

**Jennifer Rizzo-Choi, Executive Director**

Happy 2023!

To be sure, the year did not end as we expected. Our minds are etched with the historic Blizzard of '22 leaving a permanent mark; many are still recovering from its impact. Prayers continue to the families who suffered such traumatic loss.

I want to offer kudos to our New Americans and Survivor Support teams, who checked in on their clients before, during, and after the storm. As usual, they went above and beyond assisting our clients, including helping a family whose roof caved in!

When preparing for winter storms, it's never too early (or too late). We have helpful information translated into many different languages to help our neighbors stay safe, warm, and fed regardless of how well they understand English. The languages are Arabic, Burmese, Dari, English, French, Karen, Pashto, Somali, and Swahili. [Please visit our website and pass it along to whomever you think needs it.](#)

*Jennifer Rizzo-Choi*

Make a donation to support the International Institute of Buffalo



### Human Trafficking Awareness Month

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Did you know that New York State recently passed expanded legislation that allows survivors of human trafficking the ability to vacate criminal records relating to crimes they were forced to commit during their exploitation? The Survivors of Trafficking Attaining Relief Together (START) Act allows survivors to move beyond a criminal history that has often barred them from employment, education, financial resources, and housing. In 2022, IIB – along with legal services partner Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project – identified 31 survivors of human trafficking that are eligible for this opportunity. [For more information on Human Trafficking Awareness Month, click this link.](#)

Learn more about how we help survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking



### We Are Hiring!

It's not only essential to do something in life, but it's also essential to do something good. That may be why there's been a lot in the news about people quitting their jobs to find meaningful work- a job or career with more purpose to improve their communities. If you or someone you know wants that, please consider joining the IIB team! We're hiring in several different areas of the organization. [Click here to go to our Careers webpage.](#)

Suppose you're happy with your job but would still like to make Western New York a better place for immigrants and refugees. In that case, we have plenty of opportunities for people interested in volunteering.

One volunteer opportunity is to help our New American clients learn conversational English. The language barrier is often one of the biggest challenges for them. We offer English lessons through our Home English Language Learners Outreach (HELLO) Volunteer Program. By becoming a HELLO Tutor, you will travel to someone's home and teach them English. It's a great way to get involved in helping Buffalo's diverse refugee population. No Previous Experience is Required! [Click here to learn more about the HELLO program](#) or other [volunteer opportunities.](#)

Check out our Career Services webpage!

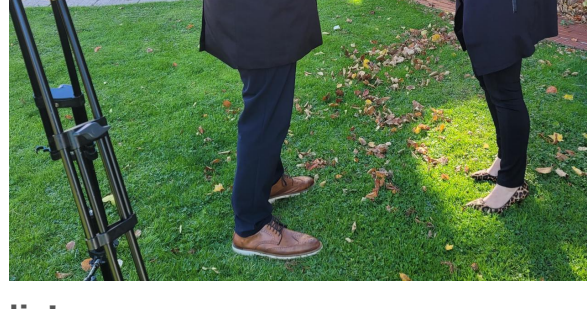


### Gifts for Good Neighbors Update!

In the autumn, we asked Western New Yorkers to donate holiday gifts for the families we serve. We've had delays in getting and delivering gifts because of the blizzard. However, we tabulated the final numbers. The season was made brighter to the tune of **\$19,664.43 in gifts and gift cards to 144 of our clients.**

Thank you if you took the time to participate in this particular program. If you missed the chance but still want to help our mission, [you can donate.](#)

Donate to help immigrants and refugees in WNY



### IIB in the Media!

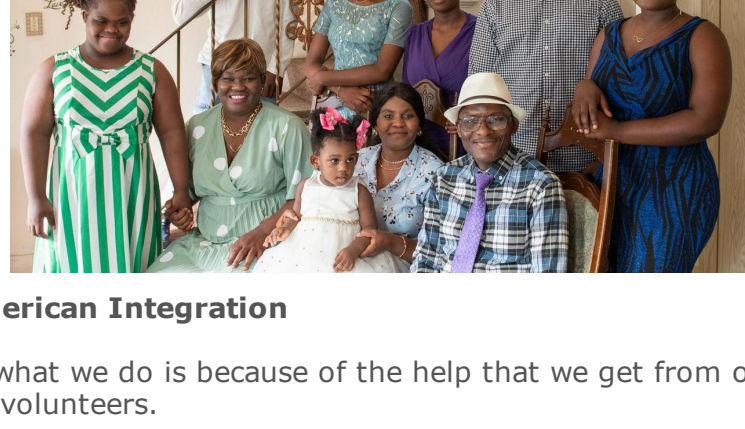
In the last month, Spectrum News Buffalo featured IIB twice. Once was for a story on the [language access issue](#). Another was on the [challenges that Buffalo might face should migrants from New York City be sent to Buffalo.](#)

[The Times Union in Albany interviewed me](#) regarding resources for settling refugees following Governor Kathy Hochul's State of the State address.

[The Buffalo News published my Letter to the Editor](#) regarding the horrific practice of governors from southern states continuing the practice of transporting migrants to northern cities.

When we re-released the winter weather information that we translated and put up on our website. [The Buffalo News mentioned it.](#) WNY's African American Weekly, the Buffalo Criterion newspaper mentioned our storm information in different languages.

Finally, the Map for Adventurous Eaters Update [was mentioned in Buffalo Rising.](#)



### New American Integration

Much of what we do is because of the help that we get from our fantastic volunteers.

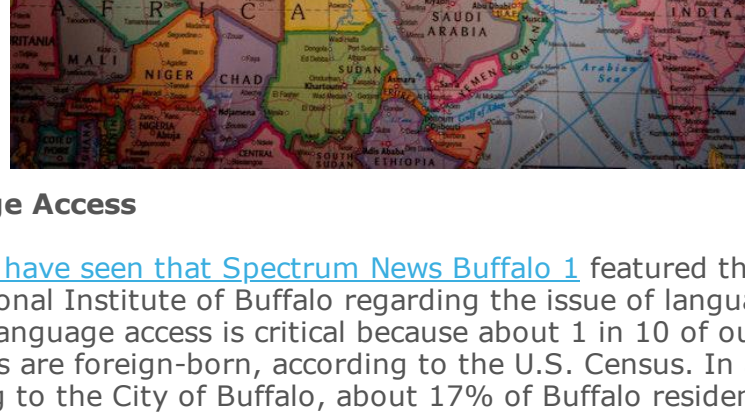
Recently, we had a recognition event for those who helped us, and our partner refugee agencies welcome over 400 Afghans. Postponed from last spring, the event honored the hard work of individuals and groups that donated money, provided goods, helped with apartment setups, and volunteered with clients. Special guest State Senator Tim Kennedy joined the volunteers and staff members, emphasizing that Buffalo truly is the City of Good Neighbors.

We've been hard at work getting families into their new homes. Recently we resettled our first of several Colombian families. Whatever their country of origin and no matter how they got to Buffalo, rest assured we will get them into safe and secure housing so they can start making their life here.

If you've ever had children, you know how expensive diapers can be and their impact on a family budget. You also know how difficult it can be to travel with kids. We've refined our relationship with Every Bottom Covered, a local non-profit that provides diapers to low-income families. Now our clients can save time and money getting the diapers directly from us instead of going to the EBC site.

After they get here, we want our clients to become tax-paying workers who contribute to their communities. Our Job Club is a program that helps our New American clients learn how working in America works. We cover everything from how to interview for a job, read a pay stub, and engage with other employees. Recently, our team accompanied 15 clients to an interview with a plastics manufacturer in Orchard Park; the company hired all of them!

Learn more about how we help new Americans



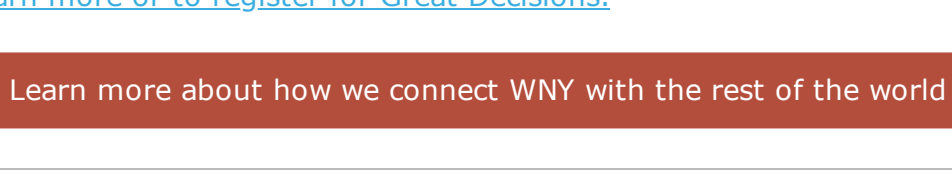
### Language Access

[You may have seen that Spectrum News Buffalo 1](#) featured the International Institute of Buffalo regarding the issue of language access. Language access is critical because about 1 in 10 of our WNY neighbors are foreign-born, according to the U.S. Census. In addition, according to the City of Buffalo, about 17% of Buffalo residents don't speak English as their primary language.

That means there may be a language barrier to them getting vital information regarding emergencies, storms, government functions, or medical information. It's not enough for critics to say, "Well, if they're living in America, they should learn English!" Many new Americans are learning English. However, as they do that, it makes sense that the most necessary information be made available in a language they can readily understand.

Our Interpreting & Translation Department worked closely with the City of Buffalo as it developed its language access plan. We look forward to when Erie County provides greater language access as well. We continue to work with governments, schools, businesses, and other organizations of all sizes and kinds for their interpreting and translation requirements.

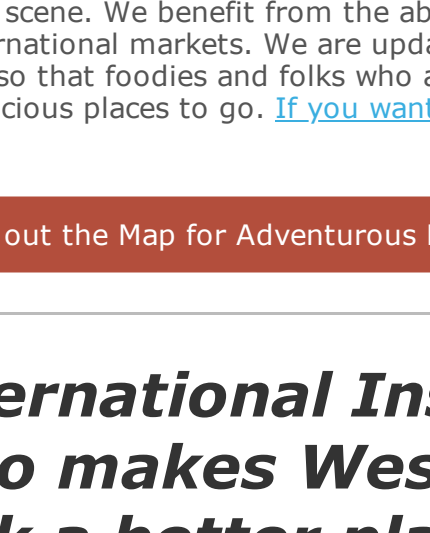
Do you or does your organization need interpretation and translation services?



If you're a lifelong learner and curious about the world, consider engaging and learning about foreign policy from leading experts!

Great Decisions is an eight-week lecture series in collaboration with the Foreign Policy Association (FPA). Lectures meet on Tuesday evenings during the spring. Topics will include Energy Geopolitics, War Crimes, China, and the U.S., Economic Warfare, Politics in Latin America, Global Famine, Iran at a Crossroads, and Climate Migration. [Click here to learn more or to register for Great Decisions.](#)

Learn more about how we connect WNY with the rest of the world



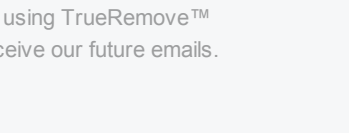
### Map for Adventurous Eaters

One of the wonderful things about living in Western New York is the diversity of the food scene. We benefit from the abundance of ethnic restaurants and international markets. We are updating our Map for Adventurous Eaters so that foodies and folks who are food curious can find our region's delicious places to go. [If you want to help us, please click on this link.](#)

Check out the Map for Adventurous Eaters

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

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