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Spring 2026 Newsletter



The last couple of months have been a fearful time for immigrants in Maine, including the Somali Bantu community. Unjust immigration operations, continued federal funding cuts, rising costs of living, and heightened racism have been felt in Lewiston and across the state. Despite the challenges facing the organization and those we serve, it's incredible what can happen when the community comes together and helps each other. We are so grateful for all the individuals, businesses, partners and organizations that have donated, volunteered, and reached out to us in solidarity.



This winter we used donations to purchase and deliver shelf-stable, culturally familiar foods to over 250 community members' homes while they sheltered in place. Our Client Navigation Services team at SBCA's Office + Community Center continues to support community members as they always do, with an emphasis on translating accurate updates and information about safety.

[Donate Here](#)

You're Invited!



Join us at our 2026 Spring Blessing Event on May 14th, 11am - 1pm where we kick off the start of the season at Liberation Farms. We will celebrate with a blessing from Somali Bantu Elders, food, music, and community. We will hear from SBCA's Executive Director and Elders around 11:30am.

This year we are requiring registration as an added safety measure. Once you register you will receive additional information about the event and a reminder the week before. Please reach out to info@somalibantumaine.org if you have any questions.

[Register Here](#)

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.

As a SNAP Outreach partner through Maine DHHS, SBCA's Client Navigators developed translated videos on how to sign up and use food benefits, increasing accessibility and providing information directly to community members. Additionally, staff has been focused on career services since two major Lewiston employers closed their doors, firing hundreds of community members. The Client Navigation Services team is hosting career services sessions and continues to provide one on one job search and application support for clients meeting a major community need.



The first cohort of community members who completed the homeownership series. Photo by Muhidin Libah.

This winter, SBCA hosted a three part series that partnered with Healthy Homeworks and Community Credit Union. Community members that participated in these classes learned the benefits of homeownership and how to prepare to buy their first home.

Kashekee Youth Program

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

In March, SBCA brought six youth leaders to the Ignite by 4H conference in Washington D.C. where they connected with other 4H youth from across the county, attended workshops related to health, agriculture and science, and explored D.C.!



Youth participants visited Representative Chellie Pingree and the World War II memorial on their D.C. trip.

SBCA's Explore Careers, Honor the Outdoors! (ECHO) program started this spring for the third year. This program brings Somali Bantu youth on exciting field trips to empower and expand their knowledge in careers. So far, youth participants have visited Viles Arboretum, Gather to Grow, and Liberation Farms, with activities teaching participants about Somali Bantu foods, traditional farming practices, and different career paths through interviews with food systems and environmental professionals.



ECHO participants waking up the youth garden beds at Liberation Farms during their first ECHO field trip of the year. Photo by Colleen Donlan.

The youth program will also be piloting Roots to Resilience, a series of intergenerational community engagement activities that will bring together many generations to enjoy activities that center identity, traditional arts, healthful eating, and celebratory social events. This project builds on a youth and Elder storytelling project from this winter where Elders shared with youth about their ancestral foodways, agricultural heritage, and history of land loss. It is a testament to the need for intergenerational connections, sharing, and storytelling as a means of cultural preservation.

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.

As the garlic pokes from the ground in the field and the farm perks back to life after a long winter, the seedling greenhouse is bursting at the seams with plants and farmers have returned, all energized for the growing season that lies ahead. Iskashito farmers, the commercial growers, had their first group meeting to talk about program commitments,

work on farm vocabulary, and plant their first early crops in the unheated high tunnels. These farmers will contribute to the pre season push and will pot up tomatoes, deep clean the wash station, and trim thousands and thousands of onions in the coming weeks.



In March, thirteen farmers participated in a food safety training, hosted by Cultivating Community and Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success. Here farmers are demonstrating hand washing. Photo by Laura Neale.



Farmers Mohamed and Maryan transplanting their beets into high tunnel beds. Farmers also planted collards, kale, chard, and scallions. Photo by Colleen Donlan.



In 2025 Liberation Farms raised 100 chickens in two chicken tractors, with plans to increase to 300 in 2026. Photo by Jacob Morton.

In partnership with Cumberland County Food Security Council, Liberation Farms is increasing its chicken production to provide access to halal food for more community members and learning opportunities that focus on raising chickens. Our Kasheke Summer Youth Program is integrating chicken curriculum and Liberation Farms has purchased new chicken processing equipment to upgrade our halal slaughter station which is available for community members as a food safe, clean, culturally appropriate slaughter space.

Donate to the Immigrant Farmer Fund

Join SBCA, [Cultivating Community](#), and [New Roots Cooperative](#) in planning for a safe growing season that meets the increasing need for food and support for immigrant communities. Together, we're seeking donations so our farms can make it through the season, continue to provide vital food access to impacted communities, and pay immigrant farmers fair wages for their produce. Your support is critical to continuing work that connects immigrant farmers with people who recognize, value, and need the produce they grow – providing connection and continuity in a time of unprecedented disruption.

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.

In March the USDA Increase Land Capital and Market Access (LCMA) program, was cancelled creating uncertainty in the funding security of our land access programming. The LCMA funding cut eliminates our budget for identifying land and resources for underserved farmers seeking to lease or own farmland in Maine - a significant blow to progress in farmland access for limited resource farmers locally and nationwide.



SBCA Board President Mohamed Mohamed and Executive Director Muhidin Libah were leaders in the Liberation Farms land search. Photo by Dennis Welsh.

Despite these ongoing barriers we are continuing work in collaboration with Land For Good and Cultivating Community to provide access to information about leasing and purchasing farmland and the support systems available to farm seekers. We are collectively consulting with an animator to create culturally representative visuals that can be translated into multiple languages for land access organizations to aid farmers in their search for land.

Thank you for your support of the Somali Bantu Community Association. If you are inspired by this work, please consider donating below. We hope to see you on May 14th at our Spring Blessing Event!

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