



BUILDING PEACEFUL BRIDGES

"Bridging the hearts and minds of all people"

BPB Family Updates

Two of our Venezuelan families have moved out of the shelter and into apartments thanks to Catholic Charities and BPB sponsors. Volunteers and donors provided household items, furniture, kitchen and bedding to make their living space a comfortable home. The children enjoyed games with Thomas and other volunteers during the Fall.



BPB Volunteer Thomas (r) with Venezuelan families.

BPB volunteers celebrated various holidays with our families. Susie, Andrew, Joni, Bruce and Abby had fun carving pumpkins with Hadya, Zainab, Reshad, Rayyan, Hadi and Taleb. The kids collected bags full of candy trick-or-treating. Dental visits are next.



Ali and Razieh's family enjoyed a Hanukkah feast with Laura, Meg and Marilyn. This is a traditional event for the family and team.



Christopher and Noah are waiting for Santa and will enjoy presents donated by BPB volunteers.

BPB welcomes Spanish speaking mentors to assist us with our new families.

Many of the families continue to experience dental issues, but thanks to Dr. Gerald Gutsell, Dr. Michael Nick and Dr. Larry Farsakian, these issues are being addressed.



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <u>Iftar Dinner</u> | <u>Junior Book Club</u> | <u>Book Club</u> |
| March | Weekly | Quarterly |



Dear Bridge Builders,

I'd like to begin by thanking all of you for answering the Call to Action for support this past year. Whether you have volunteered your time, talent or treasure, all of these are important for BPB and the newcomers we welcome.

The images from our recent events capture the spirit of our organization; our newcomers differ in language, faith, origins, but they come together with all of us to celebrate each other and our blessings. Our first ever BPB Thanksgiving celebration with some of the families was truly unique as food from all different cultures was shared, including a Halal turkey! We hope to repeat the lovely experience next year.

Bridge Builders, you are true Humanitarians. You are doers, providing support to our families and impact to our communities. You put true meaning into "We the People", "give me your tired and poor" and "I have a Dream". Your love and compassion for our fellow newcomers motivates families to thrive and not just survive.

Gather for Good features large this year as the event was finally back in person. It was amazing to see all the familiar faces of those who have journeyed with us for five years and the eager faces of new friends who want to support BPB and our mission. Five years-wow! Gather for Good was a celebration of our

Join the BPB Team

Family Support Manager
Administrative Assistant
Grant Writer

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hard work these years and the enthusiasm of those present provided an encouraging vision of our potential growth in the next five years. The overwhelmingly positive response to the speakers and the spiritual leaders was heartwarming. As one attendee noted, "It was a happy and uplifting evening."

BPB has expanded its efforts to help newcomers through outreach to the growing migrant population in Chicago. Board members and volunteers have collected household goods and clothing for distribution and provided meals to many migrants who find themselves in shelters, police stations or fire stations. We expect to continue this outreach given the number of people in need.

I'd like to officially welcome and introduce two new Board members: Del Bloem and Bruce Friedman. They each bring career experiences and skills that will assist in the future growth of BPB.

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

HAPPY 2024!



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 newcomer populations through their stories.



BPB 2023 Gather for Good

On November 30th we hosted BPB’s Gather for Good Annual Event. We were thrilled to be in person again after three years of virtual events. We were honored to share our fifth year anniversary celebration with so many friends and family. The energy in the room was full of passion for helping newcomers thrive in America. We successfully reached our fundraising goals thanks to the incredible generosity of our community. These funds will enable BPB to continue to support our new neighbors.



Lori Lucchetti’s opening remarks set the tone for an evening of commitment to BPB’s mission. “At tonight’s all faiths celebration, may we be a source of inspiration, peace and blessing for all of our families and welcoming communities.” Her remarks were followed by blessings from Rabbi Isaac Serota-Makom, Pastor Jeffrey Phillips, and Imam Irfan Sarwar.



The inspiring program included a passionate testimonial by Moira Pollard, BPB Board member and family mentor. Moira described the tumultuous journey of a young Afghan woman, whom she mentors; beginning with her escape from Kabul on the day that city fell to the Taliban and ultimately to Chicago. Moira told the audience “the path is neither short nor straight. There are ups and downs. The number of refugees and migrants in Chicago is staggering. BPB can’t help everyone, but with your help we will reach more people who deserve the care and commitment our organization provides.”



Next, Rabia Moradi shared a speech she wrote for her junior high class, “The Day My Life Changed Forever.”. Rabia shared that her family arrived in the U.S. in 2020 following five long years of waiting and dodging the dangers of the Taliban as they targeted her father for working as a translator for the U.S. military. “We had to prepare without anyone knowing because my dad told us the people could kidnap us and ruin our chance of moving to America. I had mixed emotions of sadness and happiness”.



Rabia's father, Ismail, receives enthusiastic gratitude for his service to America in Afghanistan.

Gather for Good

Our short film, Volunteers Are Building Peaceful Bridges, followed the testimonials.



BPB Volunteers Lucia Duffy, KK Brown and Emily Pollard

Thank you to all of the volunteers who shared their experiences as well as to the many other volunteers for their dedication to our mission.



Next on the program was our Bridge Builder Award. Lori presented the award to Pam Devereux, the CEO of Gift of Adoption. As Lori said that night, “Pam, your unwavering commitment to coaching and teaching BPB Board Members and Staff the ‘Right Stuff’ to build an impactful nonprofit over the last five years has been essential to BPB’s growth”.



Board Member, Kerry Suse (r). Her son, Charlie, and Bridge Builder Jordan Josellis (above)



Rabia with Monique Woel, previous Bridge Builder awardee and Board Member Emeritus

We thank everyone who sponsored and attended the event and everyone who has supported BPB throughout the years. We look forward to working together to continue “bridging the hearts and minds of all people.”



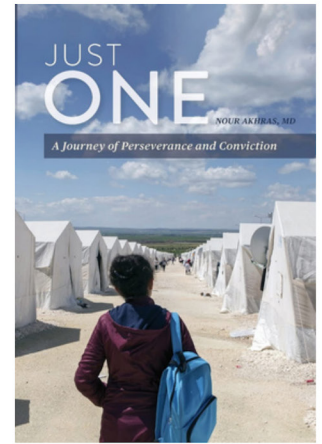
This event would not have been possible without the production team of Lexy Gore and Leslie Berkowitz. Their incredible energy and effort delivered a wonderful evening of celebration. A great time was had by all including the winners of the 50/50 raffle and the silent auction!



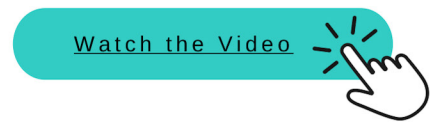
LEFT: GFG Co-chairs, Leslie Berkowitz and Lexy Gore. MIDDLE: Zainab Reshad and Zahra selling 50/50 raffle tickets to Bridge Builders Laura Kushner and Stuart Wolf. RIGHT: Board Member Nneka Obasi and her friend, Joy Brown, who won the Sightseeing Flight auction.

Reading Refuge Book Club

BPB co-hosted our Book Club with the Syrian Community Network. We were honored to have Dr. Nour Akhras discuss her book, *Just One: A Journey of Perseverance and Conviction*. The 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. Dr. Akhras was inspiring with her thoughtful insights that go to the core of what it means to be a caring and compassionate human. What an amazing and accomplished person!



We thank our co-sponsor, Syrian Community Network and give a special thanks to the Executive Director, Suzanne Akhras, and the Director of Development, Lauren West, for being outstanding partners in this event.



Thanksgiving

In November we gathered together with BPB families and volunteers to celebrate Thanksgiving. We thank Pastor Jeffrey Phillips of the Winnetka Congregational Church for hosting the event and the Nair family for their sponsorship. We were lucky to have Chef Hamid back to prepare a delicious meal. The children were especially excited to have use of the gym for soccer and basketball. Board member Nicki Nair's granddaughter, Lea, shared her heart warming reflection on Thanksgiving.



Bridge to Belongings

In response to busloads of migrants arriving in Chicago from various parts of the country, Building Peaceful Bridges (BPB) has taken proactive measures to address the needs of these newcomers. BPB strongly believes that public private partnerships are critical to addressing needs of newcomers. The surge in migrant arrivals throughout 2023 became impactful to Chicago area residents. By August, the presence of numerous migrant camps outside police stations and government facilities and in shelters could not be overlooked.

Recognizing the urgent requirements of migrant families, BPB swiftly mobilized its resources. The BPB Board, in collaboration with a dedicated group of volunteers, assessed the needs of the migrants. Subsequently, the BPB family united to source and prepare donations, including clothing and essential items.



To enhance their outreach efforts, BPB has formed partnerships with community members and organizations, notably collaborating with Youth for a Better Future (YBF), a nonprofit whose mission is to nurture and empower Chicago area youth. Through this collaboration, BPB and YBF have successfully facilitated the distribution of clothing, luggage, food, and other essential items to approximately 200 migrants, with ongoing efforts in progress.



Our Rosemary Gabriel Shop has been very busy collecting and distributing warm clothes and furniture to many of our families.

Donations can be dropped off by contacting Cindy Krizman (847-909-7349) at the St. Joseph Convent (1801 Forest Ave entrance) or by dropping donations on the front porch of the Weschler's home located at 716 Lake Avenue in Wilmette. Please label your donations for "Building Peaceful Bridges."

Current Newcomer Needs

Most immediate:

- Kitchen towels
- Kitchen tools (can opener, etc)

Ongoing:

- Diapers of all sizes
- Laundry detergent
- Feminine hygiene products
- All cleaning products



Volunteer Spotlight - Lucia Duffy



Lucia Duffy is 17 years old and a junior at Walter Payton College Preparatory. She is a member of the policy debate, Model UN, cheerleading, and sailing teams. Lucia interned for Brad Schneider for Congress last summer, which furthered her interest in politics and advocacy. Lucia really enjoys the opportunity she gets to mentor and intern for Building Peaceful Bridges, as she gets to experience multiple sides of an organization and help her community!

We Want You!

Spanish speaking volunteers needed!

VOLUNTEER

New Board Members



BPB welcomes two new Board members. Del Bloem's career began with an internal consulting position at FMC Corporation and starting an international medical diagnostic company as well as two additional small businesses. He has held leadership positions with a number of not-for-profit boards, including Board President at Youth Guidance, a social service organization focused on creating educational opportunities for underprivileged youth. He holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Lehigh University and a master's degree in business administration from the University of Chicago. He was an officer in the Air Defense Artillery branch of the U.S. Army. Del's avocations are outdoor sports, political activities, and writing. He lives in the northwest suburbs of Chicago and has three children and five grandchildren who live nearby.

Bruce Friedman is Senior Vice President at Alera Group, an insurance and financial services company. He focuses his practice on helping people who are going through difficult transitions and seeks to find solutions designed to protect his clients. He began his career at Northern Trust in Chicago, specializing in Large Corporate ERISA as well as Personal Trust and Investment Management. Bruce holds a bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and received Divorce Mediation Training at Northwestern University. He is former Chairman of the City of Highland Park Traffic Commission and a member of The Chicago Estate Planning Council. He and his wife live in Highland Park, Illinois. They have three children. Their daughter Abby is a BPB mentor. Bruce is a passionate traveler who enjoys exploring new places with his family. He is also active in tennis and pickle ball, and is an avid fisherman.



Thank you for supporting the BPB mission!

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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.

