A New Definition of "Home" for the Holidays...

About this time of year, when you turn on your radio, you'll very likely hear Perry Como sing:

"Oh, there's no place like home for the holidays
'Cause, no matter how far away you roam
If you want to be happy in a million ways
For the holidays, you can't beat home, sweet home."

When you hear this classic tune, "(There's No Place Like) Home for the Holidays", you probably think about it in the context of yourself and your family gathering for "some homemade pumpkin pie."

As you think about this and other songs that describe the season's joy, I'd respectfully ask that you take the time to meditate on what it would be like for the immigrant, refugee, or asylum seeker instead of you in the same song.
For many of the people we serve, this has been the first time they've had the chance to stop roaming for a very long time—decades for some of them! For the people whom we resettle, "home" is now redefined. Home surely isn't the country that persecuted them, nor is it the refugee camp where they stayed as they were vetted.

Buffalo is now "home sweet home" for them.

So, if you happen to see a New American neighbor, offer a smile or a wave and whichever holiday greeting you think might work because the comfort and joy associated with being "home" may only be a recent and, sadly, unfamiliar experience for them. And, as Mr. Como sang,

"When you long for the sunshine of a friendly gaze
For the holidays, you can't beat home, sweet home."

In closing, I wish you all the best for the season filled with the best of everything now and in the coming year!

Jennifer Pizzo-Choi

Thanksgiving with Parkside Lutheran Church

We collaborated with the church to bring our clients the tradition of Thanksgiving dinner. It was their first American Thanksgiving, and as with last year, there was a lot of food and merriment! This is the second time we've done this celebration in
as many years, and I daresay that this becomes a holiday tradition! Here is some coverage From Channel 7 from that fun event!

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**Baby, it’s Cold Outside!**

As the recent weather has proven, we have had more hospitable times of year around Western New York. For this reason, we ask our community to donate gently used winter coats, hats, and gloves every year. Please drop them off at our campus at 864 Delaware Avenue in Buffalo anytime during the work week.

You may not need them, but trust me, our clients do! Many of them come from places where winters are much milder. We have some essential winter weather preparation info that we’ve translated into 13 different languages. I encourage you to share it with anyone who could use it! We owe it to our newest neighbors that we help them stay warm and safe this winter.

I was recently interviewed about this on several news outlets. Here is the appearance on Spectrum News One Buffalo.

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**Some Ideas for the Season of Giving!**

**Idea #1**

**Sponsor a New American Family for the Holidays!**
We invite you to help brighten the season for our New American families! Please sponsor one of our families, including refugees and survivors from many countries, by making a purchase (or purchases) from their family holiday wish list. From there, we'll deliver the presents gifts to the families at the end of December. [Click here to learn more!]

Idea #2

**Chances Are Your Dad Doesn’t Want Another Sweater for the Holidays. Try This Instead!**

You may have a lot of old family documents from the old country stored away somewhere. Consider having us translate them for you. We can even help you to turn it into a family keepsake. A few years ago, I did that with some of my grandfather’s immigration documents when he came over from Italy. Think about all of the things that you can get translated:
• Old letters
• Diaries
• School reports
• Immigration or other vital documents (passwords, birth certificates, etc.)
• Baptism certificates and other religious records
• Photograph inscriptions
• Old home audio recordings, movies, videos (transcription and subtitling available)

We can translate in over 60 languages, so if you're interested, contact us quickly to beat the holiday rush.

From the Archives!

Santa was on hand for a holiday celebration IIB cosponsored back in 1986. If you have any IIB memorabilia, we'd love to see it! Contact us and let us know!
Whenever I get the opportunity to do longer form media interviews, I appreciate the opportunity because it allows me to let you know about what we do to help our foreign-born neighbors and provide context and nuance to the issues.

Thanks to Jay Moran for allowing me to come on WBFO’s What’s Next? It was very comprehensive! Take a listen if you get the chance.
Buffalo News Panel

I had another opportunity to discuss the issues at length with some immigration/refugee experts during a panel discussion sponsored by the Buffalo News and Joblio. Please take a moment to watch it to get a better understanding of the values that immigrants and refugees bring to the community.

Welcome New Americans!

Every month IIB takes part in U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Naturalization Ceremony in Buffalo. This month we were happy to help welcome 50 New Americans from 26 countries!
Meet the Linguist!

Spanish to English Translator Jeannine Scibilia

Jeannine was born in Niagara Falls but honed her high school and college Spanish education when she spent a year in Venezuela! Learn more about her!

IIB is lucky to have dedicated experts who do our interpretation and translation. They help people and organizations of all types and sizes close the language gap.

Simply put, software and AI can’t interpret and translate as accurately as people when it comes to the essential nuances of communication between those of different cultures.

Learn more about how our linguists help make Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees.

IIB and Leadership Buffalo Partner to Mentor New Americans in our Professional Pathways Program
Recently, we kicked off our second year of collaborating with Leadership Buffalo to provide mentorships to immigrants, refugees, and asylees through our Professional Pathways program. The program helps them get the necessary credentials, education, and experience in professional and skilled career fields. The mentorships help our clients better understand how getting a job works in the American workplace.

The volunteer mentors represent professional fields, including Law, Dentistry, Nursing, Human Resources, Accounting, Banking, Graphic Design, Education, and Social Work. They will give career advice, offer professional development, and take their mentees to business networking events. They’ll be working with 48 participants this year. The immigrants, refugees, and asylees come from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Ukraine.

Click here to learn more and to see the report from WKBW News.
Welcome to our new Domestic Violence Advocate, Khrystyna. She graduated in 2022 with a bachelor’s degree in international relations in Ukraine. Participating in volunteer work at a European school and working as a Ukrainian interpreter for non-native speakers of English assisted her in gaining knowledge of how to facilitate and provide immigrants with necessary support programs and social services.

Khrystyna says, “I was interested in pursuing a career of ensuring equal opportunities for everyone to receive the successful assistance they need, regardless of their nationality and culture, and I am grateful for the chance to get proficiency working with a competent staff of the IIB team, who provide excellent resources and services to immigrant issues.”

We are excited for Khrystyna to begin her career in the Survivor Support Department.

Click here to learn more about how our Survivor Support team helps survivors of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking.

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New American Integration
This month, we resettled 12 families of 55 clients from Afghanistan, Congo, Burma, Ecuador, Eritrea, and Syria.

Be on the lookout! We will drop collection bins off at the Westside Bazaar soon to gather toiletries and other goods for our new arrivals throughout December.

A local hotel company contacted us about clearing out two whole floors of furniture, so we got about 30 two-drawer nightstands, 12 cushioned chairs (six with an ottoman), 12 floor lamps, 12 office chairs, 21 side tables, and a coffee table! We will put these to good use as we furnish homes for our soon-to-be-arriving clients!

Many people read about our Preferred Communities program (PC) last month and wanted to know more. The PC program works with clients who have significant medical or mental health issues or are considered to be “at risk,” including single parents or children who are minors living with individuals other than their biological parents.

Our PC Program Manager, Lisa Cahill (pictured above), begins her work before the clients arrive, putting into place the necessary providers and items needed for
a client. Three recent cases are all children from different families. One child is receiving treatment for cerebral palsy, and Lisa advocated for him to get cutting-edge treatment for his condition. Another child received a customized wheelchair, and for the first time in her short 10-year life, she will be able to attend school with other kids. The last case involves two youngsters admitted to St Mary’s School for the Deaf, where they are learning American Sign Language.

Click here to learn more about how we help our newest neighbors become part of the community!

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**International Exchanges and Education**

In November, the department hosted two groups of international visitors:

Visitors from Turkmenistan (pictured above) came here to study Transboundary Water Management. They met with resources, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and sustainability experts at the University at Buffalo.

Visitors from Tajikistan came to Western New York to study Border Security: Manpower, Technology, and Infrastructure. Among other resources, they met with the U.S. Attorney's Office at U.S. District Court and with students and faculty at International Preparatory School at Grover Cleveland High School.
The department also held a Mental Health session on November 14 for Job Club attendees through our Refugee Health Promotion grant, which aims to educate refugees who have been in the U.S. for five years or less on various health topics. There were 18 attendees speaking three languages at this successful session!

We recently expanded our funding and now have two grants for health literacy sessions for refugees who have been in the U.S. for longer than five years, and also cultural competency training for healthcare providers and professional trainees.

We also held cultural competency and diversity training for 184 incoming medical students at the University at Buffalo.

Model UN 2024 preparations are well underway, as the team's sign-up deadline is Thursday, January 4! Schools are signing up, and many local college students are interested in leading or judging committees. Don't hesitate to contact May Shogan at mshogan@iibuff.org to register today.

Learn more about how our International Exchanges and Education department helps educate our community of what goes on beyond our borders.

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**Interpreting & Translation**

Recently, our Interpreting team provided 1,930 interpreting services in 47 different language groups. The most requested languages were Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Dari, Pashto, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Rohingya, Spanish, and Swahili.

The Interpreting team offers onsite interpretation and on-demand phone and audio/video remote services in over 85 languages. These invaluable services
provide comprehensive language access to limited English speakers in WNY and beyond. Email Sarah and Therese at interpretation@iibuff.org to request interpreting services.

The Translation team completed 135 individual projects last month, marking the largest number of requests in one month this year. Most of these projects were translated into Buffalo’s top ten languages for the area’s richly diverse schools, government agencies, tourist attractions, and local employers throughout WNY. Individual projects included personal documents, human resource documents such as employee onboarding materials, legal documents, and genealogy research.

Reach out to Ryan and Mairéad at translation@iibuff.org to request translation services.

Through our robust Recruiting and Training program, Robert continuously supports the Interpreting and Translation department. By sourcing talented local interpreters and translators, we can better provide first-rate language access to our community. If you are multilingual and interested in joining our team of quality linguists, we are always looking! Click to apply.

To view our workshop calendar, check out our Eventbrite page.

Head to our website to discover more of what we do.

Email Jennifer at Julrich@iibuff.org to learn more about what we do and how we continue to be champions for language access in Buffalo and beyond.

Come Work with Us!

HIRING!
As you think about your future, we hope that you’ll consider doing something that enriches your community. That could mean making Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees. [Click here if you’re interested.]

"The International Institute of Buffalo makes Western New York a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees."

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International Institute of Buffalo
864 Delaware Ave
Buffalo, NY 14209
United States

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