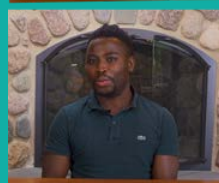




2022 Impact Report



Bridging the Hearts and Minds of All People

Message from Leadership

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

Dear Bridge Builders,

World events in 2022 have once again provided a valuable reminder that America's shores are a beacon of hope to those seeking refuge. As America expands its welcoming communities, our volunteers join BPB's mission of assisting newcomers on a journey from uncertainty to trusting to welcoming and belonging.

Americans are taught to "welcome the stranger." Daily, people ask us "How can I help America's newcomers?" We say "Become a Bridge Builder" and assist in bridging and narrowing the gap for our new immigrants.

We are extremely grateful for the tireless commitment of BPB's volunteers, donors and partners. Through your generosity of time, skills, financial support and resources, BPB has served more than 450 newcomers and educated over 1000 people in our community about the newcomers' story during 2022.

Our benevolent sponsors increased BPB's Affordable Housing Fund by fourfold! They provided housing "peace of mind" to many newcomer families. A refugee family spends 75% of their budget for housing, leaving minimum funds for other necessities. BPB fills the gap by assisting with the rental payments.

When necessary, BPB continues to provide rent guarantees to landlords for refugees without a credit history. Given the difficulty of finding housing for refugees, we advocated strongly for affordable housing during 2022.

Bridge Builders responded generously to a number of our Call to Action requests. Many of you donated to Afghan family resettlement. Others funded a partnership with HIAS to sponsor and assist Beatha and her family to settle into America from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Through an abundance of donations of in-kind contributions, we turned living spaces into comfortable homes and enabled our families to feel a sense of belonging.

Bridge Builders wrote to Congressional Members urging passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act. We are hoping that this important piece of legislation will be approved soon. We continue to advocate on behalf of our Afghan newcomers for positive Federal and State policy changes.

BPB received funding in 2022 from a Welcome.US. Grant to expand our All Faiths Refugee Collaborative. We are mobilizing the power of collaboration among faith based and secular institutions to give Afghans and other new immigrants viable opportunities to achieve independence. BPB was provided free storage space for our in-kind donations from churches, tuition assistance from mosques and program support from synagogues.

We celebrated this collaboration with an All Faith Iftar Dinner with BPB families, volunteers and donors. Each faith leader who attended the dinner encouraged the welcoming of the stranger and the bonds between all people.

BPB established an Education Fund with seed money from a number of donors. The objective is to maintain a fund that can support the educational needs of our families as they arise. We assisted in funding college tuition, summer camps, after school activities, driving lessons, and technology needs.

Our Mentors continue to develop trusting relationships with the families with whom they work and provide necessary tools needed for personal development. Many of our newcomers suffer from significant trauma from their journeys. This must be addressed effectively for those affected to move forward. We will direct resources to provide a better understanding of trauma and the effects it has on all of us.

Our key priorities to benefit refugees in 2023 are to:

- serve more newcomer families
- expand welcoming communities
- recruit more volunteers
- increase funding for Affordable Housing and BPB's Education Fund
- advocate for passage of the Afghan Adjustment Act
- address the increasing needs of mental health and dental care

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



Ahlam Mahmood
Co-Founder
Board Member

Vision, Values and Mission

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people."



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 newcomers into American society and educating communities on the challenges facing refugee populations through their stories.



Holistic | Family Based | Collaborative | Volunteer Driven

2022 Major Accomplishments



"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

Programs

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



Mentoring and Sponsoring

BPB's mentors meet newcomer families where they are in all aspects of life. Friendship is at the core of the mentor's involvement. Mentors build long term relationships with newcomers and provide them with helpful guidance to services and tools that families need to move from surviving to thriving

We bridge the gap between the time that newcomers receive initial government support to when they gain a feeling of belonging and financial independence. BPB provides financial assistance as needed.

Some of the various needs include:

- Rental Assistance
- Tutoring – ESL and Academic
- Employment Counseling
- Medical and dental referrals



Bridge to Belongings

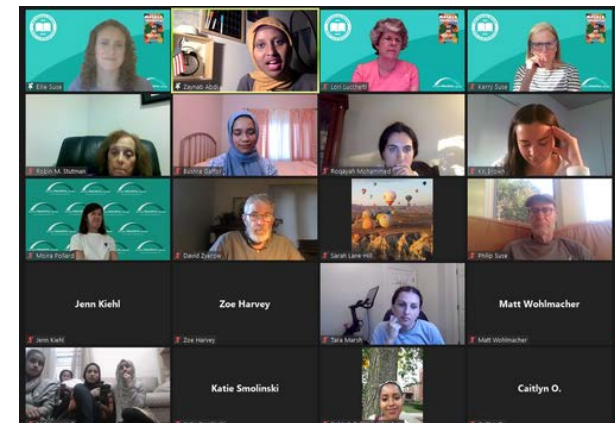
BPB helps newcomer families gain a firm footing and sense of security in their new homes. Helping them with life's essential needs while mentoring them is a clear path to financial independence and success.

We assist newcomer families feel at home in their new community and help create a safe and comfortable living space.

BPB has created a free store where families are able to choose items that fit their needs. Newcomer families appreciate the dignified experience which emulates shopping.

This program enables BPB to provide:

- Food
- Clothing
- Furniture
- Household Items



Educational Programs

BPB hosts "Learning Luncheons." a "Reading Refugee Book Club" and a "Junior Reading Refugee Book Club." We also attend Speaking Engagements to reach a wider audience.

BPB uses our website, newsletters, social media, and videos to amplify the message of welcoming newcomers. Bridge Builders listen to compelling refugee stories and hear knowledge experts speak on immigration issues, refugee challenges and ways to address them.

Through our educational programs, we:

- Amplify our mission by informing and building welcoming communities
- Foster understanding of the newcomer challenges and experiences
- Encourage cross cultural understanding



Advocacy

BPB advocates for improved newcomer resettlement programs at the national, state and local levels.

BPB influences public policy and provides community education in order to support the inclusive integration of newcomers in Illinois.

We work in coalition with many partners such as: Refugee Action Network, AfghanEvac, the White House and U.S. Department of State.

Major advocacy issues in 2022 included:

- Affordable Housing
- Humanitarian Parole
- Afghan Adjustment Act
- Uniting for Ukraine
- Reimagining Resettlement

Mentoring and Sponsoring

Hawa She Always Wears a Smile

Hawa always wears a smile, with enthusiasm and compassion. She is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo, who escaped the violence by walking with her family to a refugee camp in Burundi.

Hawa was 19 when she arrived in the U.S. in 2019 with her parents, younger brother and sister, leaving an older sister in Burundi. The family settled in Chicago where they met the new challenges of adapting to a new environment. Hawa and her parents began working right away as well as taking virtual ESL classes. Her younger siblings enrolled in school but Hawa needed to work to support the family.

Since 2019, BPB has had the privilege of watching Hawa blossom in her new home. She married a fellow Congolese man and became a mother. Hawa continues to work full time supporting her husband as he works toward his college degree. After he graduates, she will enter a GED program with dreams of becoming a nurse. Hawa volunteers with BPB providing translation and community support for newcomers. And she always wears a smile.



Reading Refuge Junior Book Club

BPB introduced its Junior Reading Refuge Book Club in 2022. Books included *Little Women*, *The Night Diary*, and *Zlata's Diary*. The club met once a week and the kids read sections of the book together. They discussed themes which included family relationships as well as friendships. They also explored new vocabulary.



*BPB's Mentoring and Sponsoring Program is built upon
hope, compassion, respect and inspiration.*

Newcomer Stories

Ismail

A journey from
Afghanistan to Chicago



Ismail and his family embarked on a courageous journey from Afghanistan to the United States in 2020. He worked alongside the U.S. and British military, ensuring safety on the roads by providing vital translations regarding the Taliban's movements. The promise of a new life in America for Ismail's family was finally fulfilled with a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) after a five-year process of paperwork and approvals.

Ismail and his wife Gulaly bid farewell to their extended family among tearful goodbyes. Accompanied by their five children, they flew to Chicago, their new and unfamiliar home. Fortunately, Ismail had a supportive network of friends in Chicago. These friends became an invaluable source of introduction to the Chicago way of life and American laws.

BPB serves as a mentor to Ismail's family, providing financial support for rent and food when needed. Ismail himself has taken on various part-time jobs. Currently, he is employed by an organization assisting newly arrived refugees to our country. His proficiency in five languages makes him an incredibly valuable employee.

BPB has become an extended family for Ismail and his loved ones. Every Friday night, Ismail's home turns into an extended school, where BPB's Mentoring Team dedicates their time to tutor each child, fostering their academic development.

When the Taliban seized control of Kabul in 2021, Ismail turned to BPB for assistance in submitting 25 Humanitarian Parole Forms, seeking refuge for family members affected by the crisis. The global law firm, BakerMcKenzie assisted in the filing process. He is awaiting USCIS determination on these cases.

The family is integrating into the community and looks forward to U.S. citizenship and paying it forward.

Educational Program

Building Welcoming Communities



Reading Refuge Book Club

2022 marks BPB's second year of our highly successful Book Club. Bela Suheda authored *From Tyranny to Liberty*, a harrowing story of his family's escape from their Hungarian homeland after Communist Russia invaded in 1956. Zaynab Abdi from Somalia shared her story in Malala's book *We are Displaced*. Dr. Wendy Pearlman talked about her book, *We Crossed a Bridge and it Trembled*. She read from and discussed the book's collection of intimate wartime testimonies and poetic fragments from a cross-section of Syrians whose lives have been transformed by revolution, war, and flight.

Learning Luncheons

BPB hosted three engaging Learning Luncheons. A panel of three experts from Housing Action Illinois, HIAS, and Refugee Action Network, detailed the critical issue of affordable housing. Kit Taintor from Welcome.US walked us through the new sponsorship model for building welcoming communities. Amy Hill, Program Manager for the Kovler Center Child Trauma, shared her insights into how to deal with the trauma that often comes from displacement. We closed the year with "Dreams - Gather for Good."



Affordable Housing Panel Discussion



Bob Palmer



Jessica Schaffer



David Zverow



Community Involvement
with Kit Taintor
from Welcome.US

Addressing Trauma in
Newcomer Children with
Amy Hill, LCSW



Quarterly Reports

BPB publishes Quarterly Reports to keep our Bridge Builders informed about all the activities that we engage in. Included in every QR are Family Updates, a Calendar of Upcoming Events, a President's Message, a Volunteer Spotlight and highlights of all the activities that BPB engaged in for that quarter.



Video

Central to our mission to tell refugee stories is our extensive use of videos. The 2022 Annual Event video was called *Dreams*, which focused on how education is so critical to our newcomers. We also record, and post all of our Learning Luncheons and Reading Refuge Book Club meetings to multiply the impact of these events.

Speaking Engagements

In 2022, we were able to start to get back out in public with several speaking engagements. BPB President Lori Lucchetti spoke at the League of Women Voters. Lori and co-founder Ahlam Al-Jebory spoke to the Wilmette Rotary Club. Advisory Board member Roqayah Mohammed spoke to 8th graders about her experience as a refugee. Nneka Obasi spoke to her church about BPB. Kevin Harvey was on a panel discussion at the Housing Action Illinois conference.



Bridge to Belongings

IPM Partnership



Spring Clothing Drive



**20 volunteers,
1100 items collected
25 \$100 gift cards**



Fall Clothing Drive

BPB partnered with Integrated Project Management Company (IPM), who generously hosted our 2022 Fall Clothing Drive as part of their philanthropic outreach program. IPM is a nationwide consulting firm headquartered in Burr Ridge, IL. With shared information about the needs of our newcomer families, IPM ran a targeted clothing drive among their employee population and was able to gather and purchase approximately 1,000 needed items for our families to stay warm in winter.

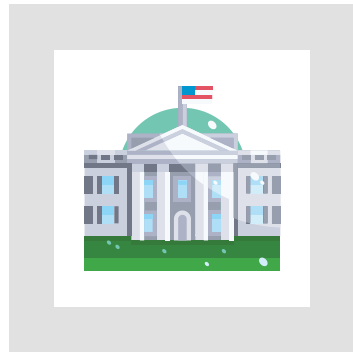


**1000 items collected
Worth \$10,000**

IPM also gave BPB a platform to raise awareness about our organization and the refugee experience by hosting a company wide learning event in which Lori Lucchetti and Roqayah Mohammed shared their stories. As a token of our appreciation, BPB has awarded IPM with a BPB Recognition Award. We are thankful for our partnership with IPM and especially want to thank Greg Kain, Jonathan Merrick and Jessie Ellerbrock.



Advocacy



Afghan Adjustment Act

BPB continues to hold discussions with Congressional Representatives to encourage passage of the AAA to improve the status of Afghan evacuees.



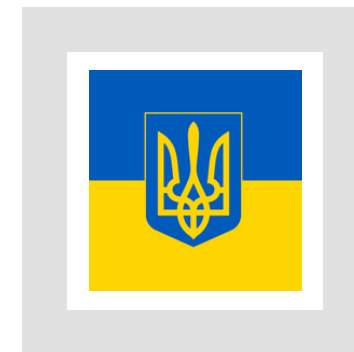
Affordable Housing

Worked at a state and local level to advocate for affordable housing for our newcomers. Initiated rent guarantee to replace landlord credit requirements. Presented at Housing Action Illinois (HAI) Conference - Affordable Housing Issues for Refugees



Humanitarian Parole

Worked with the State Department through AfghanEvac to expedite pending cases. Advocated for extension of Humanitarian Parolee status.



Uniting for Ukraine

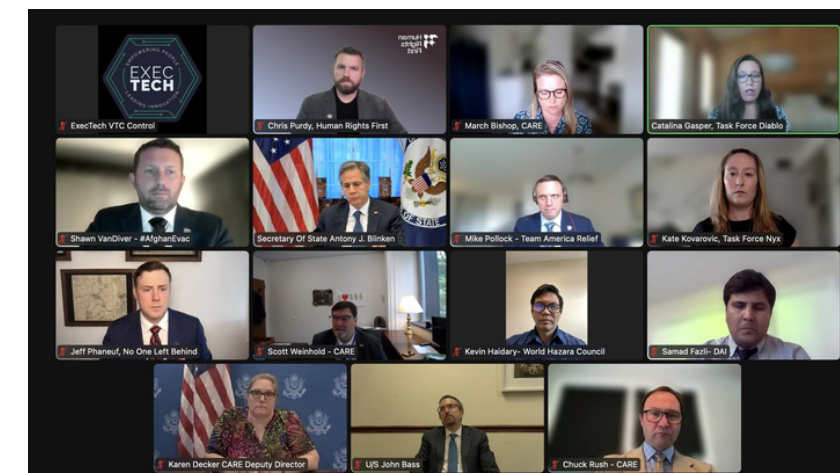
BPB advocated for support of the new sponsorship program. We hosted a learning luncheon with Welcome.US. We also assisted Ukrainian newcomers with food, household items and legal help.

Reimagining Newcomer Resettlement

2022 was a pivotal year for policies that affected newcomer resettlement. The U.S. expanded beyond the traditional refugee resettlement process due to the global crisis that displaced people from Afghanistan and Ukraine. Over 80,000 Afghans entered the U.S. during Operation Allies Welcome and Enduring Welcome under Humanitarian Parole. Over 100,000 Ukrainians were offered refuge in the U.S. through Sponsorship.

With a call to action to all Americans to sponsor Afghan and Ukrainian newcomers, a bridge to Welcoming Communities was created. BPB participated by providing this bridge of mentoring and sponsoring newcomers on their journey to belonging and self-sufficiency.

Public and private partnerships are essential. As a member of the AfghanEvac coalition, BPB had the opportunity to meet virtually with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in the Summer of 2022, where he reaffirmed the partnership between USCIS and AfghanEvac.



“I personally, and all of us at State, continue to be deeply grateful for the collaboration with the Coalition on supporting Afghans in relocation and resettling in the United States. Listening to your stories of challenges and successes exemplifies our close public-private partnership.”

Secretary Blinken, July 20, 2022

According to Welcome.US, America is “reimagining refugee resettlement as a whole-country effort.” BPB received a Welcome.US grant to continue the resettlement of Afghan newcomers. We continue to support the community-centered model for refugee and newcomer integration that is more than simply a response to this moment. It is a pathway to better addressing the challenge of global displacement.



All Faiths Collaborative - Iftar Dinner



During Ramadan, BPB Bridge Builders and our newcomer 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.



Family Fun Day



On June 12, 2022, our Bridge Builders and newcomer families gathered together 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.



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



Moira Pollard
Treasurer



Leslie Berkowitz
Secretary



Nneka Obasi
Bridge to Belongings



Nicki Nair
Education Fund

Operations



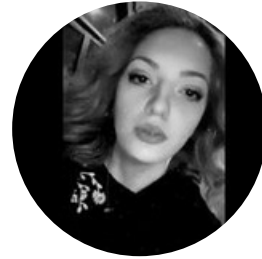
Kevin Harvey
Communications



Lesley Allen
Volunteers



Roqayah Mohammed
Intern



Ardita Roci
Family Support



Cynthia Hernandez
Finance



Sarah Lane-Hill
Volunteers



Ahadi Chibabira



Rahmatullah Hamraz



Sue Romanoski



Christina Collins



Marcia Heeter



Robin Stutman



Zeyad



Pam Devereux



Ismail



Bridget Suse



Monique Woel
Emeritus Board Member



Rebecca Grundy



Jordan Josselis



Donna Virklan

Partners



Sponsors



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

2022 Financials

Donors

Year ended December 31, 2022

Operating Revenues

Individual Contributions	\$103,729
Contributed Goods and Services	\$41,043
Foundation and Private Grants	\$56,984
Corporate Donations and Matching	\$16,503

Total Operating Revenues	\$218,259
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Operating Expenses

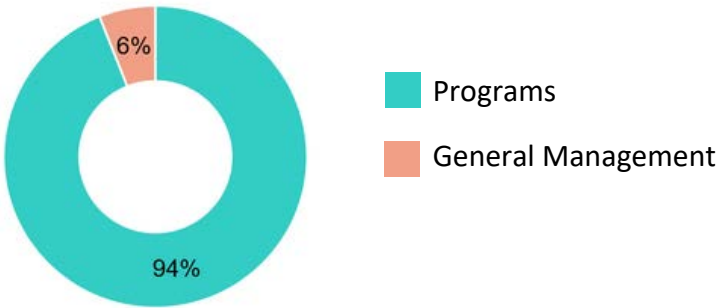
Program Services	
Mentoring/Sponsoring	\$101,688
Educational/Advocacy	\$63,540
Bridge to Belongings	\$41,043
Supporting Services	
Administrative	\$13,914

Total Operating Expenses	\$220,185
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Excess of operating revenues over operating expenses	-\$1,926
Increase in net assets	-\$1,926
Net assets, beginning of year	\$54,987

NET ASSETS END OF YEAR	\$53,061
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BPB Fundraising Efficiency



Pillars \$1000+

Anonymous	Lori and Robert Lucchetti
Brian and Ann Balusek	Mohammed Minhaj
Leslie and Mike Berkowitz	Nigar (Nicki) Nair
Katherine Kevil Brown	Nneka Obasi
Linda Castiglione	Robert and Barbara Perkaus
Christina Collins	Emily Pollard
Pam Devereux	Moira and Mike Pollard
Elisha and Nina Gray	Kevin Reardon
Carol Jansson	Barbara Scott
Brian Keating	Kerry and Phil Suse
Sheila Holder	Joanne and Gary Tarazi
Komlofske Charitable Fund	

Friends \$150 - \$999

Benevity	David Martin
Lisa Branzetti	Carol and Don Molyneux
Richard Berkowitz	William and Mary McGrath
Margaret Cushman	Nisha Nair
Jennifer Daniels	Tanya Nair
John Donahue	Network for Good
Ellen Elias	Dan Pollard
Mark and Karen Ferguson	Patrick and Rose Pollard
Marilyn Garcia	William and Kathleen Riordan
John and Reshma Haugen	John Salvino
Sarah Lane-Hill	George and Lisa Shadid
Colleen and Robert Josellis	Larry Stanton and Susan Loeb
Barbara Kantrow	Kevin and Tricia Stewart
Jodi Klein	Abigail Thomsen
Diane and Bob Langert	Katherine Tully
Michele Levitt	Donna Virklan
Arif Marchant and Waheeda Hirani	Karen Zylberman

BPB Bridge Builder Award



Marianne Gimon
2022 Recipient



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.

Ann Balusek
2021 Recipient

