

BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



Clockwise Above: Kerry with Behishta, Yousof with daughter, Crystal with Adam

Family Updates

We are happy to introduce a new family we have begun sponsoring and mentoring. We met Yousof, Behishta and their young daughter through one of our partners, Catholic Charities. The young family arrived from Kabul, Afghanistan last October through the U.S. Resettlement Program.

Catholic Charities provided a furniture, food, medical and employment advice. BPB provided financial rent support. Once the family was settled into their apartment we had our first visit. ICNA (another partner) generously provided a translator as the young couple speak Farsi.

Since the introduction we have met with the family a number of times, always enjoying tea and working with them on their English language skills. Yousof is attending English

classes at Truman College and Behishta is attending class at ICNA. Both Yousof and Behishta are eager to begin working. In Afghanistan, Yousof worked as an Auto Body Repair Technician and Behishta worked in a kindergarten. We are thrilled to share this family's hope, gratitude and enthusiasm on their journey in America!

Bushra and Zeyad continue to embrace life as American citizens. They both continue to work on their English language skills. Zeyad has begun working at a local restaurant. Bushra works at their mosque. Their daughter is working with one of our volunteers to prepare for the SAT and her senior year of high school. The older two boys work hard in school and are looking forward to spring soccer season. Their youngest son is making great progress with his speech therapist, Crystal. We are looking forward to seeing them in Chicago for the children's Spring break.

CALENDAR

Racine-Kenosha
English Festival
Carthage College
Saturday, March 11
10:25am - noon

Upcoming
Luncheon Meetings
May 18
September 21
November 16
Mondays from Noon - 2pm

Please visit our website
or send an email for
more details

Dear Bridge Builders,

Winter is an active time for Building Peaceful Bridges (BPB). Our Bridge Builders are busy gathering donations for “the new immigrants/refugees” who are in need of coats, boots and warm clothing. Thanks to Sarah and Ahlam, clothing and furniture are distributed to numerous families.

An enormous thank you to our donors, for their generous contributions and volunteer work to further BPB’s mission at our First BPB Annual Dinner. Our speaker, Rana Sweis, and our sponsored family’s story, brought the reality of refugee life in the Middle East and their new life in America to the attendees. A special thanks to The Hanna Charitable Foundation for underwriting the annual event.

The GoldenDoor Coalition (a coalition of refugee focused organizations across Illinois to foster the dignified resettlement and successful integration of refugee families into the fabric of our communities) invited BPB to join. A key initiative is World Refugee Day, June 20, 2020.

The benefit of “new immigrants” to America is endless. According to the New American Economy (a bi-partisan

research and advocacy organization fighting for smart federal, state, and local immigration policies that help grow our economy and create jobs for all Americans) in 2018 the U.S. had over 44.8 M immigrant residents, 13.7% share of U.S. population, paying \$459 B of taxes, with a spending power of \$1.2T. What a significant economic contribution.

BPB’s book recommendation for Winter is “In The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter The American Community”, by Mary Pipher. Mary helps us understand the struggles of the refugees who live around the corner or down the street from us.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, speakers, communities for all of their support of “bridging the hearts and minds of all people.”

“If not me, who? If not now, when?”

Lori Consadori Lucchetti

Lori Consadori Lucchetti, President & Co-Founder



Above: Bridge Builders

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

-Margaret Mead

Building Peaceful Bridges is a nonprofit organization supporting people of all faiths whose mission is to foster multicultural relationships by assisting in the integration of refugees into American society and educating communities on the challenges facing refugee populations through their stories.





Above and below: BPB February Luncheon with speaker Hannah Werner

Learning Luncheons

BPB hosted two luncheon meetings with speakers. In October we welcomed Brother Joe Schenk from Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program. The Program has been operational for over 40 years and has helped resettle hundreds of refugees who were forced to flee their homelands due to war, terror and persecution.

Catholic Charities has had extensive success with its Resettlement Program. Brother Joe highlights that agencies are limited by reduced financial resources tied to a reduction in the number of refugees entering the country under the current administration. Yet, he still sees the need among refugees for resettlement assistance. To this end, Catholic Charities has established Loom, a community of refugee women in Chicago who weave together to make and sell beautiful handmade products. This endeavor provides a community for refugee women to come together to collaborate, develop new skills, and earn extra income.

At our February luncheon we enjoyed and learned from a lively presentation from Hannah Werner. Hannah is an ESL teacher with the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago (ECAC). ECAC has helped refugees of all nationalities since 1984 providing a variety of resettlement services including ESL.

Hannah emphasized how important English language skills are for refugees in working toward empowerment and integration. She explained the factors that affect how quickly a person will learn English including necessity, who is teaching, level of education, age, number of known languages, opportunity to practice and the ultimate goal of studying English. Hannah laid out the number of levels and content of each level. Their ESL Program works to incorporate a basic understanding of culture as well as scenarios related to housing, family, health, transportation and other pragmatic contexts.

Hannah asked our group to participate in a number of drills she does with students which helped us realize how challenging and complicated this learning a new language process can be.

We are grateful to Brother Joe and Hannah for sharing their time and knowledge with our group. We look forward to working with both organizations as we continue to serve the needs of Midwest refugee families.



Oh What A Night

Building Peaceful Bridges (BPB) held its first annual fundraiser at Pinstripes in Northbrook. The evening included raffle prizes that were donated by local merchants and restaurants. It was a fun and busy event that included keynote speaker, Rana Sweis, a Jordanian journalist and author of *Voices of Jordan*. Rana's speech focused on the refugee situation in Jordan and other parts of the Middle East. An engaging question and answer session followed.

Lori Lucchetti, BPB President and Co-founder, spoke to the guests about the organization and its mission. In addition, BPB offered one-of-a-kind art by Oula Alemam, which attendees quickly purchased, and music by Zaya, which generated dancing and singing throughout the evening. The event was a financial success in support of our refugee families.

Clockwise Right: Rana Sweis, board members and attendees

"Be the change that you wish to see in the world."
-Mahatma Gandhi



Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

Choose how you want to support Building Peaceful Bridges – Mentoring, Sponsorship, Speaker, Publicity, Educational, and Donating Items

We are thankful to our sponsors and partners:



Mammel Foundation



Shop at **smile.amazon.com** and select Building Peaceful Bridges to DONATE while you shop!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lori Consadori Lucchetti, President
Marcia Heeter, Vice President
Leslie Berkowitz, Treasurer
Carrie Classick Johnson, Secretary
Kerry Suse, Outreach Programs
Ahlam Mahmood, Co-Founder

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBER

Monique Woel

ADVISORY BOARD

Pam Devereux, Non-Profits
Rebecca Grundy, PA-C, Communications
Jordan Josellis, Graphic Design
Sue Romanoski, Financial
Bridget Suse, Social Work
Tamara Tarazi, Financial Reporting

OUR BELIEFS

Compassion bridges to Trust.
Honesty bridges to Resilience.
Inclusiveness bridges to Security.
Hope bridges to Courage.
Respect bridges to Inspiration.
Knowledge bridges to Achievement.

