



2021 Impact Report



Bridging the Hearts and Minds of All People

Table of Contents

About Us

- Message from Leadership
- The Challenge
- Who We Are
- Our Approach

Programs

- Mentoring & Sponsoring
- Educational Programs
- Bridge to Belongings
- Advocacy

Operations

- Leadership Team
- Partners
- Sponsors and Donors
- Financials



Message from Leadership

"If not me, who? If not now, when?"

Dear Bridge Builders,

2021 was an eventful year for Building Peaceful Bridges (BPB). We mentored many new families and bridged the gap for our newcomers on their journey to self sufficiency in America.

We sipped tea, listened to stories, shared laughter, dried tears, played games, taught English, prepared for job interviews and became our families' friends. We walked with them on their path to belonging.

We expanded BPB's donor base, collaborated with numerous organizations for enhanced services, and increased volunteer and educational participation.

BPB advocates for social and economic justice for all refugees who enter the U.S. Our newcomers provide the U.S. with an opportunity to demonstrate our humanitarian values, while supplying a fresh backbone for economic growth. As BPB works with new families, we see in them the values that we hold dear as Americans: family first, hard work, compassion, patience, resilience, courage, education, and the importance of democracy.

BPB became active members of Welcome.US and the Hello Neighbor Network, two national organizations working towards refugee resettlement in the U.S. We join them in their mission to inspire Americans to welcome and support those seeking refuge here.

We initiated an All Faiths Collaborative by building on our strong network of faith based organizations. This alliance ensures that new refugees are supported and connected to welcoming communities.

Our key priorities for 2022 are to enlarge our community of Bridge Builders and expand the impact of our programs. We continue to welcome newcomers from all over the world, including the expected influx of refugees from Ukraine. With all of us working together, we are ready to meet these new challenges.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, families, speakers and community members for "bridging the hearts and minds of all people."



Lori C. Lucchetti
President
Co-Founder



Kerry Suse
Vice President



Ahlam Mahmood
Co-Founder
Board Member



Donna Virkhan
Advisory Board Chair

Handwritten signature of Kerry Suse in black ink.

Handwritten signature of Lori C. Lucchetti in black ink.

Handwritten signature of Ahlam Mahmood in blue ink.

Handwritten signature of Donna Virkhan in black ink.

The Challenge: Forced Migration

A Global Issue at a Local Level

Worldwide



84 MILLION
Forcibly displaced people worldwide

26.6 MILLION
are refugees

Source: UNHCR as of mid 2021

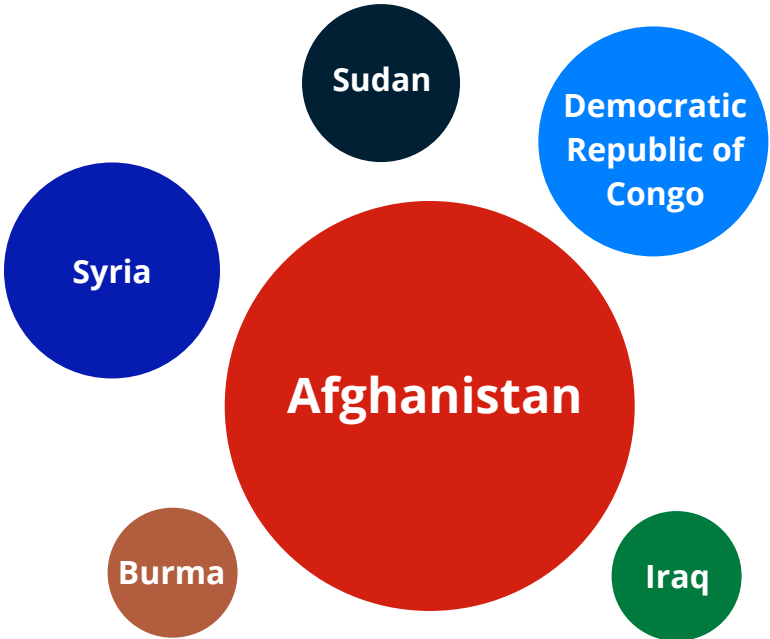
Newcomers Resettled

Illinois

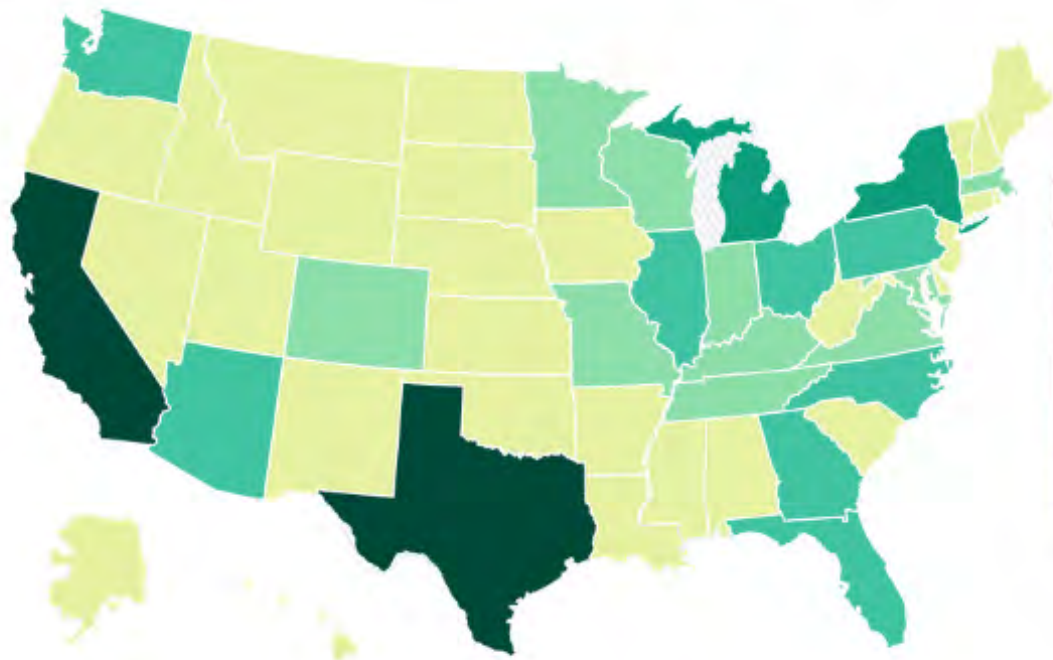
Countries of Origin



- Cook
- DuPage/Kane
- Winnebago
- Rock Island



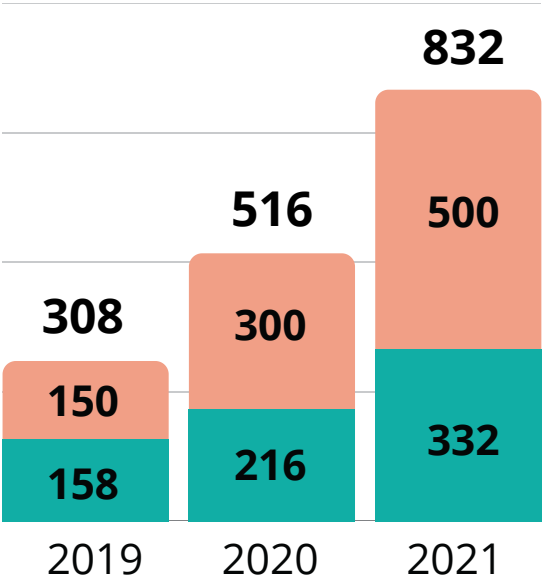
United States



CUMULATIVE AMOUNT OF REFUGEES RESETTLED 2010-2021 Source: usafacts.org

Building Peaceful Bridges

Refugees Served People Educated





We are neighbors who walk the refugee journey by building relationships with families of all faiths.

Who We Are

Mission

to foster multicultural relationships by assisting in the integration of refugees into American society.

to educate communities on the challenges facing refugee populations through their stories.

Vision

to “bridge the hearts and minds of all people.”



Building Peaceful Bridges (BPB) is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2018.



Our Approach

Holistic Family Based Collaborative Volunteer Driven

BPB takes a holistic, family based approach with individualized, tailored programs to deliver what is needed for each member of our refugee families. We collaborate with complementary agencies to increase impact and efficacy of our efforts.

*Changing lives,
hearts and minds through
education and mentoring.*

We Bridge the Gap

BPB steps in at a crucial time when resettlement agencies' assistance ends.



BPB is a bridge to self-sufficiency and belonging.



Programs

Mentoring and Sponsoring

We partner with refugee resettlement agencies by bridging the gap between the refugees' initial government support and newcomers gaining a sense of belonging and independence.

BPB mentors and sponsors families for several years by supporting them with financial aid, rent assistance, job training, ESL classes, and any needs they may have.

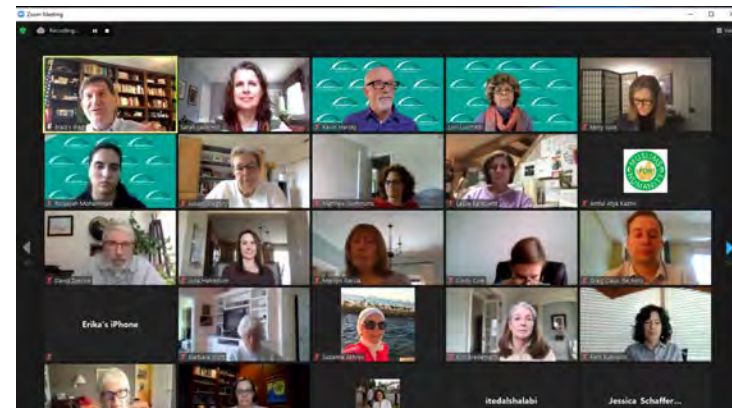


Educational Programs

BPB hosts quarterly "Learning Luncheons" and initiated a very successful "Reading Refuge" Book Club in 2021.

Bridge Builders heard refugee stories and knowledge experts speak on immigration issues, refugee challenges and ways to address them.

BPB also uses our website, newsletters, social media, and videos to raise awareness.



Bridge to Belongings

BPB helps refugee families gain a firm footing and sense of security in their new homes. Helping them with life's essential needs while mentoring them is a clear path to financial independence and success.

Through calls to action to our communities, we are able to provide food, clothing, furniture and household items to our new neighbors.



Advocacy

BPB advocates for improved refugee resettlement programs in coalition with Refugee Action Network (RAN), Church World Services, Refugee Council USA, International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) and the United Nations Association of Chicago.

BPB supports the inclusive integration of refugees in Illinois through public policy and community education.



Mentoring & Sponsoring

BPB's Mentoring and Sponsoring Program is built upon hope, compassion, respect and inspiration. Our Mentoring volunteers (Bridge Builders) build lifelong relationships with our refugee families.

As refugees move from the U.S. government resettlement programs, many families are unprepared to support themselves. BPB Bridge Builders step up to share the journey as families rebuild their lives in a new country.

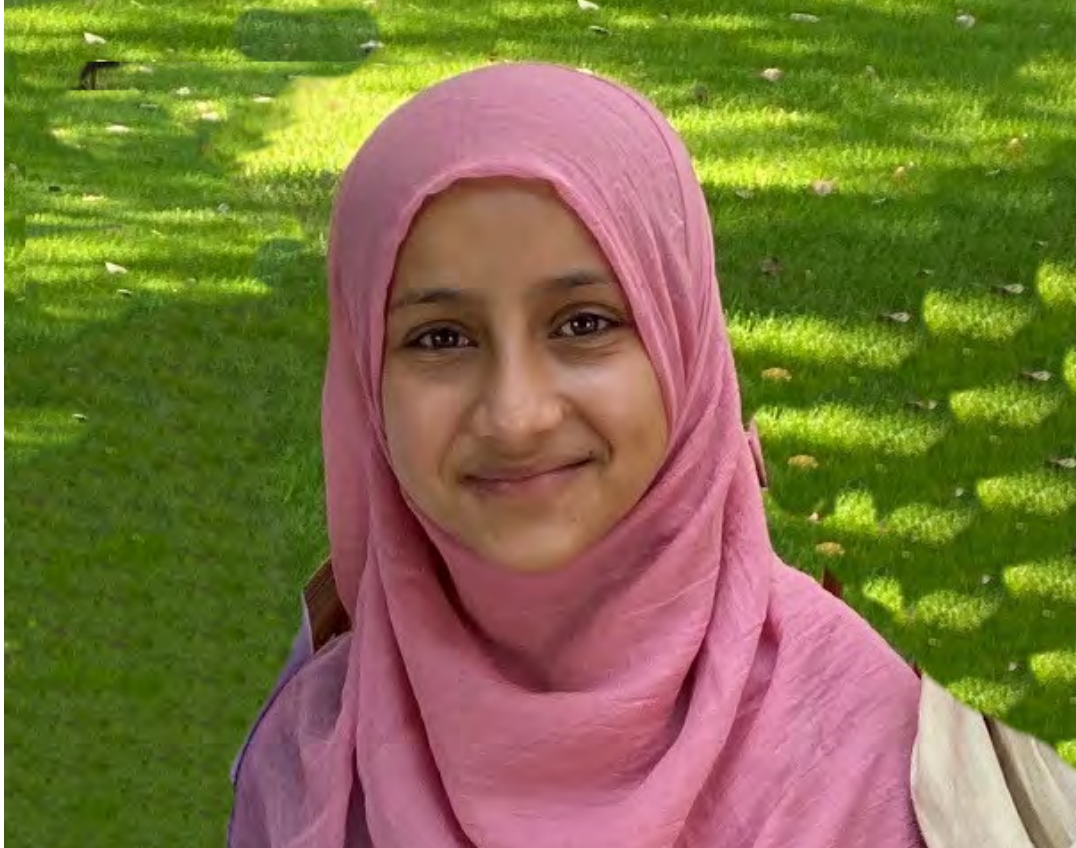
Our Bridge Builders support English language development, assist with job placement, provide tutoring, financial assistance, and physical and mental health support. They help families navigate their communities to find the resources they need to achieve self-sufficiency and a sense of belonging.

Home visits provide the foundation of the BPB Mentoring and Sponsoring Program. Bridge Builders visit families weekly during the first year and beyond. While sharing cups of steaming tea and delicious sweets, our Mentors listen to family stories, ask about family needs and wants and honor the dignity of dreams of life in America. These cross-cultural relationships are rooted in trust and compassion.



Refugee Stories

The fruits of these relationships are many.



Rabia arrived from Afghanistan with her family in 2020. She is a wonderful help to her mother, helping her learn English and caring for her four younger siblings. Rabia is an excellent student and was named Student of the Month in her seventh grade class. She volunteers with BPB to provide support to other refugee families. Rabia's enthusiasm for helping others is boundless and her faith is strong. Not surprising, she looks forward to a career in medicine and to opening a clinic in Afghanistan.



Haroun is a 61 year old refugee from the Central African Republic. Since arriving in Chicago in 2020, Haroun has supported his family of seven with a variety of jobs. He was determined to obtain a drivers license. BPB found Haroun a driving teacher which enabled him to receive his license. Through BPB's partnership with ICNA Relief, Haroun received a car that has enabled him more flexibility in seeking jobs. He is also able to drive his young son to his many doctor appointments at Lurie Children's Hospital.



Ghufra is a single mother of three children who left Syria at the start of the war and then spent years in a refugee camp in Turkey. The family arrived in Chicago in 2021 and were reunited with her sister and extended family after five years apart. Ghufra attends English language classes at a local community college. She is eager to learn to drive and find work as a seamstress. BPB has teamed with the Unitarian Church to provide financial support, mentoring and friendship to this wonderful family.

Mentor Volunteers



6,357 Mentor Volunteer Hours



As a former refugee, I find great pride and joy in volunteering at BPB. I see myself in the children that come from challenging circumstances and quickly acclimate and thrive in their new environment. We build trusting relationships as part of an extended family.

-Rogayah Mohammed



BPB goes above and beyond to help new refugees establish their home in a country that is often completely foreign to them. Volunteering with this organization has been a rewarding and invaluable experience.

-Fatima Rashid



Knowing that I and many other incredible volunteers can help underserved and newly relocated refugees in a meaningful way reassures me that a positive change in the world is possible. I am honored to be working as a volunteer at BPB.

- Sehr Amer



I'm learning so much from Gufran, Rayyan, Hadi, and Taleb about life, endurance, and faith in a brighter future. Ghufra's bravery in starting a new life in a new language and culture is inspiring.

-Meg Simonton

Educational Programs

Hosted **4** Learning Luncheons

Our quarterly "Learning Luncheons," featured a range of knowledge experts. Each speaker brought their unique perspective on the refugee experience as well as offering action steps for the audience.

250+

Registrants and Social Media Views

BPB amplifies the impact of our virtual meetings by distributing recordings via newsletter, website, and social media.

"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



March 22, 2021



A Conversation about Immigration Policy

Congressman Brad Schneider (IL-10)



May 17, 2021



Refugee Girls

Creating a Safe Place to Grow and Learn

Marianne Gimon & Ahlam Mahmood



September 8, 2021



Refugee Policy and Issues

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-09)



November 15, 2021



Supporting English Learners

Evanston Township High School

Rachel D'Onofrio & Katie Kelly



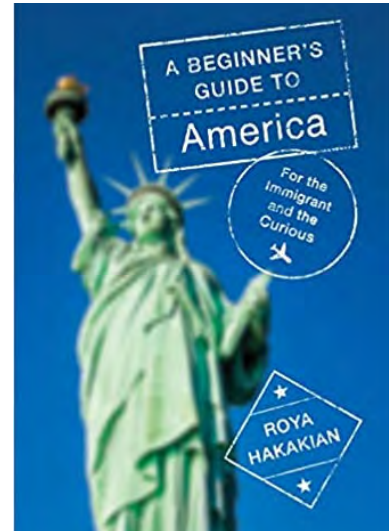
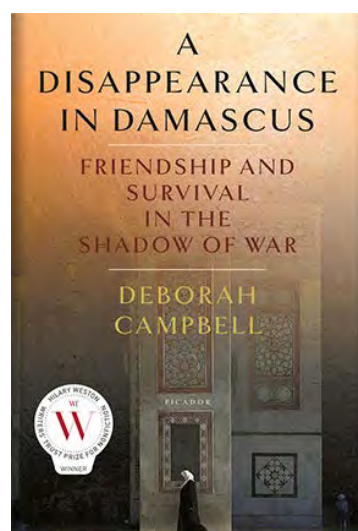
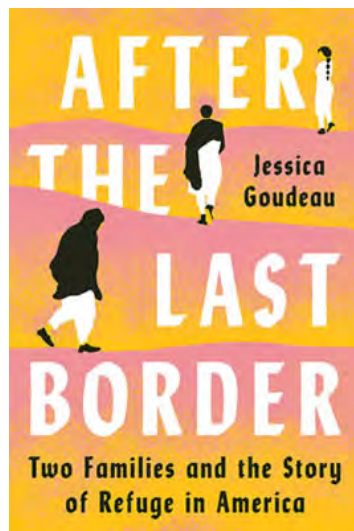
Educational Programs

Reading Refuge Book Club



2021 was BPB's inaugural year for our quarterly book club.

We were fortunate to have the authors lead lively and informative discussions with our Bridge Builders.



February 24, 2021



After the Last Border

Jessica Goudeau



April 22, 2021



A Disappearance in Damascus

Deborah Campbell



August 25, 2021



A Beginners Guide to America

Roya Hakakian



November 15, 2021



Refugee High: Coming of Age in America

Elly Fishman

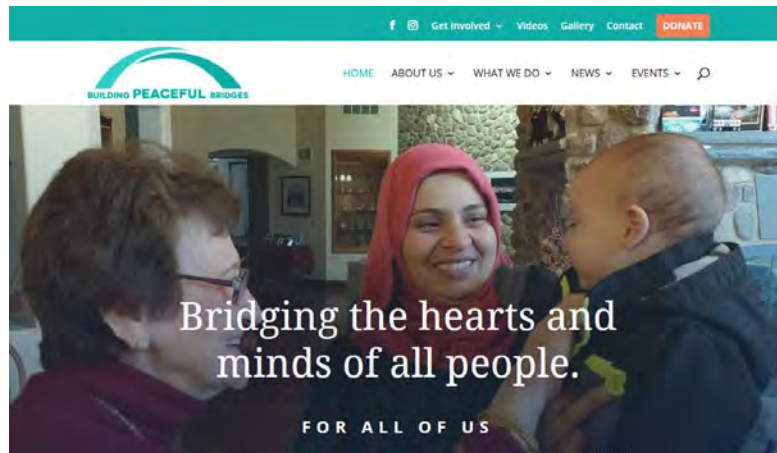
Background reading for Learning Luncheon



Educational Programs

Digital Media

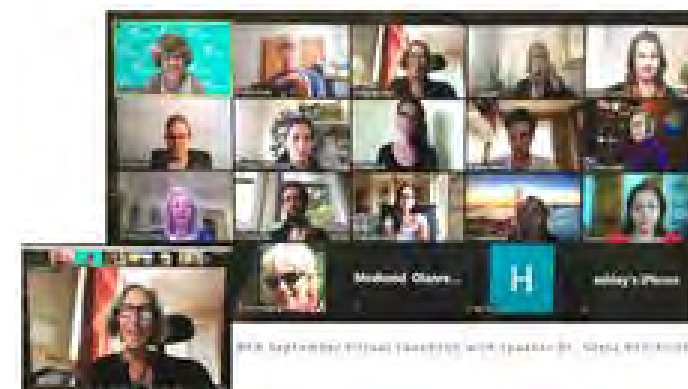
WEBSITE SOCIAL MEDIA



PUBLICATIONS



VIDEO



BPB's website, newsletters, social media and videos engage our Bridge Builders in supporting the refugee community, volunteering, and outreach efforts.

Central to our mission to tell refugee stories is our extensive use of videos. We produced two videos in 2021, "Belonging Lite" and "Gather for Good." We also record, edit and post all of our Learning Luncheons and Reading Refuge Book Club meetings to multiply the impact of these events.

Bridge to Belongings

Turning a house into a home



BPB collects, stores, and provides food, clothing, furniture and household items for refugee families. We conducted summer and winter clothing drives, providing clothing for over 300 refugees with dozens of extra bags for distribution through ICNA, Muslim Women's Resource Center and Hispanic organizations. BPB also continued to promote a cost effective, environmentally friendly furniture recycling program through donations from families downsizing or redecorating. Our volunteers mended, refreshed and delivered the furniture to area families.



Advocacy

Engaged in

4

major advocacy campaigns



Afghan Evacuation

Initiated letter writing campaign to the President, Congress and State Legislatures to encourage them to evacuate Afghans in the aftermath of U.S. troop withdrawal.



Humanitarian Parole

Worked with Baker McKenzie global law firm to apply for Humanitarian Parole for Afghan family members. Collaborated with multiple organizations for application approval.



Affordable Housing

Worked at a state and local level to provide affordable housing for our refugees. Initiated rent guarantee to replace landlord credit requirements.



Afghan Adjustment Act

BPB, with the Refugee Action Network, worked to improve funding and status for Afghan evacuees. Efforts continue in 2022 for Congressional passage.

Operations Volunteers



7,139

Volunteer Hours
in 2021



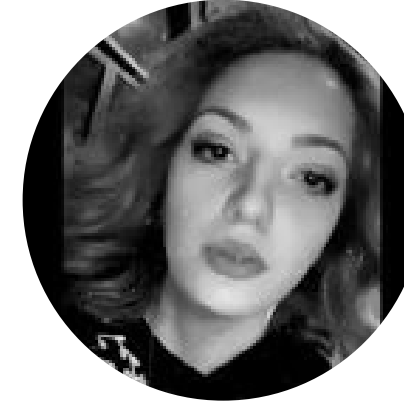
BPB has given me a great outlet to apply my professional skills towards a more fulfilling end. Beyond the group's inspirational work, its volunteer network has given me a deeper sense of purpose and community, allowing me to serve others.

-Jordan Josellis



Volunteering for BPB has given me a renewed sense of meaning and purpose in my work. I am grateful for the opportunity to support the mission and collaborate with the passionate individuals who are making an impact in the lives of local refugee families.

-Lesley Allen



As a foreign student in the U.S, being part of BPB means being part of a big family that makes you feel supported and loved in every moment. It has been a great opportunity to meet amazing people. This opportunity goes way beyond my expectations as an Intern in an organization.

-Ardita Roci



I've experienced the joy from the families when they feel welcomed and loved. It warms my heart to do small things like delivering gently used furniture or seasonal clothing sized just right, which are so appreciated. Also, recruiting enthusiastic volunteers boosts morale and supports BPB's mission.

-Sarah Lane-Hill

Leadership Team

Time to bend history and paint the future

Board of Directors



Lori C. Lucchetti
President, Co-Founder



Ahlam Mahmood
Co-Founder



Kerry Suse
Vice President



Leslie Berkowitz
Treasurer



Moira Pollard
Treasurer (2022)



Carrie Classick Johnson
Secretary

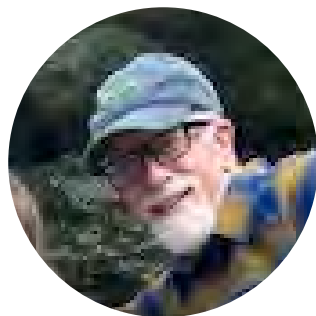


Julie Halverson
Secretary (2022)



Nneka Obasi
Board Member

Operations



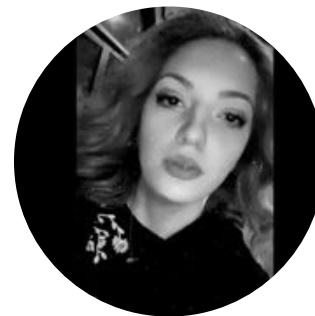
Kevin Harvey



Sarah Lane-Hill



Roqayah Mohammed



Ardita Roci

Advisory Board



Ahadi Chibabira



Christina Collins



Pam Devereux



Rebecca Grundy



Marcia Heeter



Ismail



Jordan Josselis



Sue Romanoski



Robin Stutman



Bridget Suse



Tamara Tarazi



Donna Virklan



Zeyad



Monique Woel
Emeritus Board Member

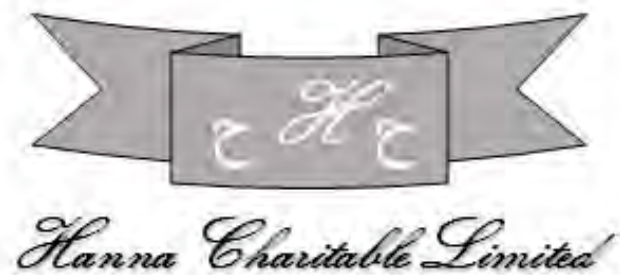
Partners



Sponsors

Donors

BPB recognizes the sponsors and donors who have funded our growth and core operations.



Pillars \$1000+

Ahlam Al-Jebory Mahmood
Avery Foundation
Brian and Ann Balusek
Leslie and Mike Berkowitz
Katherine Kevil Brown
Linda Castiglione
Christina Collins
Jennifer Daniels
Pam Devereux
Marilyn Garcia
Gimon d'Ansembourg
Elisha and Nina Gray
Julie and Timothy Halverson
Marcia Heeter and Peter Slonek

Mohammed Hussain
Komlofske Charitable Fund
Lori and Robert Lucchetti
Adrienne Monley
Nigar Nair
Nneka Obasi
Robert and Barbara Perkaus
Emily Pollard
Moira and Michael Pollard
Barbara and Walter Scott
Eileen Suse
Kerry and Phil Suse
Joanne and Gary Tarazi
Monique Woel

Friends \$250 - \$999

Cari Ahlstrom
Lisa Branzetti
John and Nikki Conway
Daniel and Olga DeSio
Thomas Doyle
Reshma Haugen
Kandis Heckler
Colleen Collins Josellis
Jodi Klein

Jane Lawrence
Carol and Donald Molyneux
Tanya Nair
Laura O'Mera
Alice Stern
Steve Sweeney
Donna Virklan
Winnetka Presbyterian Church
Liane Zulkey

2021 Financials

Year ended December 31, 2021

Operating Revenues

Individual Contributions	\$ 53,196.00
Contributed Goods and Services	\$ 5,050.00
Foundation and Private Grants	\$ 42,131.00
Corporate Donations and Matching	\$ 11,680.00

Total Operating Revenues \$ 112,057.00

Operating Expenses

Program Services

Mentoring/Sponsoring	\$ 20,176.00
Educational/Advocacy	\$ 43,614.00
Bridge to Belongings	\$ 5,050.00

Supporting Services

Administrative	\$ 5,797.00
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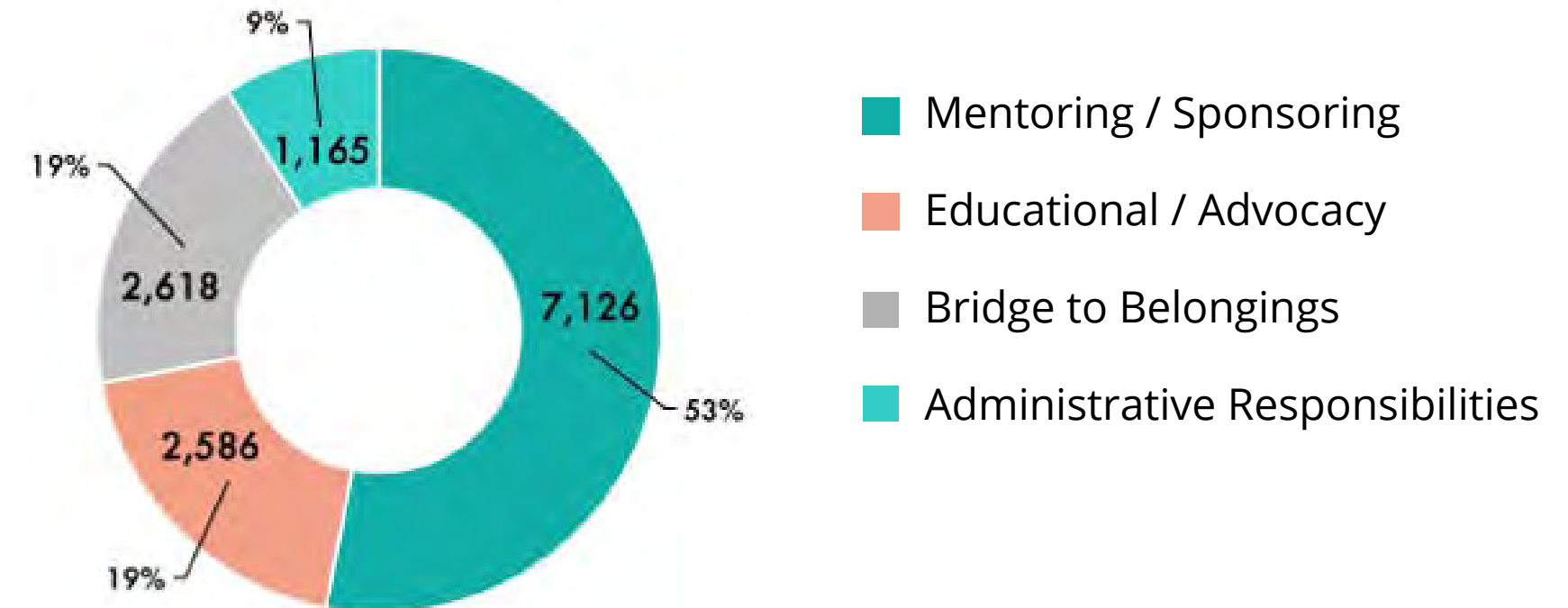
Total Operating Expenses \$ 74,637.00

Excess of operating revenues over operating expenses	\$ 37,420.00
Increase in net assets	\$ 37,420.00
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 17,567.00

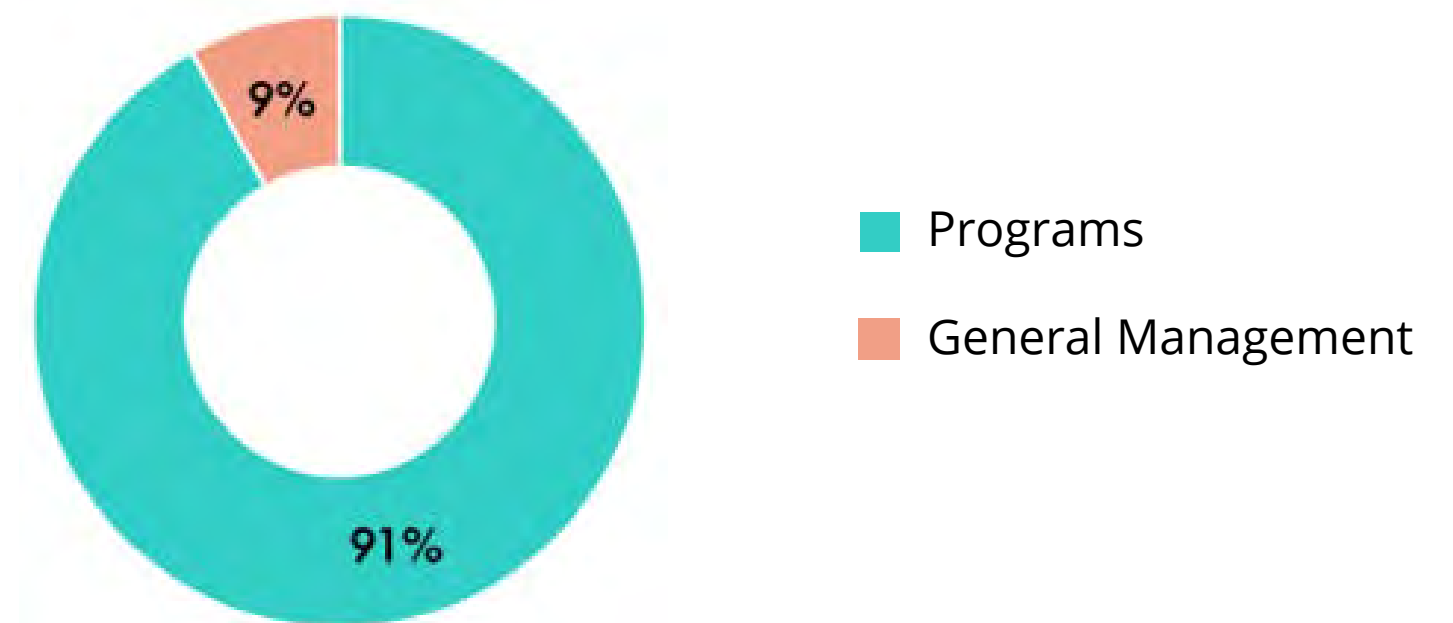
NET ASSETS END OF YEAR \$ 54,987.00

BPB Volunteer Work (13,496 Hours)

Equivalent to 6.5 full time employees



BPB Fundraising Efficiency





BPB Bridge Builder Award

for global leadership in
Bridging the Hearts and
Minds of All People

We are inspired by their life
stories in all of their volunteering
roles and their deep commitment
to welcoming new immigrants.

**Monique Woel
2020 Recipient**



**Ann Balusek
2021 Recipient**



Building Peaceful Bridges
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(847) 773-7484 EIN: 83-2282738.

