

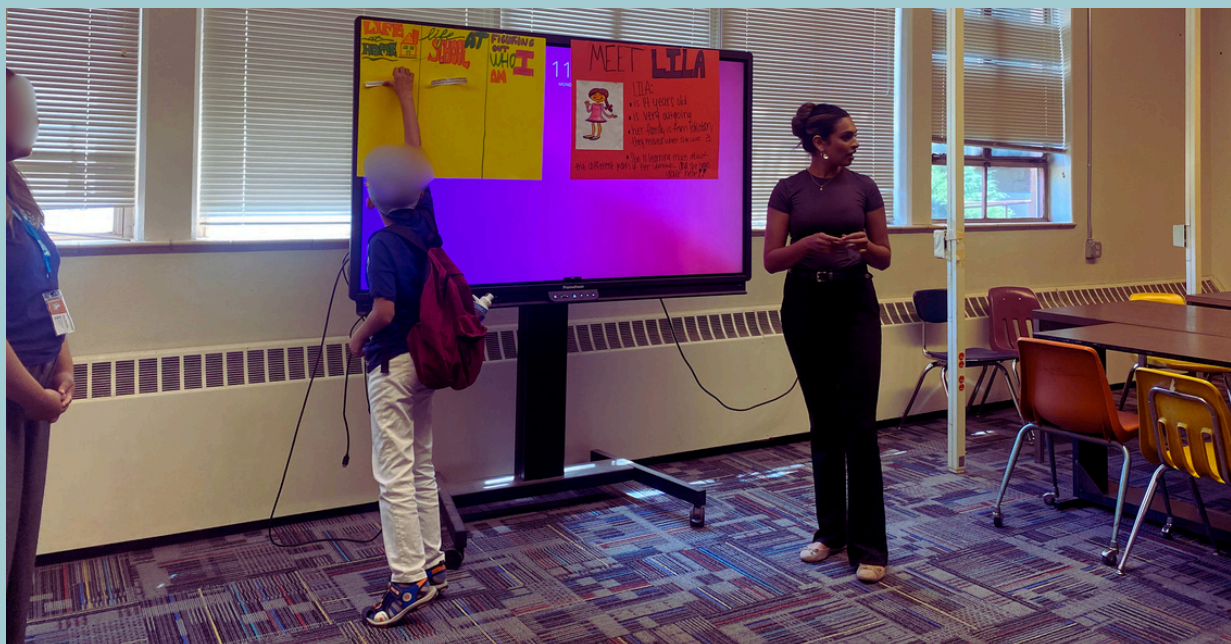


Spotlighting Ayushi and the APS Newcomer Summer Program

This summer, Ayushi Kathuria, a student at the University of New Mexico, had the incredible opportunity to present her work alongside the UVNR and Centro Sávila team as part of the Newcomer Summer Program hosted by Albuquerque Public Schools.

Ayushi's presentation focused on the important theme of cultural identity and the experience of fitting in—both at school and at home. Her engaging session was designed for middle and high school students, blending thoughtful discussions with creative, hands-on activities ranging from art projects to open conversations.

What made Ayushi's presentation especially impactful was that it was inspired by her own podcast, @talkaboutthinking, which you can check out on Spotify.



Employee of the Month: Tasawer Yosufzai

Tasawer plays a vital role at UVNR as a Community Advocate, where she brings not only incredible hard work and dedication, but also genuine enthusiasm, empathy, and heart to everything she does. Tasawer (“Tas”) is a certified CHW, and she works with Afghan community members, speaking Dari, Pashto, Russian, Urdu, and English.

Her passion for uplifting others is felt by everyone around her. She cares deeply about the well-being of every member of the community — always going the extra mile to ensure no one is left behind.

Outside of work, Tas enjoys spending time with her dog Lobo, as well as her family and friends. She also likes to travel, read, and even volunteers her time at local animal shelters when she can. Tas truly has a heart of gold, and that’s one of the many reasons we love having her on our team!

Thank you, Tasawer, for the light you bring to UVNR every day. 🧡



Diwali

Written by our Professional Intern, Madhumita Santhanam

Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is one of my favorite times of the year. It celebrates the victory of light over darkness and good over evil, and marks a time of renewal, joy, and prosperity.

The stories behind Diwali vary across different parts of India. In the North, it commemorates Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya after defeating Ravana. In the South, it celebrates Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Narakasura.

In my own family, we have cherished traditions that make the day even more meaningful—we clean our home, and light every lamp in the house to keep it bright and welcoming. We then wash our hair, wear new clothes, and cook a special Indian meal together. In the evening, we enjoy fireworks outside, play music, dance, and apply henna, making it a night full of joy, love, and celebration.

Diwali is especially meaningful to me because it falls close to my birthday. In fact, the year I was born, Diwali and my birthday were on the same day, and that connection has made the festival even more special in my life.

Although the exact date changes each year, the spirit of Diwali—light, family, and new beginnings remains the same.



Candles (diyas) and rangoli (colorful patterns) decorated outside



Fireworks during the night

Chuseok “Korean Thanksgiving”



Written by our Co-Executive Director, Ryeora Choe

This month, we also highlight Chuseok (추석) — one of Korea’s most cherished holidays, often called the “Korean Thanksgiving.” Chuseok is a harvest festival celebrated on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month, when the moon is at its fullest and brightest in the year. Families gather to share special foods, honor their ancestors for worship, and express gratitude for the year’s blessings. Traditional dishes include songpyeon (half-moon rice cakes filled with mung bean or sesame) and freshly harvested fruits.

Beyond the food, Chuseok is about connection and appreciation — reuniting with family, visiting ancestral hometowns, and giving thanks for abundance. In modern times, many Koreans living abroad, including newcomers here in New Mexico, celebrate Chuseok as a time to reflect on family and the joy of community. At UVNR, we celebrate all cultural holidays that remind us of shared values: gratitude, family, and community care. Just as Chuseok honors the bonds that sustain us, UVNR’s programs create spaces where newcomers can reconnect with their traditions while forming new roots in Albuquerque.

Through these gatherings, we honor the diversity of our community and the universal spirit of giving thanks and caring for one another.

Happy Chuseok! 🌕

May your home be filled with peace, gratitude, and light.



Songpyeon (송편)