



BUILDING **PEACEFUL** BRIDGES

# IMPACT REPORT

20  
23

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*Reimagining Newcomer Resettlement*



# MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

2023 has been a transformative year for Building Peaceful Bridges (BPB). Thanks to your unwavering support and belief in our mission, we have achieved remarkable success enabling newcomers to reach a sense of belonging and independence in America and were able to expand our welcoming communities.

We have witnessed significant growth and impact in several key areas:

- **Newcomer Stability:** Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of our work is witnessing the personal successes of those we support. From securing stable housing, food, and employment to achieving educational milestones and gaining citizenship, the stories of transformation are a testament to the resilience of refugees, parolees and migrants and the effectiveness of BPB programs.
- **Strengthened Partnerships:** Our collaborative efforts with other nonprofits, faith-based organizations, corporations and government agencies have grown stronger and enabled us to offer more wrap-around services to address the diverse needs of our families. In 2023 alone, we assisted more than 550 individuals, a 22% increase from the previous year.
- **Increased Awareness:** We have made significant strides in raising awareness about newcomer challenges, fostering a culture of inclusion and dismantling misconceptions. Through educational events, public speaking engagements, and media coverage, we increased BPB’s reach by 50%, amplifying newcomer voices and seeking to influence positive changes in national and state policies.
- **Sustainable Growth:** Financially, we worked towards continued stability and growth with over 100 sponsors and donors to expand our programs, improve operational efficiency and build additional infrastructure.

In every area of our operations, we have exceeded expectations, thanks to your generosity and the dedication of our team. Our volunteers are the heartbeat of Building Peaceful Bridges, providing the essential strength and spirit that drive our mission forward.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to deepening our impact with newcomers and communities, enhancing our partnerships, expanding our donor base and continuing to strengthen our advocacy efforts. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and are confident that, with your continued support, we will achieve even greater milestones.



*Lori C. Lucchetti*

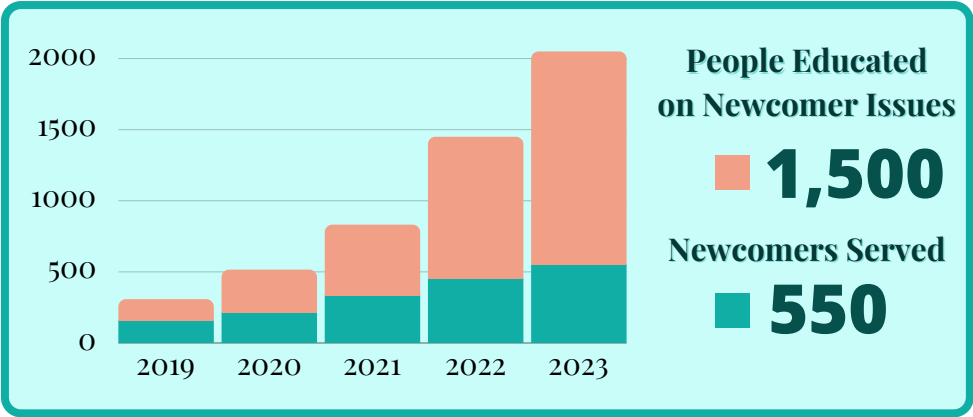
Lori C. Lucchetti  
President  
Co-Founder



Ahlam (Al-Jebory) Mahmood  
Co-Founder  
Board Member

# MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2023



**Members**  
**10**

Grew our  
All Faiths Collaborative  
for Newcomers

**\$57,000+**

**BRIDGE TO BELONGINGS**

In-Kind Donations  
Received and Distributed



2023 BPB families came from the Middle East,  
Central Africa, and South America.



**Volunteer Hours**  
**10,000+**

**ESL Hours**  
**2,000+**



HOLISTIC | FAMILY BASED | COLLABORATIVE | VOLUNTEER DRIVEN



# MISSION - VISION - VALUES

Building Peaceful Bridges is a nonprofit organization supporting people of all faiths whose mission is to:

- foster multicultural relationships
- assist the integration of newcomers into American society
- educate communities on the challenges facing newcomer populations



## Who is a “newcomer”?

A newcomer encompasses individuals and families that are classified as refugees, asylees, parolees, and immigrants.



BPB is committed to serving and supporting newcomers on their path to independence by providing financial assistance, ESL classes, academic tutoring, community events, clothing/ book drives, and much more.



# PROGRAMS



## *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 newcomers 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 Refuge Book Club" and a "Junior Book Club." We also present at speaking engagements in an effort to reach a wider audience and speak personally to attendees. 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 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 the U.S. Department of State.

Major advocacy issues in 2023 included:

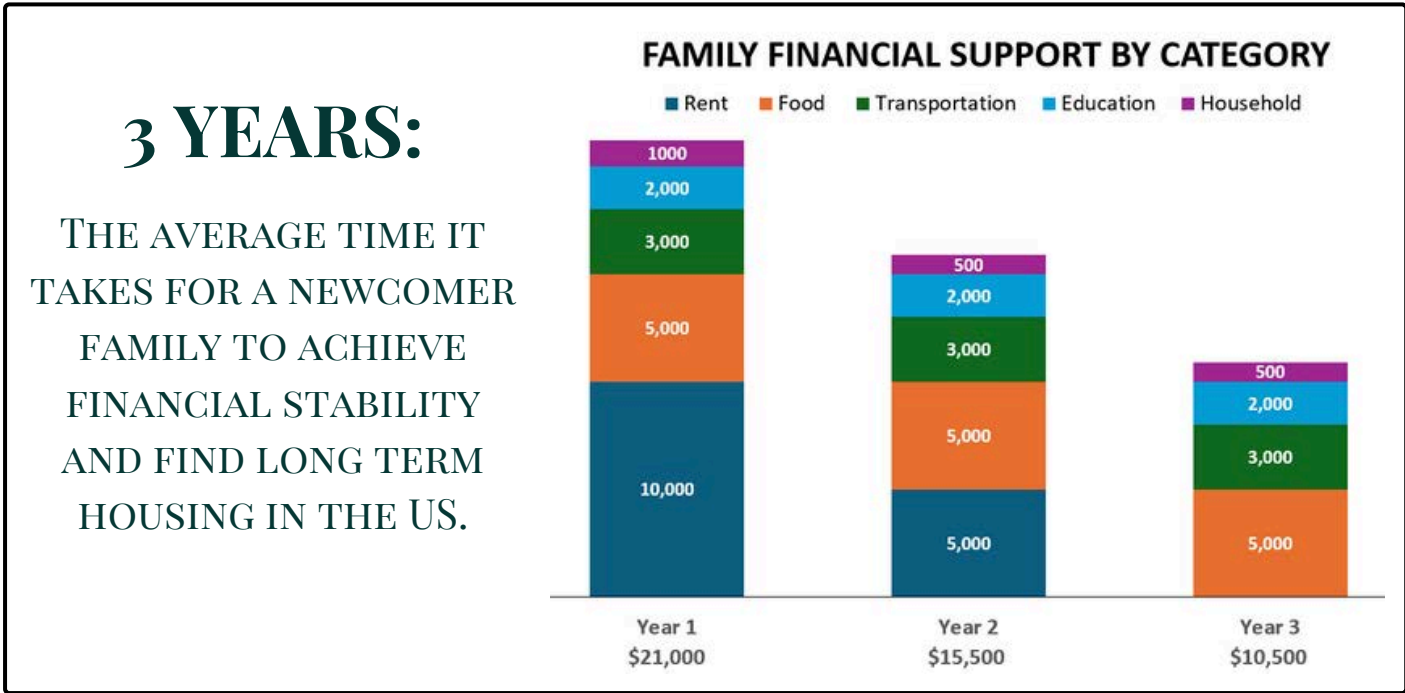
- Affordable Housing
- Humanitarian Parole
- Afghan Adjustment Act
- Uniting for Ukraine
- Reimagining Resettlement



# MENTORING AND SPONSORING



BPB Volunteers are the backbone of the Mentoring and Sponsoring Program. Our volunteers are each assigned to a family to support. With weekly family visits and bonding activities, our families and volunteers have created lifelong friendships with one another and relationships that go much deeper than just support and mentorship.



# NEWCOMER STORIES

## GHUFRAN

*“Tenacious Survivor”*



Fleeing the violence of war in Syria, Ghufraan and her children spent seven years in a Turkish refugee camp prior to arriving in the US. BPB assists her family with rent, mentoring and medical support. Ghufraan hopes to find work, using her sewing and cooking skills. She takes English classes at Oakton College. The children are all thriving in school and enjoy sports and other extracurricular activities.



## YULEXI & CARLOS

*“Journey Towards Hope”*

Seeking refuge from violence and driven by a hope for safety and opportunity, Yulexi, Carlos and their three sons arrived in Chicago after a treacherous journey from Venezuela through the Darien Gap. BPB’s ongoing assistance has enabled them to move from a shelter to an apartment. All of the children have started school outfitted with clothes and backpacks from the BPB RMG Shop.



# BRIDGE TO BELONGINGS

The Bridge to Belongings shop was christened the Dr. Rosemary Gabriel (RMG) Shop in 2023. 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 and Bridge to Belongings Program Coordinator, Nneka Obasi (second from right).



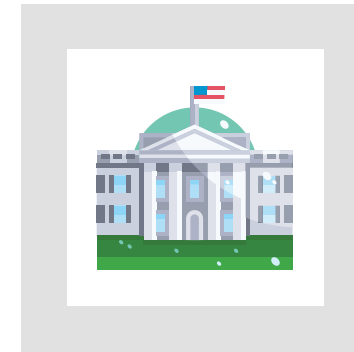
To enhance our outreach efforts, BPB formed partnerships with community members and organizations, including Youth for a Better Future (YBF), a nonprofit whose mission is to nurture and empower Chicago area youth. BPB and YBF have successfully facilitated the distribution of clothing, luggage, food, and other essential items to approximately 200 migrants.



The RMG shop is stocked with community donations for our newcomers. The dignified shopping experience is filled with seasonal clothing, household items/supplies, strollers, cribs, books, toiletries and hygiene items.



# ADVOCACY



## *Afghan Adjustment Act*

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



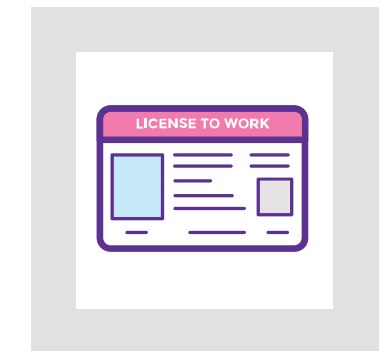
## *Humanitarian Parole*

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



## *Affordable Housing*

Reached out to state and local representatives 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.



## *Work Authorization*

Engaged with federal, state, and local authorities and partners to expedite the work authorization processing time.





# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

## Reading Refuge Book Club

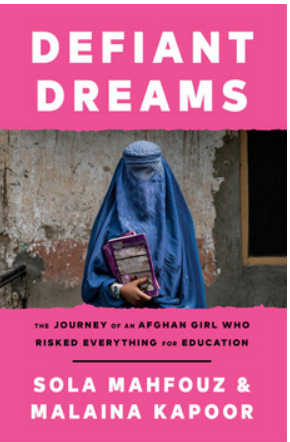
BPB held three events in 2023 as part of our Reading Refuge Book Club, including evening reading sessions and discussions with the authors. This very popular event draws 30-50 participants. We record each session and post the videos to our website and social media.



April 26, 2023

*Butterfly: From Refugee to Olympian - My Story of Rescue, Hope, and Triumph*

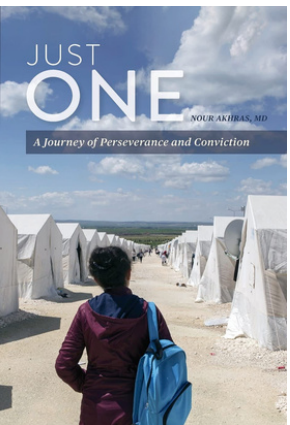
Sara and Yusra Mardini



August 30, 2023

*Defiant Dreams: The Journey of an Afghan Girl Who Risked Everything for an Education*

Sola Mahfouz and Malaina Kapoor



October 25, 2023

*Just One: A Journey of Perseverance and Conviction*

Dr. Nour Akhras



## Speaking Engagements

We have found that one of the most effective ways to educate the public on the critical issues surrounding newcomers and resettlement is to get out and talk about it. It is the stories we tell that have the most impact. In addition to small gatherings and informal discussions, BPB had three major speaking engagements in 2023: Kenilworth Union Church, Rotary Club of Wilmette, and Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish.



## Website, Social Media, and Newsletters

In 2023, BPB continued to use and expand the use of electronic media as a critical component to our educational program. Our website is the hub, social media the spokes and and our newsletters the targeted news to keep our Bridge Builders informed on the latest news about BPB and our newcomers. Our audience grew by 50% in 2023 and continues to grow as these important issues become major discussion points in the news and in political discourse.



# VOLUNTEERS

## *“Volunteers Are Building Peaceful Bridges”*

Central to our belief that volunteers are the backbone of our organization, we created a video for our annual event featuring BPB volunteers. The volunteers talk about their experience working with newcomers and with BPB. Watch the video at [buildingpeacefulbridges.org/videos](https://buildingpeacefulbridges.org/videos)



# REIMAGINING NEWCOMER RESETTLEMENT

As the world grapples with unprecedented displacement, the U.S. remains a beacon of hope for those fleeing conflicts, climate change, and adversity. While federal and state policies address forced migration, newcomer needs are most effectively met locally.

The U.S. Government, resettlement agencies, and faith-based organizations have traditionally provided short-term resettlement for refugees (typically three–six months). The new “Welcome Corp” program encourages Americans to sponsor refugees at the local level.



However, more must be done to bridge the gap between resettlement and when a refugee achieves independence and belonging. Private sector involvement is necessary for meeting long-term needs. Over the last decade, more community and non-profit organizations have joined the resettlement process to provide extended services.

BPB has reimagined refugee resettlement with a new model that fosters friendships, practical tools, and strategies to help newcomers thrive and encourages communities to be more welcoming.

The model is holistic, family-based, collaborative, relationship-centric, and volunteer-driven. BPB engages neighbors to donate time and resources, supporting newcomers on their journey to self-sufficiency and belonging. Weekly volunteer visits create hope and trust, and BPB may offer extended services based on individual circumstances.

Local collaboration among faith institutions, NGOs, government agencies, and companies is essential. We must navigate demographic change with facts, optimism, and newcomer stories to enhance public perception and engagement.

Imagine this model deployed across the U.S., generating welcoming communities and lifelong friendships. Continued local advocacy for legislation enhancing newcomers’ lives and additional investment in local organizations is critical. Additional investment is needed in local organizations to enhance the resettlement process.



# 5 YEARS STRONG

2023 marked BPB's fifth year of serving and supporting newcomers in Illinois, Northern Indiana, and Southern Wisconsin, arriving from countries such as Venezuela, Colombia, Afghanistan, Iran, Congo, and more.



*BPB President Lori Lucchetti assists WGN-TV News in interviewing Co-Founder Ahlam Mahmood at the annual Family Fun Day.*

BPB was fortunate to receive nearly 7 months of pro-bono work in 2023 from Greentarget, a major public relations firm in Chicago. The professionals at Greentarget helped us with getting our message spread to a wider audience. One of the many ways that they assisted was to secure the WGN-TV coverage of our 5th year Family Fun Day celebration. Thank you, Greentarget!



## Bridge Builder Award

Lori presented the 2023 Bridge Builder award to Pam Devereux, the CEO of Gift of Adoption, at BPB's Annual Event, Gather for Good. 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."



*Family Fun Day*



*All Faiths Collaborative Iftar Dinner*



*5th Year Luncheon*



*All Faiths Collaborative Iftar Dinner*



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Lori C. Lucchetti  
*President, Co-Founder*



Ahlam (Al-Jebory) Mahmood  
*Co-Founder*



Kerry Suse  
*Vice President*



Moira Pollard  
*Treasurer*



Nicki Nair  
*Education Fund*



Nneka Obasi  
*Bridge to Belongings*



Leslie Berkowitz  
*Secretary*



Del Bloem  
*Board Member*



Bruce Friedman  
*Board Member*

# Emeritus Board



Marcia Heeter  
*Emeritus Board Member*



Monique Woel  
*Emeritus Board Member*

# ADVISORY BOARD



Ahadi Chibabira



Christina Collins



Pam Devereux



Rebecca Grundy



Rahmatullah Hamraz



Ismail



Jordan Josselis



Sue Romanoski



Robin Stutman



Bridget Suse



Donna Virklan

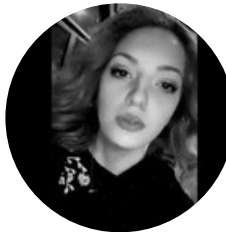


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# Operations



Kevin Harvey  
*Communications*



Ardita Roci  
*Family Support*



Lesley Allen  
*Volunteers*



Cynthia Hernandez  
*Finance*



Sarah Lane-Hill  
*Volunteers*



# PARTNERS



# SPONSORS



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



# 2023 FINANCIALS

Year ending December 31, 2023

## Operating Revenues

Individual Contributions	\$176,234
Contributed Goods and Services	\$57,493
Foundation and Private Grants	\$189,418
Corporate Donations and Matching	\$19,350

<b><u>Total Operating Revenues</u></b>	<b>\$442,496</b>
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## Operating Expenses

### **Program Services**

Mentoring/Sponsoring	\$147,362
Educational/Advocacy	\$36,570
Bridge to Belongings	\$187

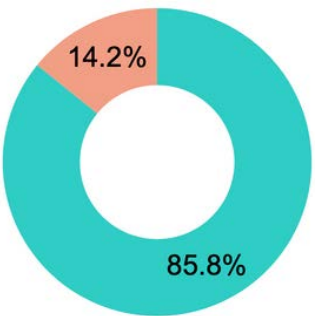
### **Supporting Services**

Administrative	\$30,373
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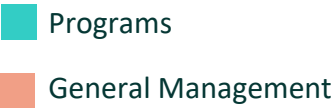
<b><u>Total Operating Expenses</u></b>	<b>\$214,491</b>
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Excess of operating revenues over operating expenses	\$228,004
Increase in net assets	\$228,004
Net assets, beginning of year	\$53,062

<b>NET ASSETS END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$281,067</b>
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**BPB Fundraising Efficiency**



# DONORS

## PILLARS \$1000+

Anonymous	Susan Garner	Moira and Mike Pollard
Mary and Joe B.	Elisha and Nina Gray	John Salvino
Brian and Ann Balusek	Joyce and Rich Hirsch	Barbara Scott
Leslie and Mike Berkowitz	Sheila Holder	Kevin and Tricia Stewart
Del Bloem	Sharon and Gerry Komlofske	Bridget Suse
Father Simon Braganza	Susie and Andrew Kramer	Ellie Suse
Katherine Kevil Brown	Lori and Bob Lucchetti	Kerry and Phil Suse
Francis Cole	Ahlam (Mahmood) Al-Jebory	Joanne and Gary Tarazi
Christina and Michael Collins	Arthur and Anne McGivern	Nassem and Jamila Ziyad
Jennifer and Timothy Daniels	Dr. Nigar (Nicki) Nair	
Pam Devereux	Nneka Obasi	
Elizabeth Feineman	Teresa and Arturo Olivera	
Bruce and Joni Friedman	Robert and Barbara Perkaus	
Marilyn and Ramon Garcia	Emily Pollard	

## FRIENDS \$150 – \$999

Lesley Allen	Air d’Marchant/Waheeda Hirani	Bill and Mary McGrath
Janet and Brian Avery	Robert Holland	Anne Morgan
Fareeda Babar	Rick and Anne Hrabe	Nisha Nair
Dr. Saeeda Bawamia	Max Jaffe	Pastor Jeffrey Phillips
Richard Berkowitz	Dr. Carol Jansson	Stephen Rapata
Sandi Berkowitz	Jordan Josellis	William and Kathleen Riordan
Mary Block	Tina Kayne	Cindy Rudman
Joyolin Brown	Jodi Klein	George and Lisa Shadid
John and Nikki Conway	Sugeeta and Ashish Kohli	Jerry Smith
Robert Dixon	Vivian and Lauren Kramer	John and Patti Smith
Ellen Elias	Cindy and Tony Krizman	Susan Loeb and Larry Stanton
Fern and Sanford Finkel	Renee Krupa	Robin Stutman
Mary and George Fitzpatrick	Laura Kushner	Abby Thomsen
Debby Fosdick	Diane and Bob Langert	Elizabeth Tisdahl
Rita Fritz	Jeff/Betsy Later/Donahue	William Urbanus
Vijayakrishna Gadi	Michele Levitt	Donna Virklan
Lexy Gore	Karen Libman	Jody and Frank Weschler
Tricia Gutekanst	Tanya Nair and Jonathan Linas	Unitarian Women
John and Reshma Haugen	Marius Lucchetti	
Sarah Lane-Hill	Glen Mangold	





## *Bridge Builder Award Recipients*



Joanna Tarazi  
2019 Recipient



Monique Woel  
2020 Recipient



Ann Balusek  
2021 Recipient



Marianne Gimon  
2022 Recipient



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