

BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"



Reshad's First Game



No Hitter Nuhru



Ahadi (left) with new family from Rwanda

BPB Family Update

Ismail and Gulaly's family continue to help BPB by translating for the newly arrived Afghan families. Three of their children have been participating in sports. Reshad is thrilled to start spring soccer. Rabia joined her school's track team and Hadya was selected for her school's soccer team. Gulaly, Rabia and Hadya have been instrumental in setting up BPB's RoseMary Gabriel Shop.

We are enjoying following Nuhru's baseball team at Sullivan High School. Nuhru was recruited for the team because of his involvement in other school team sports including soccer and basketball. At one of the first games of the season, Nuhru scored three home runs!!

BPB welcomed a new family of nine from Rwanda in partnership with HIAS/JCFS. Ukuzungu and Angelique spent 20 years in a refugee camp after fleeing their home country of the Democratic Republic of Congo. BPB volunteers helped the family settle into their new home with generous donations of furniture, household items and clothing from our community. Ahadi, another BPB family member, has provided essential translating and mentoring.

Gustavo and Alejandra and their twin boys, Christopher and Noah, arrived in Chicago from El Paso, Texas, after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border. They are originally from Venezuela and connected with BPB through one of our board members. BPB was able to provide the family with furniture and other household items as well as clothing. Both parents are already working.

Continued on Pg.5



Gustaf and Family

CALENDAR

Family Fun Day
Sat. June 10

Fifth Year Luncheon
Wed, June 21

Reading Refgugue Book Club
Wed. August 30th

Junior Book Club
Weekly

Gather for Good
November 30th

We Want You!

**Change a life,
including your own!**

**Become a Bridge
Builder today.**



Dear Bridge Builders,

Over the last five years, we have worked to ensure that newcomers are supported and connected to welcoming communities. To this end, BPB engages with fellow partners

in the refugee community, including faith organizations, community organizations, academic institutions, and government agencies.

BPB's All Faiths Collaborative hosted an Iftar dinner with more than 170 attendees. Thank you to Pastor Gilmore, of The Winnetka Presbyterian Church, for providing a beautiful space for the event. We appreciate the involvement of Dita de Leeuw, lead mentor for the many Afghan families embraced by the church. Thank you to The Nair Family for sponsoring such a heartfelt event. Prior to breaking the day's fast Imam Irfan, Bob Turner and Rabbi Bruce and Pastor Lara provided blessings. As Imam Irfan said "Let us embrace the values of love, tolerance and understanding that are at the heart of all faiths and cultures." BPB partners with each of the faith organizations.

BPB presented its mission at the Wilmette Rotary Club where Ahlam discussed her refugee journey from Iraq through Syria to America. A more detailed account of Ahlam's fear to triumph, is told in *A Disappearance in Damascus; Friendship and Survival In The Shadow of War*, by Deborah Campbell, available on Amazon. We will continue our work with the Rotary Club on how they can assist refugees.



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.

We acknowledge the importance of academic institutions and government agencies for their role in supporting the resettlement process. As a recognized stakeholder, BPB participates in immigration policy research. Two current studies BPB is involved in are: The Urban Institute - University Of Chicago study: "Examining One Humanitarian Crisis to Prepare for Another: Lessons from Afghan Evacuees' Resettlement" and The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR) *Ukrainian Arrivals Needs Assessment*. These reports should generate best practices to improve the U.S. Immigration Resettlement system.

Because of the impact we are making in the community, Greentarget (www.greentarget.com), a recognized PR firm, has taken us on pro bono to assist BPB in reaching more families and volunteers.

With additional funding and volunteers, BPB will be able to mentor and sponsor more newcomer families. We assist them in integrating into our society and gaining a sense of belonging. Please assist us in our call to action for more [volunteers](#) and [donors](#) to engage with more families.

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



BPB's All-Faiths Iftar Dinner



Imam Irfan



Father Lara



Bob Turner and Rabbi Bruce



BPB hosted an amazing evening of friendship, conversation and breaking bread together. A testament to the power of unity and harmony. We came together to share our traditions and learn from one another.

Seeing all of the families together, laughing, eating and meeting new friends was especially gratifying. The children's smiles were so heartfelt. According to a few of the children, it was "one of the best nights of my life."



Nicki Nair, Event Sponsor



Chef Hamid



Ardita Roci & Lori Lucchetti



Dita de Leeuw, BPB Partner, with Guests

BPB's All-Faiths Iftar Dinner



Ahlam Mahmood and Jessica Darrow



Kids at Iftar enjoying being kids



Rahmat and his family



The Kherzai Family



Jaikai Ceisel & Moira Pollard



Grace, Hawa, Binja & Nuhru



Cynthia Hernandez, Adila, and Kerry Suse



Peggy Notebart Nature Museum Field Trip



Experiencing the Wonder of the Butterfly Haven

Spring Break is a time for exploring and that’s what we did with two of our families during the childrens’ spring break. The day started at the Peggy Notebart Nature Museum in Chicago. We explored the many wonders of nature and found answers to questions like how do butterflies get their colors and how do birds know where to migrate! We also enjoyed the magic of the Butterfly Haven where we experienced exotic free-flying butterflies and watched some newly-emerged butterflies take flight for the first time. The many immersive activities made the visit fun for all ages. After our visit to the Museum, we drove to the lakefront and enjoyed the amazing view of the Chicago skyline from Montrose Beach.



Zahra, The Explorer

BPB Family Update continued from Pg. 1



Lincoln JH EL Students w Teacher & Ardita

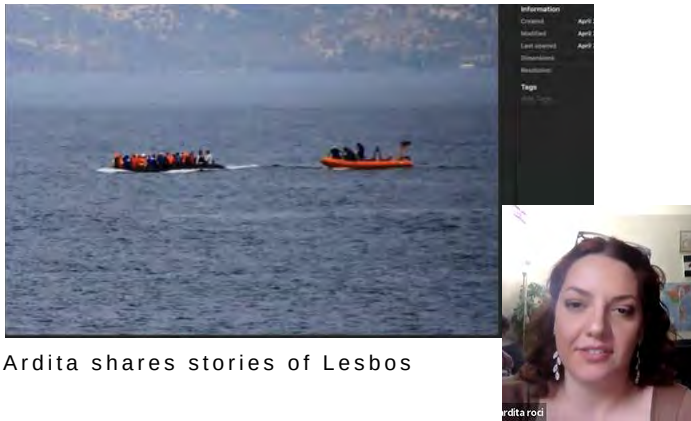
Some of our volunteers attended a Night of Celebrations at Lincoln Junior High which highlighted the many achievements and cultures of the students in the school’s English Language program. Our volunteers shared the audience with the proud parents of Rabia, Hadya, Rayaana and Hadi. It was a wonderful opportunity for the students to showcase their English language development as well as share highlights of their countries.

Ghufran has successfully passed her permit test and now is taking driving classes. Her English has improved since taking classes with the ESL teacher Cindy Cole. Ghufran and Rayaana have also been helping in the BPB Shop.

Habibullah and his family moved to Madison, Wisconsin, in May to be closer to extended family. BPB supported them in their move and we wish them well in their new home. We will miss our weekly meetings with them. Noshaba, Habibullah’s wife, was a diligent ESL student. She is also an excellent seamstress and generously made traditional Afghan dresses for two of our volunteers!

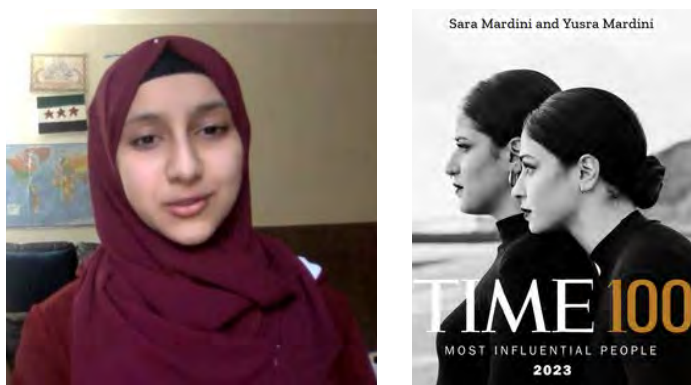
Reading Refuge Book Club

BBP hosted an evening discussion about Sara and Yusra Mardini's lives portrayed in the book *Butterfly: From Refugee to Olympian - My Story of Rescue, Hope, and Triumph* and the movie *The Swimmers*. Two sisters who have chosen life paths which benefit the refugee cause around the world. As Yusra says "It is not about the medal, it is about the message."



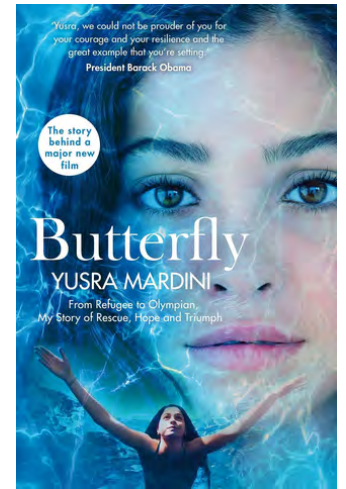
Ardita shares stories of Lesbos

BBP added to the discussion its own Bridge Builders who shared their stories. Ardita, spoke about her volunteering in Lesbos with Sara Mardini and hundreds of volunteers. They welcomed the refugees at the shoreline and escorted them to the Moria Refugee Camp. Ardita had us walking with her in Lesbos.

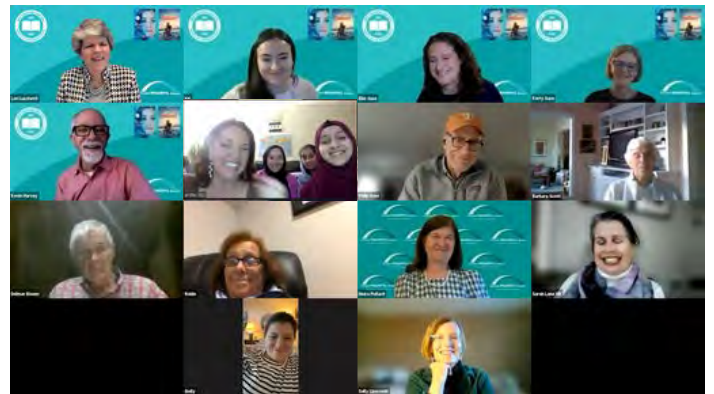


Rabia reads her essay. Next stop, Time 100.

Rabia, 8th grader and BBP family member, recently won an essay contest at school for her answer to the prompt, "the day my life changed forever." She did a beautiful job reading that essay. She told us that she's proud of the award, but like Yusra, it's the message that she wants to share.



BBP's mission is to share new immigrant stories. According to Melissa Fleming, UN Under Secretary General for Global Communications, "Using the power of storytelling, it allows the audience not only to feel compassion for those forcibly displaced but identify with them - imagine they're in their shoes. The film underscores our shared humanity, while inspiring and energizing."



[See the video of the Book Club meeting here.](#)

Sara and Yusra's present situation is captured in the following Tedx talks which highlight their current circumstances.

[How I was arrested for handing out blankets to refugees](#), Sara Mardini, TEDxLondonWomen

[Stronger Together - A home for everyone](#), Yusra Mardini, TEDxIITPatnaLive

Bridge to Belongings



Nneka Obasi (second from right), delivering donations to family from Rwanda

The BtB shop, now christened the Dr. RoseMary Ndi Gabriel Shop is set up and families have started shopping. Our Shop name honors a woman who taught and assisted new refugee students in the Chicago Public School system for years. Dr. Gabriel is the sister of BPB Board Member Nneka Obasi, who has been the Bridge to Belonging Program Coordinator for the last two years.

Thanks to many of our volunteers over the last month sorting and staging clothing and household items. We appreciate the tremendous amount of donations from family's downsizing their space. The Shop is a friendly place to gather needed items for newcomer families.

We welcome Cindy Krizman, a new volunteer, who brings her amazing organizational skills to our Shop. We are grateful for her dedication. The Shop is open on Wednesdays, from 11 am - 2 pm for donation drop off and shopping; also by appointment.

Ghufran Family Earthquake Update

BPB raised more than \$2500 to help Ghufran's (BPB family) mother, four sisters and 12 nieces and nephews in Turkey in the wake of the earthquake that struck on February 6th. Your funds assisted in rent, food, and personal needs for the last few months. The family managed to get to Mersin, Turkey, where they are renting a home. We are in contact with the family to determine future needs.



Ghufran's Family in Turkey

The family had to evacuate their crumbling building in the middle of the night after the earthquake struck where they lived in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey. Luckily, they were unharmed, but were left out on the street with no shelter, food, or clothing.

BPB has been sponsoring and mentoring Ghufran and her three children since September of 2021 when they arrived in America and now stepped up to help her family who we consider our extended family.

Volunteer Spotlight



Sarah Frank began volunteering with BPB in 2022. She is volunteering with a family, helping the children with ESL, homework, and reading skills. She is also part of the CRM team that is focused on using technology to provide a great volunteer

experience and track the data for reports needed in the grant process. She enjoys volunteering with BPB, as it helps combine several of her passions-building relationships, language learning, reading, and sharing cultural experiences.

We Want You!

To build bridges with newcomer families.
Join BPB for a rewarding experience.
Change a life, including your own!

Become a Bridge Builder today.

VOLUNTEER

Building Bridges

BPB Volunteer Lexy Gore also gives her time for the Community Animal Rescue Effort. The Shelter had a fundraiser event where they collected and sold household items. Lexy noted that they had extra donated items and quickly went into action.

Bridge Builders were able to go and collect the household items for our newcomers!



This way, one nonprofit is helping out another. Thanks to the thoughtfulness and mobilization by our Lexy!

SAVE THE DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2023

NOVEMBER 30, 2023

GATHER FOR GOOD

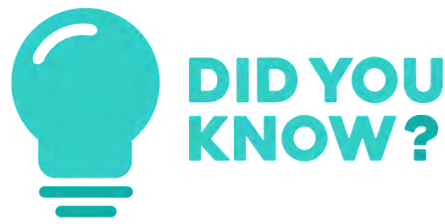
EMPOWERING WELL-BEING

HOME

EDUCATION

WORK

HEALTH / WELLNESS



The **Biden Administration is extending legal status for Afghan nationals currently residing in the United States**. The majority of these newcomers arrived after the US evacuation in August 2021 and their humanitarian parole status is due to expire in August 2023. This news is a great relief to the thousands of Afghan refugees who were facing an uncertain future. The extension will provide much-needed near term stability and security in a time of great uncertainty. However, this is only a temporary solution to a much larger issue, which is now to prevail upon Congress to provide these newcomers a path to citizenship.

BPB has worked closely with nearly two dozen Afghan newcomers providing crucial support: rental assistance, food, clothing, household items, job training, English tutoring, and other vital services. Many of these families have flourished since coming here in 2021 and are finally at a point where they are gaining a sense of independence and belonging in their new country.



Additionally, many are also actively adding critical value to both the U.S. economy and society. In March of this year, Upwardly Global published a Report focused on the immense contributions Afghan newcomers have made through the following groups: Afghan professionals filling labor market gaps, Afghan women leaders and human rights defenders, Afghans who are reinvigorating communities, and Afghan students. At the same time, these refugees continue to send money home to their families in Afghanistan who didn't have the same opportunity to evacuate and are currently enduring a humanitarian crisis.

The U.S. has an obligation to provide all Afghan evacuees with a safe haven and a path to permanent residency in the United States. Extending parole status to integrate is welcome, but the passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act is a crucial part of a more comprehensive solution.

"Did You Know?" now appears regularly in our Quarterly Report. See archives [here!](#)

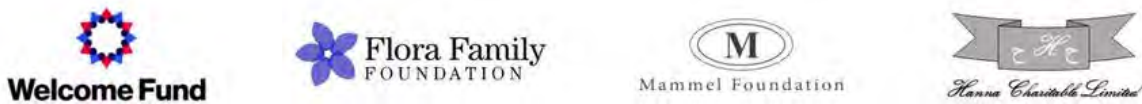
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