

# BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



## BPB Family Update

BPB welcomes Haroun, Kaltouma and their five children to BPB's Mentoring Family. After spending five years in a refugee camp in the Central African Republic they resettled in Chicago. Haroun works hard to support his family. He travels by way of three buses to work in maintenance at a local processing plant. Kaltouma cares for their five children aged 18 years to four months. The two oldest boys, Mohammed and Abdulmutalid, attend Sullivan High School. Fatima and Ashta attend Rogers Elementary School. BPB looks forward to working with this family to support their needs as well as enjoying time together sharing stories, meals and friendship.



Baby Binja at 3 months

We are happy to report that Baby Binja is thriving. He is much loved by all BPB volunteers. Ahadi has taken on a new job that requires extensive travel. Thank goodness for WhatsApp so the family can enjoy virtual connections when he is on the road. He is studying hard for his Citizenship test. When Hawa isn't busy with Binja she is attending ESL

From left: BPB Visits Family; Haroun, Kaltouma & their children The Mishawaka home Zeyad is renovating

class at Truman College. She is now in Level 3! BPB continues to supplement the family's rent as well as provide food, diapers and baby clothes as needed. Thank you to Faith for being BPB's Swahili translator.

Bushra and Zeyad are rehabbing a house in Mishawaka. The boys help when they can. Zahra is dedicated to her coursework at Indiana University. Adam's language skills continue to develop. He is a bilingual four year old speaking English at school and Arabic at home.



Adam going to school

## CALENDAR

### Reading Refuge

#### Book Club

Wednesday, April 28, 7-9 pm

### Learning Luncheon

Virtual - May 17 Monday:

Noon to 1 pm Speaker:

Marianne Gimon

### World Refugee Day

June 20

### Spring Clothing Drive

May 1-15

Click on titles for more info



## Dear Bridge Builders,

Spring is a time for planting, gardening, and blooming. Our Bridge Builders are “gardeners of heart” working together with our refugee families to foster a sense of belonging to American terra firma.

In 2021, we will double the families we mentor and sponsor helping them bridge the gap towards independence. BPB's stewardship is evident in its Bridge Builder's daily volunteering. We welcomed nine new volunteers to the BPB family and will continue to recruit.

BPB continues to voice its support of social and economic justice for refugees entering the U.S. As our Co-Founder, Ahlam Mahmood stated “I came to the realization that refugees leave one war for another. No bombs, no army, but it is survival nonetheless. Getting the basics – food, clothing, and shelter – without the language and knowledge of the culture, are the new battles. Even having skills or education are not enough if you don't know how to navigate this new land. I do not want refugees to experience what I went through.”

A critical objective for BPB in 2021 is Affordable Housing for refugees. As we on-board our new refugee families please watch for Call to Action requests for rental assistance. The average refugee pays 80% of their budget towards rent. BPB is working with Refugee Action Network (RAN) and Illinois Representatives to improve housing policies.

We are proud to announce that Ahlam is a semifinalist of Forbes Magazine and **50 Over 50 Know Your Value initiative**. Forbes and 50 Over 50 are committed to shining a light on 50 diverse women over the age of 50 who have achieved significant success later in life, often by overcoming formidable odds or barriers.



We are looking forward to seeing you at two upcoming events. BPB's Reading Refuge Book Club, April 28, *A Disappearance in Damascus*. At the Spring Learning Luncheon, May 17, we welcome Marianne Gimon, The Flora Family Foundation member, speaking about “Refugee Camp Life.”

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, speakers, and 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



Bridge Builders

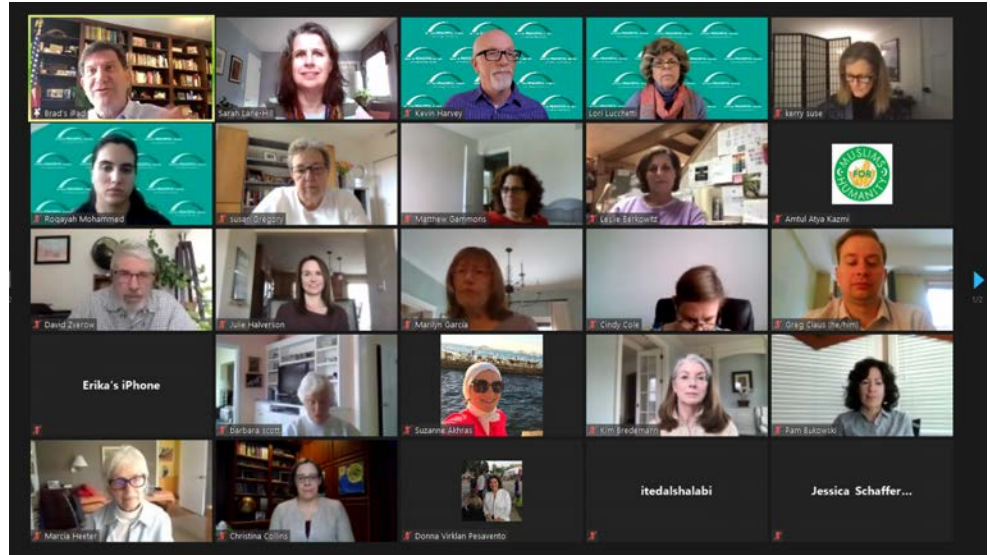
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

-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.







## Learning Luncheon

Congressman Brad Schneider and the BPB Team during the Learning Luncheon

BPB welcomed Congressman Brad Schneider, March 22nd in a discussion of proposed reforms of the U.S. Immigration Policy 2021 and beyond.

Congressman Schneider (D) is a fourth-term representative for the 10th District of Illinois. He has made international affairs a staple of his policies, specifically immigration rights, as evidenced by his membership in the Congressional Refugee Caucus. Together with other members of Congress, he works to ensure “protection, humanitarian needs, and compassionate treatment of refugees”. Within the House of Representatives, he is an official cosponsor of the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021.

Schneider explained the Biden administration’s effort to reallocate the funding for building a wall to “technology and other resources” to strengthen border security. The treatment of children at the border was addressed. One question was in regards to refugee resettlement where many refugee flights

had been canceled and what can be done to resettle refugees who have been vetted. He promised to follow-up on this issue. Another question was what are the ways to address the root cause of migration? The congressman discussed eliminating the drivers of migration and providing safe communities and opportunities for vulnerable populations. Another topic was engaging in conversations with people of different views, meeting them where they are and having realistic expectations.

Congressman Schneider reaffirmed that the Biden Administration is working to resolve some immigration issues. He encouraged us to reach out to our representatives and continue advocating for refugees. Please direct your questions to your representative through this [website](#).


Thank you for BPB volunteer, Connor, for his reporting on this Learning Luncheon.

**Discussion available on [Vimeo](#).**

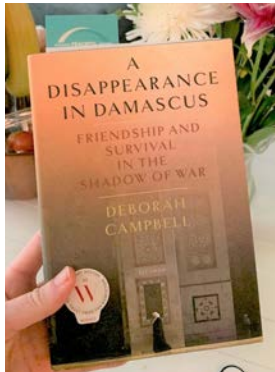
## Board Transitions

Thank you to Marcia Heeter for her Board service. We are grateful for her continued involvement with BPB. We welcome our new Board member Julie Halverson and four new Advisory Board Members: Christina Collins, Marcia Heeter, Robin Stutman and Donna Virkhan Pesavento. These new members increase BPB’s experience in immigration law, financial coaching, counseling and educational advice.

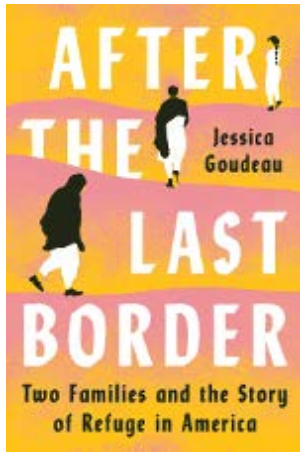
**[See BPB Leadership](#)**



Our next Book Club Meeting is Wednesday, April 28th at 7:00 pm. We will discuss the book, *A Disappearance in Damascus*, written by Deborah Campbell, about our very own Ahlam Mahmood.



**[Click here to Sign Up](#)**



"After the Last Border" By Jessica Goudeau; The inaugural BPB Bookclub

## Reading Refuge

BPB launched our inaugural 'Reading Refuge' Book Club on February 24th. BPB welcomed Dr. Jessica Goudeau who led our discussion about her book, *After the Last Border: Two Families and the Story of Refuge in America*.

*After the Last Border* is a story of two refugee families and their hope and resilience as they fight to survive and belong in America. It situates the dramatic, character-driven story about Mu Naw (a Christian woman from Myanmar) and Hasna (a Muslim woman from Syria) within the larger historical context of modern refugee resettlement in the United States. The book reveals not just how America's changing attitudes toward refugees has influenced policies and laws, but also the profound effect on human lives.

Dr. Goudeau read a segment from her book where one of the characters, Hasna, realized she had to leave Syria. One question that the attendees had was why the author chose women to be the main characters? Dr. Goudeau explained that both women overcame barriers in a patriarchal society and they were the best at recalling events. She added that they arrived in the U.S. at different times and had varying experiences. Dr. Goudeau's goal for her book is that it'll be a way for Americans to immerse themselves in the story and learn about the refugee experience in hopes of creating a more welcoming society.

This discussion reaffirmed the importance of the work done by BPB Bridge Builders and other nonprofits who are dedicated to mentoring and sponsoring refugee families. We encourage you to share her book in your community to spread awareness about the experiences of refugees.

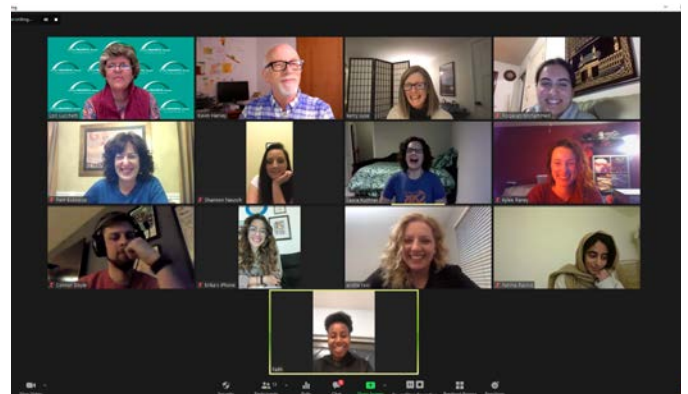
**Watch the discussion on [Vimeo](#).**

## Training Program

Since BPB began posting on VolunteerMatch last Fall, we have received 1,700 inquiries about volunteering with BPB. We were excited to welcome nine new volunteers at our recent Bridge Builder Orientation. Many of these volunteers will be mentoring our families this quarter. As a volunteer run organization, we welcome the commitment of these individuals to provide support in the following additional areas: social media, policy and advocacy research, administration, mentor coaching and development. Thank you Laura, Ardita and Shannon for creating the training presentation!

Many of these volunteers also attended our February Reading Refuge Book Club and March Learning Luncheon. They each received a signed copy of *Disappearance in Damascus*. We look forward to seeing them at our next book event on April 28.

We will welcome more volunteers in 2021 as BPB continues to expand its services. Currently we are recruiting for the following team members: Arabic and Dari translators, Content and Applications Assistant, and a caseworker.



Volunteer Virtual Training Program

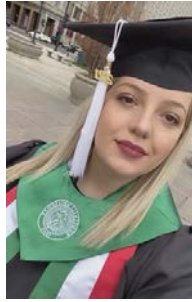




## Volunteer Spotlight

Ardita Roci, from Modena, Italy, was an exchange student between the University of Chicago and Padova

University. She is graduating from Roosevelt University in May. Fluent in Italian, Albanian, Spanish, and English, she is an energetic intern who mentors BPB refugee families, and is an active member of BPB's Volunteer Recruitment and Bridge to Belongings Teams.



Ardita Roci

## BPB Staff Training - 2021 Go Forward!

A big thank you to Bridget Suse for providing us a Self care COVID - 19 Kit. Social distancing, we learned coping skills and met outdoors for the first time since February 2020. She shared a guided meditation and led a discussion about the challenges and silver linings of COVID. These skills are now being shared with our refugee families.



*"Be the change that you wish to see in the world."*

-Mahatma Gandhi

## Call to Action SPRING CLOTHING DRIVE

**SHIRTS, SHORTS, SHOES, SWIMWEAR,  
LIGHT JACKETS**

With spring in full bloom, our refugee families need clothing for the hot Chicago summers.

**Please donate!**

Contact Sarah @  
[sjlanehill@buildingpeacefulbridges.org](mailto:sjlanehill@buildingpeacefulbridges.org)  
with donations.

## Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

Be a Donor, Educator, Influencer, Mentor, Speaker, Sponsor

abbvie

Flora Family  
FOUNDATION

THE  
GLENVIEW  
STATE BANK  
SINCE 1921



Hanna Charitable Limited



Mammel Foundation



amazon smile

Shop at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)  
Select Building Peaceful Bridges  
to DONATE while you shop!



ICNA Relief  
- Chicago

New  
American  
Economy

refugeeONE



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

### EMERITUS BOARD MEMBER

Monique Woel

### ADVISORY BOARD

Christina Collins, Financial  
Pam Devereux, Non-Profit Management  
Rebecca Grundy, Communications  
Marcia Heeter, Life Coach  
Jordan Josellis, Graphic Design  
Sue Romanoski, Financial  
Robin Stutman, Immigration Law  
Bridget Suse, Mental Health  
Tamara Tarazi, Financial Reporting  
Donna Virklin Pesavento, Education

### 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.

