

BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



Bridge Builders with BPB mentored and sponsored families

BPB Family Update

We are expanding the BPB Family again! We are pleased to introduce Ismail, Gulaly, and their five children. After many years in Afghanistan seeking refugee status, the family arrived in Chicago in November, 2020. BPB was introduced to the family by Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program who supported the family upon their arrival. The BPB mentoring team has been welcomed into the family's home and has already enjoyed many traditional Afghani beverages and sweets! Ismail works to support his family while Gulaly cares for their five young children. Despite her hectic days, Gulaly is eager to learn English. She and one of the younger children meet twice a week with BPB mentors and are making great progress with their language skills.



Gulaly was able to "shop" for her family and the children enjoyed playing in the beautiful backyard of a BPB volunteer. A fun time was had by all AND the job was completed!

On a recent Saturday, Gulaly and her children joined the Bridge to Belonging team, along with the family's mentors, to sort and bag donations from the BPB Spring Clothing Drive.

Our Bridge to Belongings program made a difference for Haroun and Kaltouma's family. We were able to source and deliver furniture for the family, replacing and adding to their existing furniture. The end result was a transformed living space.



Kaltouma was delighted to have a redecorated home to host her family's Eid al-Adha celebration. On another day, the children enjoyed ice cream with members of our Mentoring Team and together they made plans for additional summer adventures together.

We continue to work with both Binja and Adam's families and watch them enjoy their successes!

CALENDAR

Reading Refuge Book Club

Wednesday, August 25th
7-9 pm
Beginner's Guide to America

Learning Luncheon

Wednesday, September 8th
Noon to 1 pm
Congresswoman Schakowsky

Fall Clothing Drive

October

Reading Refuge: 10/25

Learning Luncheon: 11/15

Annual Event: 12/2



Dear Bridge Builders,

Summer fun is upon us. Volunteer with our Bridge Builders and enjoy field trips with our families. Join Laura and her mentoring team to parks, libraries, and ice cream parlors; tag along with Ardita's team to picnics and soccer games; or, help Roqayah and Nadia at the beach or playing board games on rainy days. It is time to pull together as citizens to support our "21st century new immigrants."

Rebuilding the refugee resettlement program will take community based organizations, like BPB, building "Welcoming Communities." President Biden is urging government cooperation "with private partners and American citizens" in an effort to demonstrate the "generosity and core values of our Nation."

Working with our families provides us with a connection to their families in their home countries. After multiple conversations with Afghani family members BPB was prompted to write to President Biden and other elected officials. We urged them to immediately airlift our loyal allies and their families out of Afghanistan to a safe zone while completing the vetting process in light of the U.S. Military withdrawal.

At BPB's May Learning Luncheon, we honored Monique Woel, BPB Emeritus, for her global leadership in "bridging the hearts and minds of all people." **Marianne Gimon presented the award to Monique.** In Monique's own words, "It is only through trust that we will be able to build bridges of solid relationships and finally walk across the bridge together."

I am pleased to report that BPB's strategic plan objectives are on track:

- Double the number of new refugee families mentored
- Build awareness of refugee stories through educational programs
- Provide rent support to achieve affordable housing for our families
- Source In Kind contributions consisting of food, furniture and household items
- Train families on their finances and speech and language skills

We are looking forward to seeing you at BPB's Reading Refugee Book Club, Wednesday, August 25 when we will discuss, *A Beginner's Guide to America*, by Roya Hakakian. And, we will host Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky at our late summer Learning Luncheon, Wednesday, September 8th, at noon.

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



"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.





Bridge Builders at first hybrid Learning Luncheon

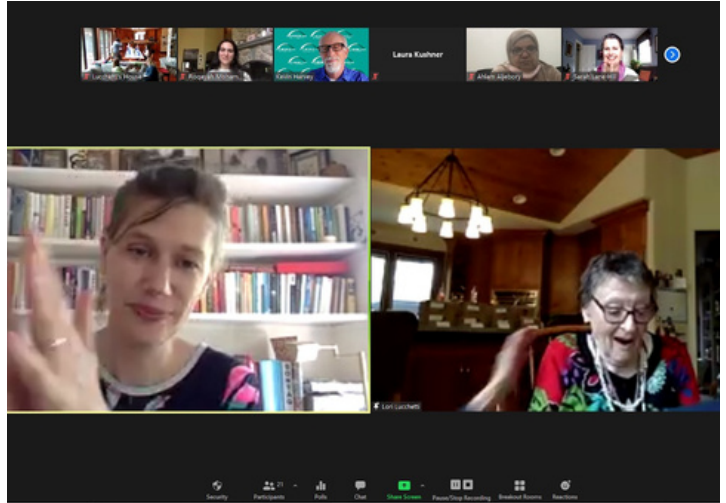
Learning Luncheon

Building Peaceful Bridges' (BPB) hosted our first hybrid Learning Luncheon with Marianne Gimon on May 17th. She and Ahlam Mahmood, BPB Co-Founder, discussed the refugee crisis and the vulnerability of refugee adolescent girls.

Marianne Gimon is a humanitarian and independent consultant and serves on the Board of Refugees International. She was a consultant for UNICEF in Damascus, Syria, where she analyzed available assistance to Iraqi refugees and created several programs emphasizing child protection.

Marianne, Ahlam and Roqayah, as our moderator, chronicled the lives of Iraqi refugees in Damascus, Syria, as a result of the Iraq War. They discussed the lack of resources available for refugee children, especially young girls who lost years of education during the War. A major objective of their work together was to create a safe place for girls to grow and learn. Marianne and Ahlam described the process of establishing the school in Ahlam's apartment where they arranged classes and a place to share stories.

Marianne explained that many of the challenges facing refugee girls in Syria and, more recently in Jordan, continue once the girls are resettled in the U.S.



Marianne Gimon presenting the Bridge Builder Award to Monique Woel

This problem was exacerbated during the pandemic due to challenges of online learning.

Just as Marianne and Ahlam's school in Damascus provided a safe place for the girls to learn and socialize, so does our Bridge Builder Mentor Program build a sense of safety and belonging for the families we serve.

Also at the luncheon, Monique Woel, BPB Board Member Emeritus, received our first Bridge Builder Award. We thanked Monique for her commitment to "bridging the hearts and minds of all people."

Discussion available on [Vimeo](#).

Board Transitions

We are pleased to welcome Julie and Nneka to the BPB Board



Julie Halverson brings over 20 years of experience in immigration law. She has extensive leadership and volunteer experience with organizations such as Gift of Adoption and Love Without Boundaries.



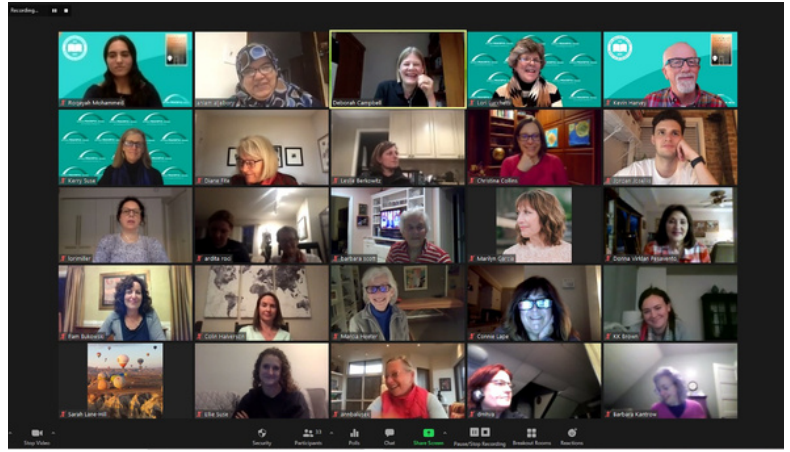
Nneka Obasi is a multilingual doctoral student from Nigeria. She has worked with refugees in the Chicago Public School System, been a team member of the United Nations Committees, and has broad nonprofit management and strategic planning skills.

Our next Book Club Meeting is Wednesday, August 25th at 7:00 pm. We will discuss the book, *Beginner's Guide to America; For the Immigrant and the Curious*, written by Roya Hakakian.

[Click here to Sign Up](#)



Deborah Campbell and Ahlam Mahmood discussing *A Disappearance in Damascus* with BPB Bridge Builders



Reading Refuge

BPB was delighted to welcome Deborah Campbell at our second Reading Refuge Book Club on April 28. Deborah led our discussion about her book, *A Disappearance in Damascus*, along with Ahlam Mahmood, co-founder of BPB, whose story as a refugee is told in the book.

The discussion sparked conversation among our attendees, as two friends met again to share their remarkable story of a friendship born out of crisis and conflict. Ahlam's daughter, Roqayah, moderated the discussion. Deborah described her experiences as a journalist in Syria in 2007. She explained the complicated political climate in the region and described how and why she developed her friendship with Ahlam, who was her guide, "fixer", in Damascus.

Ahlam shared her story which began in a rural suburb of Baghdad before the Iraq War through her difficult yet inspirational journey to becoming a "one woman NGO" in Syria and later in Chicago. Roqayah shared memories of her childhood as a refugee and later as a young American. The discussion brought together unique experiences and points of view and was eye-opening as to how the Iraq War impacted different people. The screen rights for *A Disappearance in Damascus* are optioned by filmmaker Terry George. We are hopeful to see their story become a film.

Campbell's work has been published in seven languages and 11 countries. She received three National Magazine Awards, and received the Freedom to Read Award. Campbell has lectured at Harvard, Berkeley, Zayed University in Dubai, and the National Press Club in Washington. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Writing at the University of Victoria.

Watch the discussion on [Vimeo](#).

Call to Action - Spring Clothing Drive

The Bridge to Belongings Spring Clothing Drive Call to Action exceeded expectations. With the help of neighborhood groups and University of Chicago Booth School of Management graduates, BPB spent weeks sorting over 100 bags of clothes, providing clothes and shoes for seven refugee families plus two carloads of extra items for our partner, ICNA Relief. Besides clothing, we also collected small household items and school supplies as a head start for the fall. A bonus was boots and a few warm coats we set aside for next winter.

Instead of BPB volunteers deciding which items best suited the families, we did a test run of having one of our families help us sort and pick out clothing and accessories for themselves. It was a joy and wonderful learning experience to work with them.

Recognizing the need, BPB recently delivered over 800 cans to the ICNA pantry. We hope to continue with weekly deliveries throughout the summer.



Spring
Clothing
Drive and
Food
Pantry
Delivery



Volunteer Spotlight

Laura Kushner joined BPB following a career in education including as an award winning principal. As a BPB

Mentor Team Leader, Laura coordinates weekly family visits. She always introduces creative ways to encourage learning both for younger children as well as parents. BPB is grateful for her time and talent.



Laura Kushner

Call to Action - Act Now!

We urgently need you to contact President Biden and your elected Congressional officials and request that the US continue to evacuate the Afghani SIV (Special Immigration Visa) holders and their families immediately!

Acting in such roles as interpreters, cultural advisors, engineers and embassy staff, these individuals have provided critical support for U.S. military, diplomatic and development efforts in Afghanistan. Many organizations along with BPB stand ready to assist these families integrate into the U.S.

[Contact BPB](#) to volunteer to assist these families in gaining a sense of belonging in America:

[Letter to President Biden](#)

[Senate Directory](#)

[Representative's Directory](#)



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

-Mahatma Gandhi

Call to Action

FALL CLOTHING DRIVE

COATS, BOOTS, HATS, GLOVES & SCARVES

Once the days cool off, our families need clothing to take them through the frigid winter months.

- Boots for Men, Women & Children
- Children's clothes
- Men's and Women's pants
- Gloves, socks and hats for all ages

Please Donate! October 15 - 30

Contact us @ donations@buildingpeacefulbridges.org

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
Select Building Peaceful Bridges
to DONATE while you shop!

CATHOLIC
CHARITIES
ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

COMPASS

ICNA Relief
- Chicago

New
American
Economy

refugeeONE

REFUGEE
ACTION
NETWORK

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
Nneka Obasi

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.

BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES