



# BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



Ghufran meets the new BPB Kramer Team volunteers.



Bridge to Belongings helpers: Rabia, Hadya and Ahlam

## *BPB Family Update*

Ghufran and her family were thrilled to receive furniture from our Bridge to Belongings Program. Thanks to a generous donation, the family was able to transform their living space. Bridge Builder Meg Simonton facilitated the furniture delivery with her neighbor Jaime Rojas with a donation of time and truck. Ghufran was thankful for the EID gift cards from another generous BPB donor.

Ali and Razieh's family have been working hard and steadily integrating into a life in Chicago. Two of their daughters have secured jobs, and one has achieved straight A's. Their English has been continually improving with our weekly visits.



Ali And Razieh's Family

Gulaly started taking ESL classes at Oakton. This is especially meaningful for her because she was prevented from an education under Taliban rule. As she attends school, her daughters, Rabia and Hadya, help Ahlam deliver clothing for ICNA.

Basharmal, is attending Northeastern University to earn his Masters in Accounting. He is one of three BPB families who came to Chicago via Fort McCoy in Wisconsin from Afghanistan filled with the uncertainty of what their future would be.

Basharmal's commitment to furthering his education is a very incredible, large step for himself and the family's future.

## *CALENDAR*

### **Learning Luncheon**

Monday, September 19  
12pm to 1pm

### **Reading Refuge Book Club**

Wednesday, October 12  
7pm to 8pm

### **HAI Conference on Housing**

Thursday, October 20 &  
Friday, October 21

### **Annual Event**

Thursday, December 1  
7pm



## Dear Bridge Builders,

Summertime is a time to enjoy the outdoors with family and friends. BPB volunteers, families and pillars are enjoying Family Fun Days, picnics, park visits and a trip to

Six Flags. We continue to provide BPB weekly services to our families (financial and food support, resume writing and job fair trips, English language mentoring).

BPB engaged in a Strategic Planning Mid-Term Review to reflect on our accomplishments benefiting our families and the necessary objectives of the second half of 2022 and beyond to meet newcomer needs.

The next few years BPB will continue to bridge the gap from resettlement to belonging by:

- Expanding local community support through partnerships, sponsors and volunteers.
- Mentoring and sponsoring families through financial and in-kind assistance.
- Educating fellow Americans on the facts of our newcomers' journeys and advocating on their behalf through federal and state policy changes.
- Transitioning to a Hybrid organizational structure (staff and volunteers) will provide job opportunities for newcomers. This is essential, especially during these inflationary times.



Bridge Builders

We have welcomed a new Ukrainian family through Uniting for Ukraine (Welcome.US) and a Congolese family through a partnership with HIAS/JCFS. BPB is issuing a **Call To Action** for financial support for the Congolese family. A generous Bridge Builder has offered a \$5,000 matching gift in support of the family.

BPB continues building community support for our newcomers with our All Faiths Collaborative for Newcomers. BPB is meeting with all faith representatives over the next six months to develop community support for our neighborhoods' new immigrants. Through a Welcome.US Grant, we are expanding our support for Afghan families.

We grieve with our Highland Park neighbors for the senseless loss of life and for all of the people who are affected by the unthinkable event of July 4th. We must work harder to eliminate senseless gun violence. We need more understanding and compassion for our newcomers, many of whom come from places where every day there are shootings and worse. There needs to be a better understanding of trauma and the effects it has on us.

We are looking forward to seeing you at our late summer Learning Luncheon, Monday, September 19, specifics TBD, and BPB's Reading Refugee Book Club, Wednesday, October 12, 7 p.m., with author Dr. Wendy Pearlman, *We Crossed a Bridge and It Trembled*.

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

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

*Lori Consadori Lucchetti*

Lori Consadori Lucchetti, President & Co-Founder

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**BPB Annual Event**  
**December 1, 2022, 7 P.M.**

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*



BPB's recent Learning Luncheon welcomed Kit Taintor, the Vice President of Policy and Practice at Welcome.US, a nonprofit initiative with the mission to inspire and empower people from across divides to unite in common purpose and welcome newcomers, meet their essential needs, and help them thrive. Kit discussed ways to welcome Ukrainians and resettle Afghans in our communities.

Our Bridge Builders learned more about resettlement policy and programs, tools and resources to guide newcomers families. Kit also spoke about the future vision of Welcome.US in helping refugees of various nations.

Welcome.US has a fund that raised over \$16.5 million and deployed \$14.2 million in grants to 172 nonprofit organizations (BPB is a grant recipient). It secured over 54,000 free flights with their Miles4Migrants campaign and created an employment exchange to connect newcomers with jobs. Welcome.US continues to invite national faith and service organizations to become community sponsors.

Kit did an amazing job addressing the concerns of participants about preferential treatment of Ukrainians compared to other refugees. She acknowledges that there are many issues in the refugee resettlement process. The discussion ended on a hopeful note when Kit urged the audience to reach out to representatives in Congress who can investigate the backlog of cases at USCIS.

For those that were unable to attend, you can watch the discussion at:  
<https://www.buildingpeacefulbridges.org/videos/learning-luncheons/>

## Reading Refuge Book Club



### Bridge Builders at Reading Refuge Bookclub

BPB welcomed Zaynab Abdi to our most recent Reading Refuge Book Club. She joined us in discussion of *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai. The book chronicles stories from refugee girls around the world and includes the powerful and emotional story of Zaynab and her sister, Sabreen.

Following a reading from her chapter in the book, Zaynab shared the details of her courageous journey from Somalia to Yemen to Egypt and eventual resettlement in the U.S. She discussed the trauma of displacement through her story of strength, resilience and hope. She also emphasized the importance and privilege of education.



Ellie Suse, our moderator, invited two members of the BPB community to share their experiences. Roqayah spoke of her journey from Iraq and Rebekah shared her family's story from Ethiopia to the U.S. To conclude the evening, Zaynab invited attendees to introduce themselves and share their background. Her invitation prompted numerous introductions from attendees, including seven-year-old Zainab from Afghanistan. Our younger attendees were especially motivated by Zaynab's optimism and hope for the future. They began considering their role in building peaceful bridges.

We were excited to learn that Zaynab is also an author and has written a bilingual graphic novel, *Voice for Refuge (Our Stories Carried Us Here)*, which chronicles her journey. The book is due out in September. Zaynab hopes it will encourage readers to be more welcoming as refugees resettle in our country.

For those that were unable to attend, we encourage you to watch and share the video of the event: [buildingpeacefulbridges.org/videos/book-club/](https://buildingpeacefulbridges.org/videos/book-club/)

**“OUR WORLD IS CALLING OUT FOR HELP AND CHANGE AND HOPE. IT IS THE YOUNGER GENERATION, AND GIRLS AND WOMEN LIKE THOSE FEATURED IN THIS BOOK WHO ARE ANSWERING.”**

*-We Are Displaced by Malala Yousafzai*



## World Refugee Day

On World Refugee Day, June 20th, I visited the Welcome.US Lightbox Installation in downtown Chicago. The Installation was meant to share positive messages to our newcomers in Chicago, and around the nation. It warmed my heart to know how we can all come together to do something as simple as welcoming someone to their new home.

Keeping my BPB family in mind, I decided to write the following messages: “A bridge to safety never fails” and “You are the reason we will continue to bridge the hearts and minds of all people.” Growing up in an immigrant family, I’ve always aspired to lend a helping hand to those who need it. Although no nation is perfect, and there is so much to be done, the U.S. has continued to be a symbol of freedom to those seeking refuge.

Every day, I look forward to working with BPB to help refugees feel welcome in their new communities. I’m determined to expand our outreach so we may help as many people as possible.

- Cynthia Hernandez, BPB Intern



## Bridge to Belongings



Thank you to all of the generous donors and volunteers who contributed to our successful Spring Clothing Drive. We distributed clothing and small household items to all of our families. A few families visited St. Joe's and made their own selections! We also received 25 \$100 gift cards to Target from an anonymous donor, some of which we gave to the families who used them to purchase Eid gifts for their children. Additionally, we received a donation of four air conditioning units which were immediately distributed! We are especially grateful to Lexy Gore, a new BPB Bridge Builder, for her enthusiastic support on both days of the Clothing Drive.

While we seek a new Program Director for Bridge to Belongings, we are thankful to the new volunteers from St Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish for their ongoing support of the Program. We look forward to working together in the Fall to support the needs of the new families we are welcoming.

[www.buildingpeacefulbridges.org/donate/](http://www.buildingpeacefulbridges.org/donate/)



## *BPB 2022 Family Fun Event*



On June 12 our Bridge Builders and newcomer families gathered at Lovelace Park in Evanston for BPB's first Family Fun Day. It was a delightful day of soccer, bean bag toss, Hokey Pokey, ice cream and laughter. Thanks to Bridge Builder Jordan Josellis and his family for coordinating this event. Enjoy the photos.





## Call to Action: Donate Now! Volunteer Spotlight

BPB is partnering with HIAS Immigration & Citizenship/JCFS to cosponsor a newly arrived refugee family from the Democratic Republic of Congo. After years of waiting in a refugee camp, Beatha and her five children arrived in America on July 13. Thanks to the Biden Administration, the U.S. has raised the ceiling for refugee resettlement to 125,00 for fiscal year 2022.

GOAL: \$10,000



Please join us in welcoming Beatha and her family by contributing to the \$10,000 fund. A generous Bridge Builder has offered a \$5,000 matching gift in support of Beatha's family. Your contribution is critical to their successful access to housing and other essential resources and services as they rebuild their lives in the Chicagoland area.

**DONATE NOW**

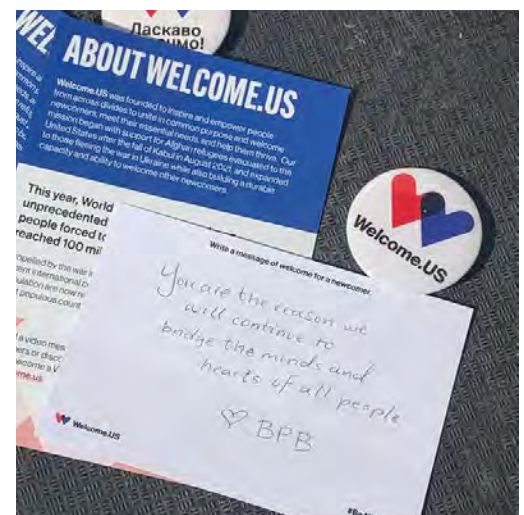


Neda Ahmad

Neda Ahmad has been volunteering with BPB since October of 2021. She was inspired to help refugees when watching the news about the collapse of the Afghanistan government over the summer. During her work with BPB, Neda has learned about how critical mental health is for refugees while integrating into a new country. She loves contributing her own experiences of helping her parents navigate the system as immigrants for BPB families as well.

## Welcome.US Grant

In accordance with our grant from The Welcome Fund, BPB has hired Ardita Roca and Lesley Allen as part time Family Support Manager and part time Volunteer Coordinator, respectively. Both women bring extensive experience to the positions and will provide excellent support as BPB continues to engage our community in the resettlement of newcomers. In conjunction with these new hires, BPB has trained close to 20 new volunteers. These volunteers will be assisting in BPB's Mentoring and Sponsoring, Education and Bridge to Belongings Programs. Our outreach efforts are also enhanced by the expansion of the All Faiths Collaborative which includes welcoming the Unitarian Church of Evanston.



# Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

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Compassion bridges to Trust.  
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