

# BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"

## BPB Family Updates

BPB welcomed two new families from Venezuela. Carlos and Yulexi have three sons and Illiana and Luis have one son. They each arrived in Chicago after long journeys which took them through the Darien Gap, a treacherous and dangerous route from Venezuela to the U.S. Like so many other migrants, both families were seeking refuge from violence driven by a hope for safety and economic opportunity in the U.S. Since arriving in Chicago,



Welcoming our new Venezuelan Family



Summer Fun (pg. 4)

both families have been living in shelters. BPB is working with Catholic Charities to obtain housing for both families. All of the children have started school outfitted with clothes and backpacks from the BPB store. Bridge Builders also facilitated activities outside of the shelter including picnics in the park and a trip to a Chicago Dogs baseball game. Thanks to a generous donation from a BPB Pillar, these families will continue to have financial support from BPB as they resettle in the Chicago area.



June was an exciting month of graduations. Nehru and his family celebrated his graduation from Sullivan High School. This was a special moment for the whole family who arrived in Chicago from a refugee camp in Burundi in 2019. Bridge Builders, Kerry and Phil Suse also attended the graduation ceremony and share this quote from one of Nuhru’s teachers: “Nuhru is a highly motivated student and we expect him to have great success in college.” BPB is excited to watch Nuhru take this next step as he starts his freshman year at University of Illinois, Chicago, on a full scholarship.

*continues on page 6*

NOVEMBER 30, 2023

BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

**Annual BENEFIT**

5 YEARS OF IMPACTING LIVES

**GATHER FOR GOOD**

EMPOWERING WELL-BEING

HOME EDUCATION WORK HEALTH / WELLNESS

**REGISTER NOW: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2023**

**CALENDAR**

Reading Refuge Book Club

Wed. October 25th

Junior Book Club

Weekly

Gather for Good

November 30th



## Dear Bridge Builders,

Congratulations on your generosity offered to all of the new refugees, asylees and parolees entering Chicago and Illinois. You have provided rent support, food, clothing, personal hygiene items, legal assistance, outings and friendship

to many families housed in the shelters. According to Liamh, age 5. "We are thankful to have clothing since all got lost in the forest. We are here for our future."

Working alongside Catholic Charities and thanks to generous BPB sponsors, BPB is able to assist Venezuelan families find housing and schooling for their children. Bridge Builders have already created sponsoring/mentoring teams for the families on this initial journey in America.

Chicago is overwhelmed with newcomers - some have a pathway to citizenship and others are waiting for the opportunity to earn the American dream. As one individual said "America was built by immigrants. I am here to help build." Bridge Builders can create more welcoming communities throughout our State.

We call on Governor Pritzker and Mayor Johnson to consider working with mayors throughout our "Prairie State" to resettle newcomers. Demonstrate to fellow Americans how a sanctuary state can be a true welcoming state. We should be willing to hire the new talent for needed jobs. There are many sister organizations, companies, families and faith organizations throughout Illinois who will sign up to assist integrating our newcomers into their communities.

The tremendous number of newcomers in the Chicago area and our work with current refugee and parole families generates a critical Call to Action for volunteers/Bridge Builders and donors. Please join BPB in reaching more families and making a greater impact!



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.



A key ingredient to a successful sense of belonging and independence in America for our families is education. BPB established an Education Fund in December 2022. The Fund provides access to education, career development, and extra-curricular learning opportunities for our families.

Given the long term lack of dental care for almost all our newcomer families due to poor or no dental services in refugee camps or countries of origin, we initiated a Call to Action. Thank you to our generous donors who donated \$4,000 to assist with root canals, crowns and serious surgeries.

Welcome to our new Board Member Nigar (Nicki) Nair. She has immediately joined the Education Fund Committee and looks forward to expanding BPB's educational support to our families to assist them in reaching independence.

Thank you to the wonderful Josellis Family for a magical Family Fun Day in June in the park with volunteers, families and donors.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Gather for Good Annual Event on November 30, at The Glen Club, 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. We are thrilled to gather in person, something we have not done since 2019. Come and join BPB's fifth year celebration and the opportunity to raise funds for Empowering Well-Being for our families.

Thank you to our donors, volunteers, speakers and communities for all the 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 2023 Family Fun Day



On June 10th, Bridge Builders and newcomer families gathered once again at Lovelace Park in Evanston for BPB’s annual Family Fun Day. The afternoon was filled with joyful smiles, much laughter and a friendly game of soccer. Everyone enjoyed the delicious Syrian and Afghan desserts made by Ghufran and Gulaly as well as a variety of ice cream treats. Another highlight was the introduction of tie dyeing t-shirts thanks to Board Member Leslie Berkowitz. Thanks again to Bridge Builder Jordan Josellis and his family for coordinating this event and thanks to WGN TV for the [interview that appeared on the evening news](#).

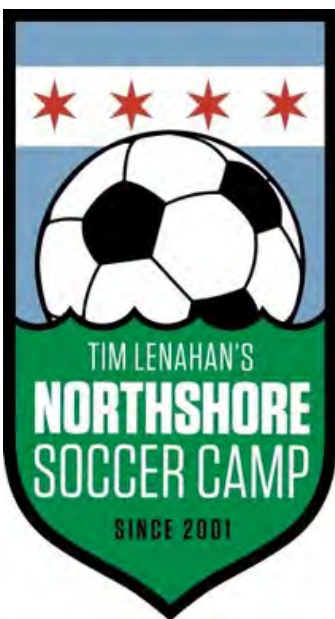




## Summer Fun



Summer camp was an exciting new addition to BPB's Mentoring and Sponsoring program. We organized weekly meetings with the children, families and new volunteers. Activities included preparing food bags for new migrants, picnics at a local park, and beach outings. Thank you to Joni and Bruce Friedman, who sponsored an evening out to a Chicago Dogs baseball game.

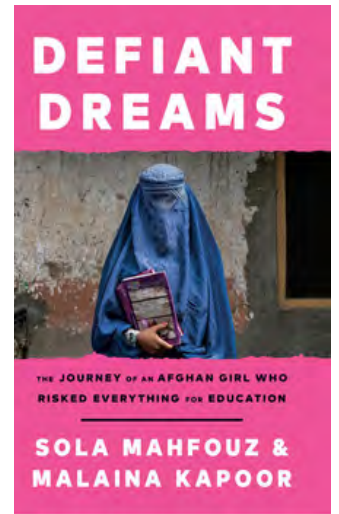
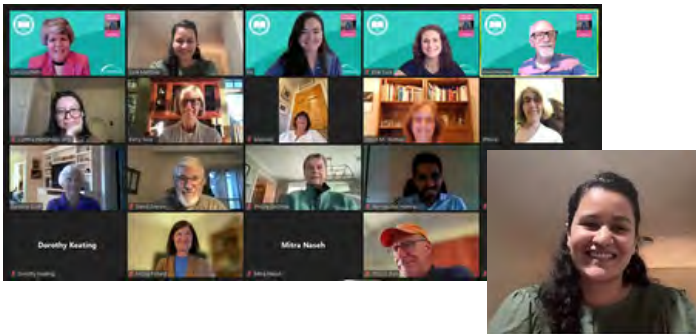


Tim Lenahan's Northshore Soccer Camps sponsored four children who attended the sports camp for one week. This experience enabled the participants to continue to develop their soccer skills. The Camp offered personalized instruction as well as encouraged team building. The parents were also provided the opportunity to cheer and support their players at the games.

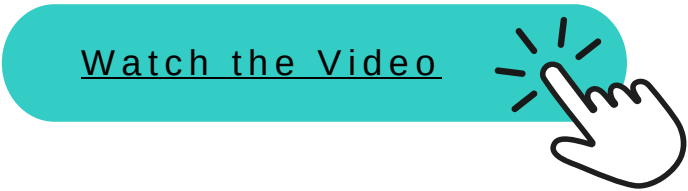


## Reading Refuge Book Club

BPB welcomed Sola Mahfouz, co-author of *Defiant Dreams: The Journey of an Afghan Girl Who Risked Everything for an Education*, to our Reading Refuge Book Club. Sola began the evening by reading a powerful passage from the book which chronicles her tumultuous journey from an oppressed childhood in Afghanistan to becoming a quantum computing researcher at Tufts University.

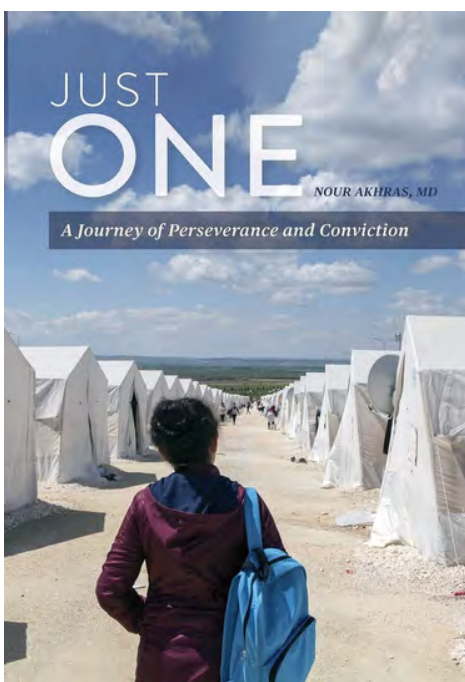


Sola's story is a testament to the indomitable human spirit and the quest for knowledge against adversity.



During the evening, Sola shared details of how she dared to break free from the stereotypical prescriptions of Afghan society to achieve an education. Her thoughtful telling of her story and her answers to Bridge Builder questions serve as a beacon of light to all of us.

## Next Reading Refuge Book Club - October 25



Please join us for our next Reading Refuge Book Club on October 25 from 7-8 pm. We will be co-hosting this event with the Syrian Community Network. Our discussion is about *Just One: A Journey of Perseverance and Conviction* by Nour Akhras, M.D. Dr. Akhras' book chronicles her life as a Syrian American wife, mother and infectious disease physician who has provided humanitarian aid in war torn countries around the globe.



## *Bridge to Belongings*

Our Rosemary Gabriel Shop was very busy during the summer months as Bridge Builders helped many newcomers settle into their homes in Chicago as well as supported asylees still waiting for housing. We also provided backpacks to our partner, ICNA Relief Chicago whose members will distribute them to newcomer students. As always, our generous donors made this assistance possible.



## *Family Updates* (continued from pg1)



Rayyan and Rabia celebrated their graduations from Lincoln Junior High in Skokie. Their ceremony was attended by their families as well as their Bridge Builders teams, who have tutored and mentored the girls. Rayyan and Rabia have started at Niles West High School - a place neither of them could have imagined just a few years ago when Rayyan was living in a refugee camp in Turkey and Rabia was living in an increasingly unstable Afghanistan.

BPB continues to tutor Rayyan and Rabia and their younger brothers and sisters thanks to volunteers Sarah, Emily, Nathan, Sophie, Abby, Ardita, Kevin, Susie, Andrew, Loren, Lillian, Del, Bruce and Joni.

BPB recognized Rabia and Rayyan's graduation with a picnic at Oakton Park. Volunteers, family members and board members played soccer and ate cake and Syrian and Afghan treats. It was a joint celebration honoring our co-founder Ahlam's birthday. Best wishes to the new grads!



Exciting news from Indiana! Zeyad and Bushra have sold the second home they rehabbed and have purchased a third home. We continue to be inspired by their entrepreneurial spirit and hard work. All of their children are thriving in school led by Zahra entering her sophomore year at University of Indiana and Adam entering first grade.

Congratulations to Basharmal, who began a financial internship at Alera Group, thanks to a new BPB volunteer. We wish Basharmal great success in this internship and in completing his Masters in Accounting. We are also happy to report that the family's new baby girl is doing well!



## *New Board Member - Nigar (Nicki) Nair*



Nicki, our new Board member, is a retired physician who worked at Boys Town in Omaha for 35 years. Her background includes clinical work, as well as teaching and research. After retiring in 2001 and moving to Chicago, Nicki wanted to continue to volunteer. She strongly believes that diversity adds richness to society, helping new residents adapt and learn our culture is essential. Nicki is a proud grandmother of seven grandchildren. Being an immigrant herself, she has learned a lot from her children and now is learning the current culture to include social media from the next generation.

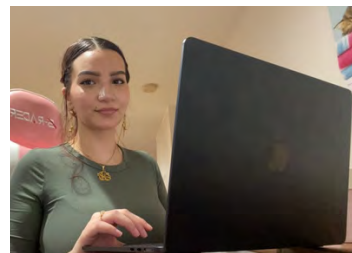
## *Education Fund*



We want to thank our Bridge Builders, Donna Virklan, Nicki Nair, and Del Bloem for agreeing to lead our Educational Fund Committee. Donna, a member of BPB's Advisory Board, is a retired high school college counselor at Niles North High School in Skokie. Nicki is our new Board member (see above). Del, a new BPB volunteer, is the retired President of Healthcare Information Systems and former Board President of Youth Guidance, a Chicago area non-profit.

PB established its Educational Fund in 2022 through the generosity of attendees at our Gather for Good Annual Event.

The purpose of the Education Fund is to support activities that provide and manage educational initiatives for BPB's families. The goal is to empower our families by providing access to education, career development, and extra-curricular learning opportunities that promote self-reliance, social integration and long-term success.



Zahra, a junior at Indiana University is thrilled with her new laptop provided to her through the new BPB Education Fund.

"Thank you so much! I really appreciate it. It's going to help me out with school a lot. I love it!"

## *Dental Assistance*

Thank you to the many generous donors who contributed to our Dental Care Fund for many of our families. We successfully raised \$4,000.

Many of our newcomers have complex dental problems that have resulted from a lifetime of cumulative lack of professional dental care. They now suffer from severe tooth pain that urgently needs attention yet they don't have the means or support to receive the care they need. Thank you for funding our appeal. We have been able to support Basharmal, Ahmad, Marwa, Soheila, Ali and Razieh. Dental care consists of crowns, root canals and cavities filled.

BPB also recognizes and thanks the generous dentists who have performed dental services on a pro bono basis.

- Dr. Chris Krueger
- Dr. Peter Tomaselli, Chicago Smile Design
- Dr. Gerald Gutsell
- Dr. Thomas Murray, Dental Innovations
- Dr. Barry Cherny, Oral Surgery and Implants
- Dr. Martin Rogers, Best Endodontics
- Dr. Larry Farsakian, Highland Park Endodontists



## Volunteer Spotlight - The Goby Family



Earlier this year, Emily Goby and her two teenage children Sophie and Nathan started volunteering with Building Peaceful Bridges. Sophie is a junior Regina Dominican High School and active in her school community. She enjoys playing sports (especially volleyball), serves as an ambassador to prospective students and participates in leadership activities at school. She is outgoing and enjoys meeting the BPB refugee families, especially the children. Nathan is a high school freshman at Loyola Academy who is enjoying being at a new school and meeting new friends. He loves playing baseball, enjoys fishing and spends free time watching all Chicago sports teams.

The Goby Family was looking for a way to get involved with an organization where they could volunteer together and make a difference. Building Peaceful Bridges stood out to them with its focus on helping refugee families settle in a new city and new country. They learned about BPB from their neighbor Moira Pollard (BPB Board member) who is very active. The more they learned, the more they could see there were many ways to get involved and help families adjust to life in Chicago.

The Gobys have felt fortunate to help in a number of ways. First, Emily, Sophie and Nathan have spent time tutoring and playing educational games with a family from Afghanistan who have four young children. While Sophie and Nathan had never tutored before, they quickly learned that assisting others only requires a willingness to help, patience and a little creativity. Nathan received some tutoring himself in math from the father, Rahmat, while he was at their home! Emily credits Ardita Roci - the BPB liaison who has introduced them to the families - with feeling so comfortable bridging the cultural and language gaps encountered.

The Gobys have also helped sort and organize clothing and houseware donations for Bridge to Belongings. Recently they were even able to help BPB make meals for a group of migrants who were living at a nearby police precinct. They loved working alongside other volunteers, refugees and BPB representatives to meet the needs of the migrants. They are now looking forward to meeting a new family in Skokie in September where they will tutor and spend time with the family.

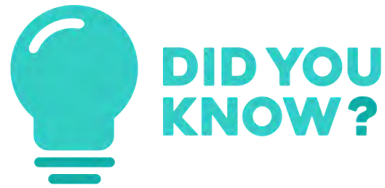
The Goby family says they are extremely grateful to have become involved with BPB. The teens have learned that they have skills and experience that can be applied to making a real difference in the lives of newcomers to Chicago. The Gobys feel that the BPB organization is a community that has given them a chance to connect with families from different cultures in a meaningful way!

### **We Want You!**

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

**VOLUNTEER**





BPB was interviewed along with 54 other organizations in the Spring by the Urban Institute and the University of Chicago for their upcoming report on understanding how Afghan evacuees are doing after a year and a half of their arrival in the U.S. Please read the [highlights of the upcoming report here](#).



BPB is tremendously grateful to Greentarget for the extensive pro bono public relations support they provided to BPB over the last 3 months. The very talented team of Lisa Seidenberg, Joe Eichner, Emily Stuts and Niki Sodetz have helped BPB skillfully communicate our story and enabled us to broaden our reach through a unique mix of earned media. We are happy to announce that Greentarget has extended its pro bono work with BPB for another 3 months. Please click the link below to see a sample of their outstanding work and look for more great news to come!

Joe Eichner, Associate VP at Greentarget, joins BPB for our 5th year luncheon.

[See BPB In the Media](#)

## Join the BPB Team

BPB is looking to fill the following positions:

- [Family Support Manager](#)
- [Social Media Intern](#)
- [Administrative Assistant](#)
- [Grant Writer](#)

Click on title to see job description.

To apply or to find out more, contact us at [jobs@buildingpeacefulbridges.org](mailto:jobs@buildingpeacefulbridges.org)



# Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

Be a Donor, Educator, Influencer, Mentor, Speaker, Sponsor

## Partners



## Sponsors



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### OUR BELIEFS

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

