



BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



Bridge Builders Ahlam and Meg with Ghufan



Fatima, Bridge Builder, tutors Rabia and Rayyan

BPB Family Updates

Three families journeyed together from Fort McCoy in Wisconsin as one unit in circumstances similar to many refugees from Afghanistan. They had stayed at the airport in Afghanistan for 2-3 days without food or water, with only the clothes they were wearing, and uncertain of what their fate would be. The family unit included Basharmal and his wife, Hadijah, along with their two children, Rashid, 4 and Rizwan, 2. Alongside them were Ziba and her daughter Marwa, 19 and Ahmad and his sister Malalay who are in their early to mid-20s.

The biggest challenge these families had was securing housing. BPB provided a rent guarantee for these families to live together in a townhome. Parishioners from Queen of All Saints and Alderwoman Samantha Nugent donated furniture, money, and household supplies. Many people also helped to underwrite the move and assisted in moving them to their new home. BPB Partner, Givenkind, was also very generous to donate rugs for the families, as this is culturally a significant source of feeling at home.

Phones were provided by a donation from Refugee Community Connection, another BPB partner. BPB provided a Chromebook. Going forward, the focus for the BPB team is helping all the members of the family to learn English, and, subsequently, to assist in securing jobs.

Ali and Razieh and their older daughters are diligently working on improving their English. BPB assisted Ali with his resume and he continues his work with Panda Express. BPB also facilitated driving lessons for Ali and he subsequently was able to receive his drivers license.

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CALENDAR

Spring Clothing Drive

May 13 & May 21
10 am - 4 pm

Learning Luncheon

Monday, May 23, 2022
Noon

Family Fun Day

Sunday, June 12, 2022
12:30 start

Reading Refuge Book Club

Wednesday, June 22, 2022
7 pm - 8 pm



Dear Bridge Builders,

The recent world events have once again provided a reminder that in America we share the gift of freedom. Our democracy allows that freedom to flourish.

As we expand our welcoming communities, we can share this freedom with our newcomers. Over 5.5 million Ukrainian refugees and 26.6 million refugees around the world remind us every day of this precious gift.

We are proud to share that BPB was chosen to receive a \$15,000 grant from the Welcome.US Fund to build welcoming communities. This grant will allow us to develop BPB's All Faiths Collaborative through partnerships to enhance our refugee services in our neighborhoods.

BPB's Afghan Family Sponsorship Fund reached its goal of \$23K for 2022 to provide rental assistance, food support and household items. The Afghan household from Fort McCoy thanks you for your continuous generosity.

A big shout out to Kelly Wong, from Coldwell Banker, who worked with his landlord to accept a BPB Rent Guarantee in place of a credit report and pay stub for the Afghan family. BPB is developing additional

relationships with realtors accepting of our rent guarantee.

BPB's 2022 Strategic Plan focuses on the importance of technology in the lives of refugees. We have partnered with Refugee Community Connections to provide cell phones to refugee families. BPB also supplied four Chromebooks to facilitate online learning.

We had a lovely Iftar dinner in April, thanks to the Nair Family, who generously hosted BPB families and volunteers. In the spirit of Ramadan, we celebrated together as a community.

Please join your fellow Bridge Builders at BPB's Spring Clothing Drive May 13 and 21, 10 am - 4 pm, at St. Joseph Church in Wilmette. We will receive, sort and distribute clothing to our families. Your help is needed!

We hope you will join us for our upcoming virtual Learning Luncheon and Reading Refuge Book Club meetings. We will be mailing BPB's 2021 Impact Report this month.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, speakers and communities for "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



Bridge Builders

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



Bridge Builders at Learning Luncheon

Housing is a critical issue for refugees along with much of the population at large who live at or below the poverty line. BPB's recent luncheon included knowledge experts Bob Palmer (Housing Action Illinois), Jessica Schaffer (HIAS Immigration & Citizenship), and David Zverow (RAN Housing Subcommittee) who provided insight into this critical issue.

Our Bridge Builders learned that an income of \$22/hour is required to afford a home. Two-thirds of those that are already struggling pay more than 50% of their income on housing, when the recommendation is at 30%. Factors such as affordability, inventory, location, and rental history are challenges that are faced by refugees needing to resettle into a permanent home. More funding is needed for implementing solutions to this problem, and a focus is to target fourteen area suburbs with increased refugee populations to create housing security. It is imperative to contact the state legislature, area aldermen, and to push for passing housing bills such as Bill 2775 which passed the Illinois legislature.

[Watch the Learning Luncheon](#)



Bob Palmer

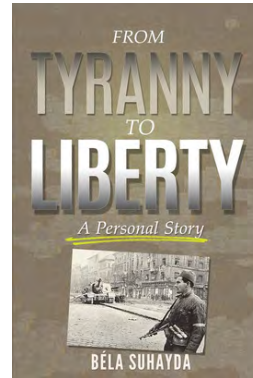


Jessica Schaffer



David Zverow

Reading Refuge Book Club

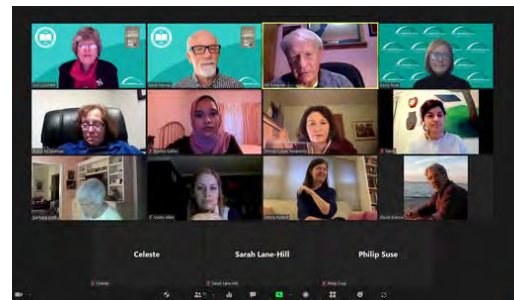


This month's Book Club featured a harrowing tale of a family that needed to make the difficult decision to leave their home of



origin in Hungary and escape to the United States in post-WWII. *From Tyranny to Liberty, A Personal Story*, by Bela Suhayda, tells the story of the family decisions that needed to be made and the strength and bravery of the author's parents while navigating their escape and eventual resettlement in the U.S. Thank you to our Advisory Board Member, Donna, for introducing us to Bill. We thank him for this informative insight about what many of those facing similar circumstances are possibly experiencing today.

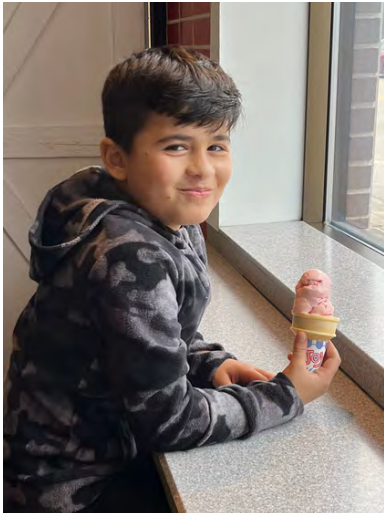
[Watch the Book Club discussion](#)



Next Reading Refuge Book Club Meeting on June 22nd at 7 pm

Family Events

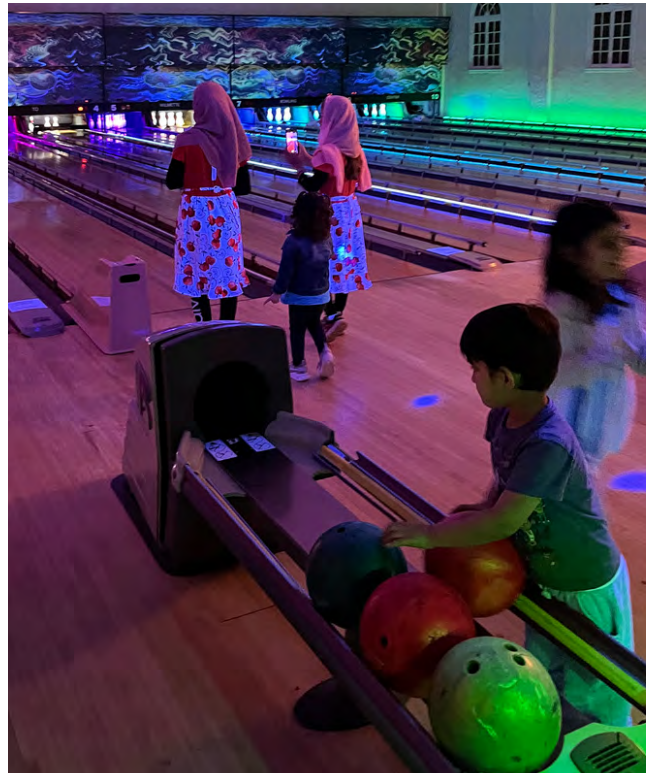
Two of the BPB families found fun during the children's spring break from school when some of our Bridge Builders took them to the Wilmette Bowl. Mothers and children alike enjoyed cheering each other on as it was a new experience for all. We shared lots of laughs, some good competition and feasted on pizza for lunch.



Hadi enjoying ice cream

Bowling was followed by a visit to Homer's Ice Cream store. Favorite flavors included chocolate and strawberry.

Overall, this was a great opportunity for BPB to spend time with the families. We all look forward to more outings together.



BPB children bowling



During Ramadan, BPB Bridge Builders and our refugee families came together for an Iftar dinner which was generously sponsored by the Nair family. BPB hosted over fifty people at Serena Restaurant. Families arrived close to dusk to break their fast and feast together as a community. There was much joy and love in our hearts as old and new members of the BPB family renewed friendships and began to build new bonds. It was an inspiring celebration during

the holy month of reflection. We are grateful to Bridge Builder Roqayah and her team for organizing the event.



Bridge to Belongings



Our Bridge to Belongings Program is transitioning into summer. Please consider donating! Also, we have some wonderful seamstresses so even donating fabric is encouraged. Thank you to Hawa, BPB volunteer, for sorting and organizing donations!

Make sure to drop by with your clothing donations, or if you would like to assist with the sorting of items please contact us at:

donations@buildingpeacefulbridges.org



Volunteer Spotlight

Here at BPB I help with branding, graphics and random projects in between! I'm so fortunate to work with such dedicated Bridge Builders and look forward to our continued growth. Outside of the organization, I work as a designer in Chicago and enjoy watching basketball and running on the lake.



Jordan Josellis

Grant Awarded to BPB

BPB is pleased to be one of 143 organizations nationwide and one of four in Illinois to receive a grant from The Welcome Fund, a project of Welcome.US, to engage Americans in the resettlement of Afghan newcomers.

BPB will be using these funds to expand its All Faiths Collaborative to build welcoming communities.

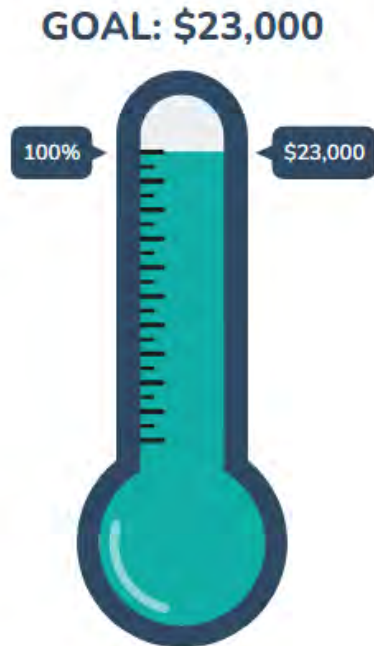


Welcome.US



Afghan Family Sponsorship Fund

This fund will provide one year of support for an Afghan family resettled in the Chicagoland area.



Sponsorship Fund Goal Reached

Thank you to our generous donors, Queen of All Saints parishioners and ICNA Relief Chicago Food Pantry partners for helping us raise \$23K!

We are now able to provide **one year of full support** for the resettlement of an Afghan family transitioning from Fort McCoy in LaCrosse, Wisconsin to the Chicagoland area.

One year total support averages around **\$23,000**.

- \$15,000 for one year's rent,
- \$5000 in supplemental food support
- \$3000 for household items, computer and gift cards for transportation and spending money.



World Refugee Day
20th Anniversary Celebration
June 18, 2022
at Pottawattomie Park

Family Updates (Continued from page 1)

BPB volunteers took the three adult women to a job fair at Will B. White Park, and continued to assist in the process of the job hunt. Nila, the youngest member of the family, is enrolled in an after school program that will allow her to make friends, and will soon ride a bike that is donated to her by BPB.

Ghufran is enjoying her English classes at Oakton Community College. She shares her new knowledge with the volunteers who drive her to and from her twice weekly classes. The other day she gleefully announced that she was “happy” and “loved her new friends.” Her daughter Rayyan enjoys her tutoring sessions with BPB volunteer, Fatima, who tutors Rayyan and neighbor and classmate, Rabia. The joint sessions allow both girls to improve their English language skills as well as foster their friendship outside of school.



Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

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OUR BELIEFS

Compassion bridges to Trust.
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 Knowledge bridges to Achievement.

