

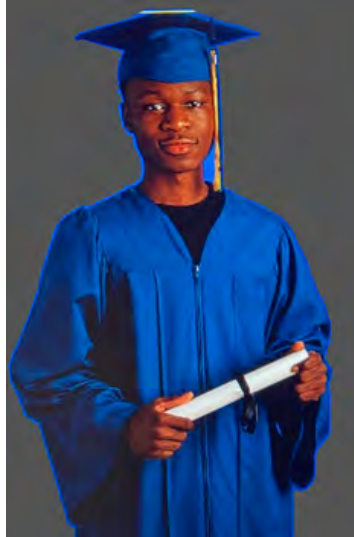


# BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



Rabia's Writing Award



Nehru's graduation photo



Jamia, Dewa, and Bilal with their dad, Rahmat



Nila's choir concert at Chicago Symphony Center

## BPB Family Update

Ismail and Gulaly's family has made great strides in education. Gulaly has been studying ESL at Madison Elementary School where her children attend. BPB volunteers continue to tutor the children in math, social studies, science and reading. Rabia won an Award in Writing by the Illinois TESOL Bilingual Education organization. Hadya won student of the month at Lincoln Junior High. Ismail continues to be a great asset to BPB in translating and being a bridge to the relationships with new Afghan families.

Ahadi and Hawa's family continue working toward their educational goals. Nuhru, will graduate from Sullivan High School and will be attending college in the Fall. He has been accepted to a number of colleges including Loyola University and UIC. Hawa is advancing in her ESL studies at Truman College. Ahadi and Hawa now serve as BPB mentors, volunteering with new families that arrive from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

BPB welcomed Rahmat and Tworpeki's family in December from Afghanistan. Rahmat has joined BPB's Advisory Board and is employed by the University of Chicago, where he was an Obama fellow scholar. Thanks to community donations their apartment is now a home. The two older children are in elementary school and Tworpeki is at Madonna Mission learning English.

Ghufran's children are enjoying team sports thanks to BPB volunteers who enrolled, drove them to practices and games and cheered them on. And exciting news for Hadi, the oldest son of the family, who finally received his prosthetic.

Ali and Razieh's family is thriving. Ali started a new job in the city and the girls are succeeding academically and in their jobs. The family gathered to celebrate Nila singing with her school chorus at the Chicago Symphony Center.

## CALENDAR

**Iftar Dinner**  
April 15th

**Reading Refuge Book Club**  
April 26th

**Junior Book Club**  
Weekly

**Family Fun Day**  
June 10th

**Gather for Good**  
November 30th



Hadya's Student of the Month Celebration



### *Dear Bridge Builders,*

BPB ended 2022 strong and is beginning 2023 capable of many positive impacts to the newcomer community. BPB's 2022 *Gather for Good* Annual Event surpassed its

fundraising goal. We received over \$44,000 from our donors for continued rent support for our families and initial funding for BPB's Education Fund.

In 2023, America will welcome many newcomers from Ukraine, Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, Mexico, Afghanistan, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries. BPB continues to assist in their integration into our communities. BPB's Volunteer Management Team, of Lesley, Sarah, Laura and Cynthia continually recruit, vet and train new volunteers. I welcome you to join the refugee journey.

### VOLUNTEER

#### **The BPB Board and staff finalized our 2023 Strategic Plan and Budget. Priority goals are:**

- Continue to expand BPB's funding base
- Recruit additional volunteers to serve the new families
- Expand BPB Board and Advisory Board to build new networks of involvement

#### **Priority Program Goals are:**

- Sponsoring and Mentoring additional families
- Sponsoring speaking events to build community awareness and recruit volunteers
- Advocating for passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act



Bridge Builders

Thank you to Father Wayne Watts, Pastor of Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier (JFX), for the expanded pro bono space for BPB's Bridge to Belongings Program. Nneka and her volunteers are arranging in kind donations for our families to shop in a welcoming environment. We continue to broaden our partnerships with other faith based organizations in our community.

BPB welcomes Allison Harrison, a professional grant writer and Jennifer Daniels, a nonprofit consultant, to the BPB Team.

A special thank you to the Immaculate Conception School 8th Grade classes for their Blessing Bags for BPB Families. The Bags consisted of emergency household items: flashlights, tool kits, welcome letters, Target gift cards, disinfectant wipes and batteries.

BPB, the Nair Family and the Winnetka Presbyterian Church will host our second Iftar Dinner for our families in April. We are thankful to Pastor Paul Gilmore for opening his parish center to this event.

I look forward to you all joining us at our Family Fun Day on June 10th. Come and socialize with each other, participate in the BPB soccer game, and enjoy food from various countries.

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

### Earthquake Relief

Thank you all for your donations in support of Ghufuran's extended family in Turkey.

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.





## *Rotary Club of Wilmette*



Ahlam's speech



Javi Santacruz introducing BPB to the Rotary Club of Wilmette

Last fall, Javi Santacruz invited BPB to speak at the Rotary Club of Wilmette. Lori Lucchetti and Ahlam Al-Jebory shared BPB's mission as well as Ahlam's journey as a refugee from Baghdad to Damascus to the U.S. They described BPB's work assisting newcomers gain a sense of belonging in America and move toward self sufficiency. Lori explained how BPB has grown from an informal gathering of committed women in 2015 to an impactful nonprofit organization. BPB was invited back for a second presentation in 2023.

## *League of Women Voters*



Lori speaking at League of Women Voters

In December, Lori Lucchetti was invited to speak at The League of Women Voters of Glenview-Glencoe Holiday Dinner. Lori highlighted BPB's work to bridge the gap for our newcomers to America after government resettlement work finishes. She invited attendees to join BPB's journey of mentoring new families and educating Americans about the newcomers' stories.

## *Saints JFX Knitting Circle*

BPB was thrilled to accept over 125 hand knitted items from the Saints JFX Ministry. The knitters wrapped and included an inspiring note with each hat and scarf. Kerry Suse was invited to speak to the group and explain BPB's mission. She thanked the members for their generosity and shared some stories of recent newcomer arrivals to Chicago. The items were delivered and received by our families with gratitude for the love and care woven into each beautiful item.



## Junior Book Club



KK Brown and Ellie Suse with  
Rabia, Hadya, and Zainab

BPB's Junior Book Club selected Zlata's Diary to read this quarter. In the book, Zlata Filipovic provides a day-to-day record of her life as an eleven-year-old girl experiencing the horror of the Bosnian War. The Moradi sisters intentionally selected this book while reading it in school so that our Sunday sessions can directly supplement their schoolwork. In a recent session, Rabia Moradi reflected on an essay she had written for school. In the essay, she answered the prompt "The day my life changed forever" with a retelling of her move to America. To hear Rabia reflect on her experiences while reading and discussing Zlata's first-person telling of her life-changing experience in wartime Sarajevo is a perfect example of the Junior Book Club's mission: to inspire confidence, foster curiosity and build connections through books.

## Bridge to Belongings

The Bridge to Belongings program (BtB) has seen much growth in the past few months. The challenge of inadequate space for inventory was overcome by the generous donation from Saints JFX, with five rooms in their Convent. BtB will have use of the rooms for the next one-two years. Inventory can now be displayed in categories such as Men and Boys' clothing, Women and Girls' clothing, and Babies and Toddlers' clothing and supplies. The space also increases efficiency of the program in terms of inventory keeping, distribution, and fixed location for receiving donations.

Bridge to Belongings presents an excellent opportunity for assisting those in need while reducing items that go into land dumpsters and landfills. Donate and volunteer now!

[DONATE NOW](#)



BPB volunteers with 8th graders from Saints JFX



Kerry with Ismail, Zainab, Rabia, and Hadya



## Annual Event



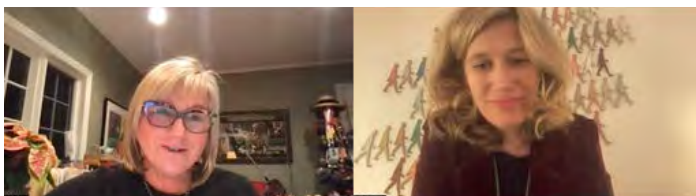
On December 1st we gathered virtually for our fourth *Gather for Good*. It was a memorable evening where we focused on the importance of supporting newcomers with a solid foundation in education. We showed a short film featuring some of our families who shared their personal stories and how education is impacting their goals and dreams. We are so grateful to our Communications Director Kevin Harvey for his tireless work in creating this wonderful film.



Top row: Grace, Nuhru, Rabia; Bottom row: Ahadi, Hadya, Ghufan

If you have not had a chance to view the film, you can find it [here](#).

BPB honored Marianne Gimon D'Ansembourg with our Bridge Builder Award for her global leadership in "bridging the hearts and minds of all people." Marianne is an independent consultant who specializes in gender equality and international development.



Ann Balusek presented the Bridge Builder award to Marianne Gimon

Marianne has 23 years of experience nurturing and sustaining development all over the world. She has worked with global organizations including UNICEF, the United Nations Development program, Refugees International and the Population Council. Her philanthropic work with the Flora Family Foundation has been invaluable to the growth of BPB.

A big thank you to Lexy Gore who secured our 14 amazing raffle prizes and our grand prize! Everyone loved watching the raffle wheel spin to reveal all the winners. This year we also had a live auction hosted by Laura Kushner, who did a great job auctioning off our incredible grand prize – a \$250 gift certificate to either Pomeroy or Sophia Steak.



We are grateful to our generous donors, guests and everyone who made our event so special. BPB has big goals and everyone's generosity is making a lasting impact. We exceeded our objective of raising \$40,000 and these funds will support our Mentoring and Sponsoring program and allow us to continue to welcome newcomers and provide them a sense of belonging in our community.

We are excited to see everyone in person to celebrate our 5th Annual Event on Thursday November 30, 2023

## Volunteer Spotlight



Lexy Gore

Lexy Gore began volunteering with BPB about a year ago, first with the Bridge to Belongings program, mentoring a newcomer family, and now also as co-chair on the upcoming 5 Year Anniversary *Gather for Good* Celebration. She has extensive experience working in international affairs and

event planning and is excited for our next Annual Event on November 30, 2023. Thank you, Lexy, for all of your help in BPB's 2022 *Gather for Good* Annual Event.

**BECOME A BPB VOLUNTEER**

We began volunteering in 2022 by helping to organize the Reading Refuge Book Club. We work together to choose a book, recruit an author to speak and prepare discussion questions for the event. It's been so rewarding to connect with authors who do the important work of telling



Ellie Suse and KK Brown

refugee stories. We've also developed a Junior Book Club which gives us the opportunity to work with some of the children of BPB families. We meet virtually every week to read and discuss a book of their choosing. We feel very lucky to share our love of books and to work at "bridging the hearts and minds of all people."

## New Advisory Board Members



Lesley Allen, a consultant with expertise in people leadership and software implementation, joined BPB in 2021 to develop our people management system and oversee our Volunteer Management program. With her leadership, we are streamlining

our volunteer recruitment and onboarding processes, and working through several ongoing projects. While most of her work has been internal, Lesley's dedication to understanding the resettlement process led her to complete a program on refugee rights through Amnesty International. Her commitment to BPB's mission and volunteers has been unwavering. We are excited to have her join the Advisory Board in her new role.



Rahmatullah Hamraz, an economist and peace advocate, is the Director of the National Center for Peace and Development, an Afghan non-profit. He was a senior official in the Afghan government and is an Obama Foundation

Scholar. He completed a master's degree program in International Development and Policy at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy. Rahmatullah's strong community engagement skills and understanding of Afghan issues are invaluable in recruiting and training volunteers and assisting in the resettlement of our Afghan families.

**If you are interested in joining our Board or Advisory Board, please Contact Us.**



## DID YOU KNOW?



The future is uncertain for close to 80,000 Afghans who were evacuated to the U.S. beginning in August 2021 under Operation Allies Welcome when the Taliban assumed control.

The evacuees were initially granted temporary status of "Humanitarian Parole," a special immigration classification that allows foreign citizens to enter the U.S. without a visa. In the case of the Afghans they are allowed to stay in the country temporarily for two years.

As of February 12, the U.S. had approved just 4,775 applications for asylum or special visa status for aiding American forces from the Afghan evacuees. Delays in asylum processing and the impending expiration of parole statuses beginning in August 2023 could mean being deported to a perilous situation at the hands of violent extremists in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Adjustment Act, which was first introduced last year with bipartisan support, would offer Afghans in the United States pathways to legal permanent residency. The Act also seeks to streamline massive backlogs and bureaucratic bottlenecks for Afghans in the process of trying to permanently settle in the United States. However, the Act has stalled in Congress, mainly due to concern by some Senators for insufficient vetting of evacuees.

The Act is expected to be reintroduced in Congress this Spring/Summer. We will keep you posted on any legislative action.



## DID YOU KNOW?

"Did You Know?" will now appear regularly in our Quarterly Report.

See archives [here!](#)



# Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

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Compassion bridges to Trust.  
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 Inclusiveness bridges to Security.  
 Hope bridges to Courage.  
 Respect bridges to Inspiration.  
 Knowledge bridges to Achievement.

