



Fall 2025 Newsletter



Giving Tuesday

As we head into the fall giving season, leadership at the SBCA is mindful of the challenges facing so many throughout the state and nation during these unprecedented times. We are observing fear, hunger, joblessness, and uncertainty about healthcare and housing as we close out the year. The SBCA is seeking general funding to be able to pivot and address the emergent and changing needs of the community we serve, as well as our employees, the majority of whom are from the immigrant and refugee community. While we are fortunate to have a diverse portfolio of funding sources, we have been impacted by freezes and cancellations of USDA federal funding programs, which jeopardize our ability to meet the needs of our community in capacity and resources. We are protective of our experienced and dedicated staff as they face increasing healthcare costs and limited opportunities for salary support alongside our program participants. Rising material and infrastructure costs, tariffs, and climate change make stewarding the land at Liberation Farms and improving our Office & Community Center in downtown Lewiston a more arduous task, with limited room to expand or grow our programs and offerings.

Balanced with the harsh and surreal reality of this moment is the continuous and uplifting support that we receive from partners, institutions, service providers, and donors in a variety of different ways. Collaborations, shared resources, solidarity, and additional financial gifts are buoying us in this difficult chapter, and we are so fortunate and grateful to engage in mutually beneficial relationships. Of course, the determination, vision, and enduring tenacity of the immigrant and refugee community in Maine is the driving force behind our mission to succeed. We look forward to continuing to build a network of support, resources, and collective vision as we enter a New Year, and are committed to sustaining our work as long as possible. Your assistance is critical to our success, and we thank you for considering a donation to the SBCA this Giving Tuesday.

[**Donate Here!**](#)



SBCA youth leaders and staff at the Common Ground Fair in September.

Program Updates

Client Navigation Services

SBCA's Client Navigation Services mission is to empower the immigrant community by providing culturally relevant support, advocating on their behalf, and helping navigate systems and resources available for our clients.

Increasing Food Security through SNAP Outreach

SBCA received a SNAP outreach contract with the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to increase application support and information sharing about the SNAP program to clients. SBCA's Client Navigation Services team has worked with Somali Bantu community members for years to assist with new applications, the renewal process, and understanding of how the program works. With new federal regulations on SNAP eligibility, including work requirements and citizenship status restrictions, as well as confusion over the Federal Shutdown, SBCA staff will have more capacity to support community members through this process. We are excited to work with Maine DHHS, [Full Plates Full Potential](#), and other outreach partners doing similar work to increase food security through the SNAP program.



Executive Director, Muhidin Libah, helping a client with paperwork. Photo by John Ochira.

Welcome to Hamdi Dakane!

This year Hamdi joined SBCA's staff as the Women's Client Navigator & Financial Assistant. Hamdi is a recent graduate of Simmons University with a BS degree in Finance and Accounting.

She has over five years of experience in organizational operations and peer & community advocacy, including serving clients at SBCA before heading off to college. She brings her dedication to community and attention to detail to her new position. Hamdi grew up in Lewiston, is bilingual in Somali and English, and is eager to apply the skills she has worked to build. In this role she hopes to serve her community and support the growth of SBCA and Liberation Farms.



SBCA's Women's Client Navigator & Financial Assistant, Hamdi Dakane.

Kashekee Youth Program

SBCA's Kashekee Youth Program's mission is to empower immigrant youth by fostering identity, cultural pride, and community connection.

Summer Kashekee Youth Program

The SBCA Kashekee Summer Youth Program supports Somali Bantu youth ages 5–12 through hands-on activities in gardening, cooking, and weekly field trips. Running from June to August, the program meets three days a week and centers cultural learning, interpersonal skills, and intergenerational mentorship.

Each week began with staff feedback sessions that helped youth leaders reflect, grow, and improve. We cooked together weekly with older youth working in the kitchen and younger youth preparing safe, no-stove dishes in the classroom. We also visited local farms and outdoor spaces, giving youth new experiences and connections to nature. The summer was filled with learning, exploration, and growth, and we are proud of everything our youth accomplished.



This summer, youth participants went strawberry picking at Pineland Farms (left) and decorated their garden beds at Liberation Farms (right). Photos by Fatuma Dakane.

Oh Yea! 4H Grows True Leaders

Oh Yea! 4H Grows True Leaders, a partnership between the University of Maine 4-H Cooperative Extension and the Somali Bantu Community Association, provides a safe, inclusive after-school space where teens build skills, explore new ideas, and grow as leaders.

This season included hands-on cooking, leadership events like the 4-H Youth Council and the Maine Environmental Education Association's (MEEA) Changemaker Gathering, and weekly gardening at Liberation Farms. Youth conducted a soil health experiment, enjoyed corn roasting and storytelling, and compared garden-grown corn to store-bought corn. We partnered with [Maine Inside Out](#) for workshops on grief and loss, giving youth space to explore emotional wellness through art and movement. Youth also interviewed Somali Bantu elders to preserve cultural stories and strengthen intergenerational connections.

Through sessions with [Artist's Rapid Response Team](#) (ARRT!), teens created banners highlighting food access, cultural connection, resilience, and freedom. We will close the season with a community dinner celebrating unity and the partnerships that supported us. This year was filled with creativity, cultural pride, and leadership.



Oh Yea! participants at an AART session. Photo by Caroline de Mauriac.

Liberation Farms

Liberation Farms' mission is to promote food security, livelihood development, community building and intergenerational connections by empowering immigrant farmers through access to land, agricultural resources, and technical assistance.

2025 Season

Somali Bantu farmers at Liberation Farms once again demonstrated their adaptability and commitment to local food this season. Weather in Maine is anything but predictable and the cold and wet spring, followed by the long drought in the summer, brought a range of challenges. Even so, the Iskashito farmers in our cooperative commercial grower program successfully cultivated 20 different crops across 3 acres and

generated \$140,000 in sales through a diverse range of market outlets. The bulk of the fresh produce was distributed to food pantries in the Lewiston and Portland areas through the Mainers Feeding Mainers program, directly to the Somali Bantu community through the SBCA's office in downtown Lewiston, and the Elder Farmshare program which offers home delivery for those in need. The farm continued its partnerships with Portland Public Schools, the Maine Marinara Collaborative and Gather to Grow in Lewiston, among others.



Farm Assistant Kalfur, Farmers Habiba and Fadumo, and Executive Director Muhidin stand with fresh lettuce for the farmers markets in front of our new market and delivery van. Photo by Laura Neale.

Iskashito farmers honed their crop plan this season and focused on culturally relevant, nutritious and delicious vegetable staples including cooking greens like collards, amaranth, and swiss chard, several varieties of onions, winter squash, and tomatoes. Farmers also participated in essential components of vegetable production by contributing hours in the seedling greenhouse in the spring and in the wash and pack station on busy harvest mornings at the height of the summer. All farmers in the Iskashito program met once a month to discuss best growing practices in the field such as pest management, soil fertility maintenance, and irrigation.



Farmer Mana sprays carrots to pack for wholesale orders. Photo by Laura Neale.

Community Halal Goat and Chicken Distribution

Liberation Farms continues to be a trusted source of halal meat for the Somali Bantu community. This spring's successful kidding season increased the goat herd to record breaking numbers, and after a full season of grazing, 23 goats were processed on the farm and distributed directly to community members in late fall. The livestock program also increased its pasture-raised poultry operation, raising 100 chickens and

accepting the generous donation of 150 older laying hens from [Apple Creek Farm](#) in Bowdoinham, all of which went directly to Somali Bantu families.

The halal meat distributions were coordinated by the dedicated members of the Farm Committee with support from farm staff. The SBCA has also strengthened the livestock handling system to ensure safer, more efficient processing through support from the [Cumberland County Food Security Council](#).



Liberation Farms raised 100 chickens in our two chicken tractors. Photo by Jacob Morton.

Land Access

The SBCA's Land Access mission is to advance land access for historically marginalized farmers and communities in Maine in partnership with land justice organizations and to mobilize resources to increase the diversity of people accessing farmland in the Northeast.

SBCA and [Agrarian Trust](#) are thrilled to announce that as of May 2025, SBCA is the sole owner of Liberation Farms. This transfer ensures land tenure without encumbrances for the SBCA community indefinitely, as was the original intent of the project. To learn more about our land access journey and what Liberation Farms means to the Somali Bantu community, check out the video below *Finding Liberation*, also available on our website. Thank you to Alex Sutula for the videography and Sara Cannon for the animation.

In addition to our land access journey at Liberation Farms, we are working with [Cultivating Community](#) and [Land for Good](#) to create accessible information in multiple languages for land seekers with support from the [Wildseeds Fund](#). Stay tuned for updates!



Thank you for your support of the Somali Bantu Community Association. If you are inspired by this work, please consider donating below.

Donate