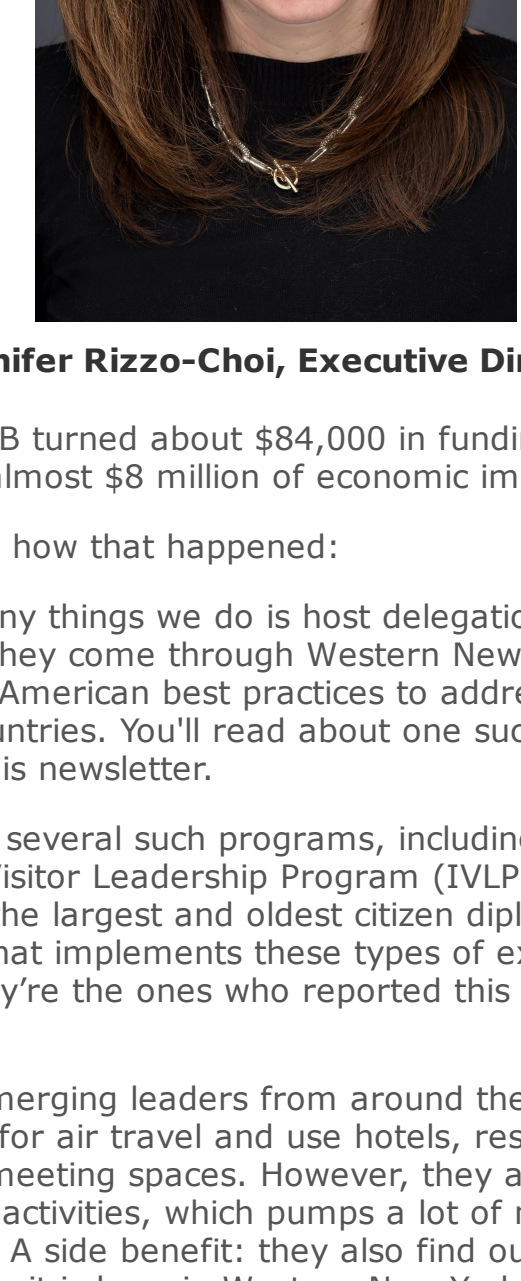


March 2023



Jennifer Rizzo-Choi, Executive Director

In FY- 2021, IIB turned about \$84,000 in funding for a federal program into almost \$8 million of economic impact!

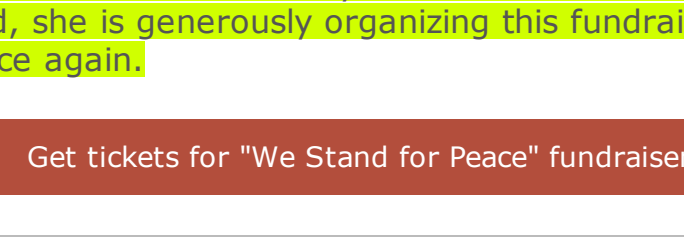
Let me explain how that happened:

One of the many things we do is host delegations of foreign dignitaries as they come through Western New York. They come to learn American best practices to address challenges in their home countries. You'll read about one such group from Italy later in this newsletter.

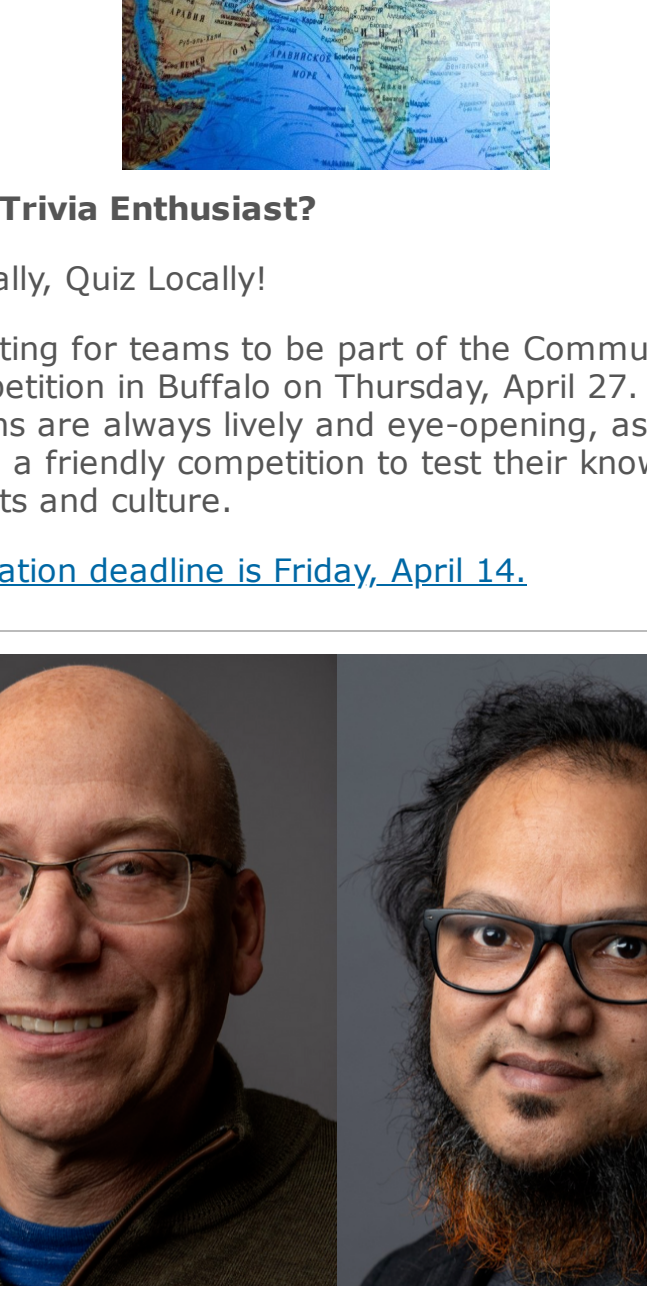
We administer several such programs, including the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) from Global Ties U.S.; it's the largest and oldest citizen diplomacy network of nonprofits that implements these types of exchange programs. They're the ones who reported this economic impact to us.

When these emerging leaders from around the globe come to visit, they pay for air travel and use hotels, restaurants, driving services, and meeting spaces. However, they also shop and do tourist-related activities, which pumps a lot of money into the local economy. A side benefit: they also find out what a wonderful place it is here in Western New York!

If you want to know more about the economic activity generated by our excellent work at IIB, [let us know!](#)



[Make a donation to support the International Institute of Buffalo!](#)

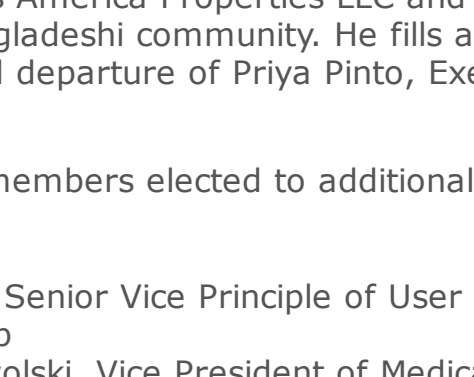


Save the date!

On Sunday, May 21st, we'll again hold the "We Stand for Peace" fundraiser at Soho on Chippewa Avenue in Buffalo. Last year, we raised over \$30,000, and we hope to top that this year! Similar to last year's event, there will be local vendors, basket raffles, silent auctions, a DJ, an open bar, and much more. Tickets are \$40 presale and \$50 at the door.

Karina Krantz is organizing the event. In the early 1990s, IIB resettled Karina and her family from Ukraine. As a way to pay it forward, she is generously organizing this fundraising event for us once again.

[Get tickets for "We Stand for Peace" fundraiser!](#)



Are you a Trivia Enthusiast?

Think Globally, Quiz Locally!

We're scouting for teams to be part of the Community World Trivia competition in Buffalo on Thursday, April 27. These competitions are always lively and eye-opening, as teams compete in a friendly competition to test their knowledge of world events and culture.

[The registration deadline is Friday, April 14.](#)



We want to recognize the new leadership for IIB!

[Welcome to the 2023-2024 Board of Directors!](#)

Matt Romagnuolo is our new chairperson. He was the board's vice chair and previously served on the Board Governance and Development committees. He is a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the United States Army, where he was an infantry officer and an Africa foreign area officer (FAO).

Matt succeeds Katie Schneider, an invaluable resource to everyone here at IIB. She'll return to the board with our deepest gratitude for her leadership and guidance. She is the owner of Katie Schneider Photography, LLC.

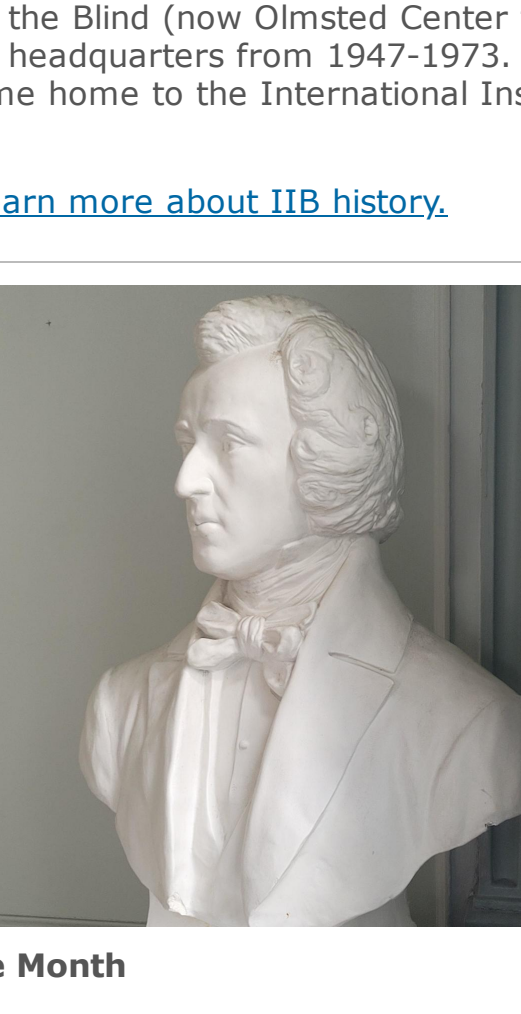
Kevin Gentry was elected Vice Chair. Gentry, a native of London, England, is Assistant Vice President, Consumer Direct Sales Manager at M&T Bank.

Umesh Babaria, Consumer Bank CFO for Key Bank, will remain as our Treasurer.

We want to extend a special welcome to our newest board member, Mohammed Osman. Mohammed is the president & CEO of Fortunes America Properties LLC and an active leader in Buffalo's Bangladeshi community. He fills a vacancy left by the term-limited departure of Priya Pinto, Executive Director of Allwei.

Current board members elected to additional three-year-terms are:

- Molly Chvala, Senior Vice Principle of User Experience at Crowley Webb
- Dawn Odrzywolski, Vice President of Medicare Programs at Independent Health
- Dan Theal, Vice President, M&T Bank Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Sr. Program Manager



Happy Women's History Month!

During March, we've been highlighting the stories of women immigrants and refugees to celebrate their accomplishments. The list includes:

[Isabel Allende](#)

[Madeline Albright](#)

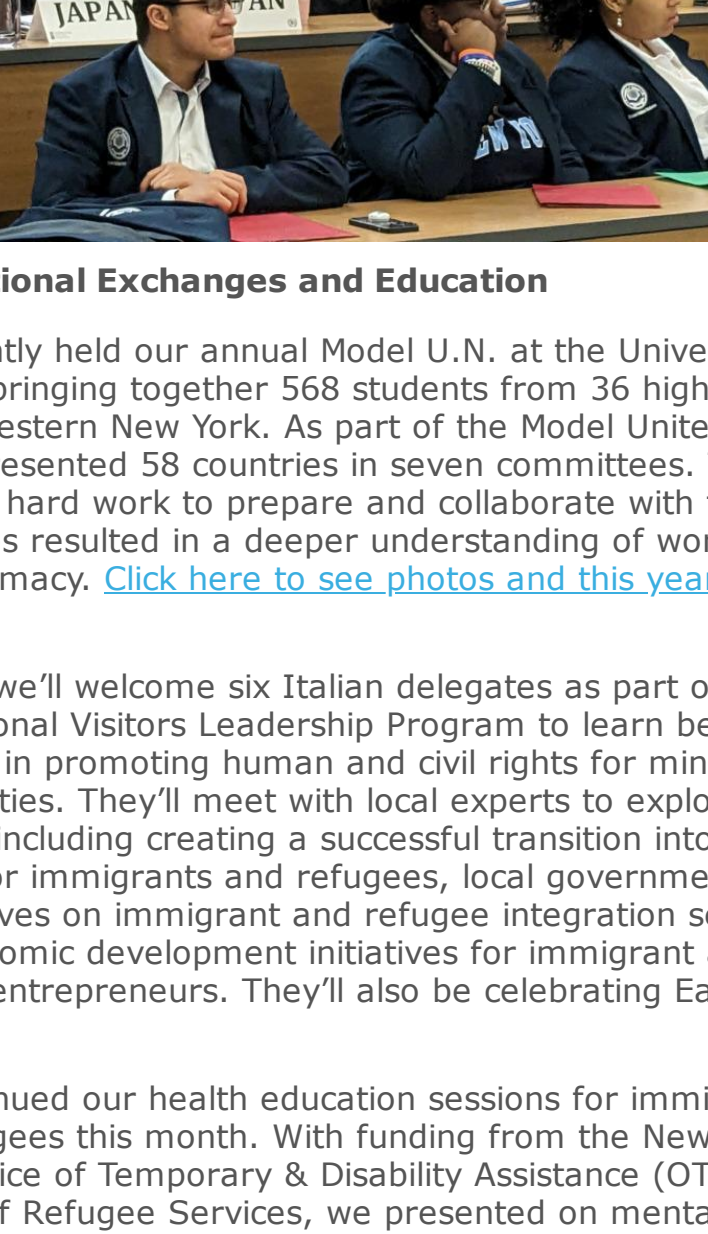
[Lidia Bastianich](#)

[Iman](#)

[Mila Kunis](#)

[Hedy Lamarr](#)

[Martina Navratilova](#)



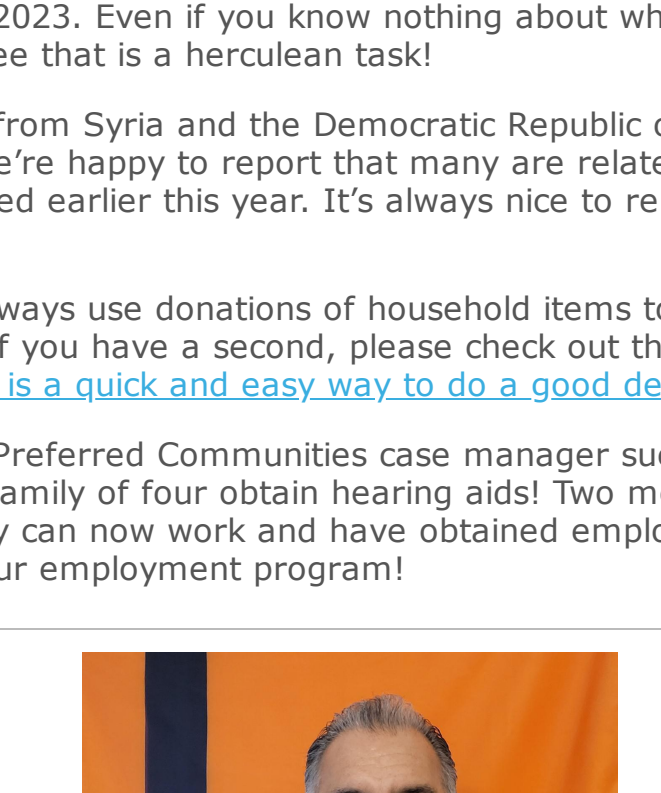
Did you know? In 1898, our building was one of the first designed by the architectural firm of Esenwein & Johnson. They went on to design some of Buffalo's most iconic buildings, including:

- The Calumet
- The Buffalo Museum of Science
- The Electric Tower
- Lafayette High School
- The Lafayette Hotel
- The Temple of Music (from the 1901 Pan-American Exposition)

It's no secret that before it was our home, 864 Delaware Avenue was a private residence with several different owners. Its first occupant was Harlow C. Curtiss, a practicing lawyer in Buffalo for nearly 40 years. He began his law career in the firm of Cleveland and Bissell, whose senior partner was former President Grover Cleveland. The building's last private resident, Frank Henry, was chairman of the board of the Washburn-Crosby Company, manufacturers of Gold Medal Flour.

The first non-residential occupant was the Temple of Unity and Truth, which occupied the site from 1941-1942. The Buffalo Association for the Blind (now Olmsted Center for Sight) called the building its headquarters from 1947-1973. In 1973, the mansion became home to the International Institute of Buffalo.

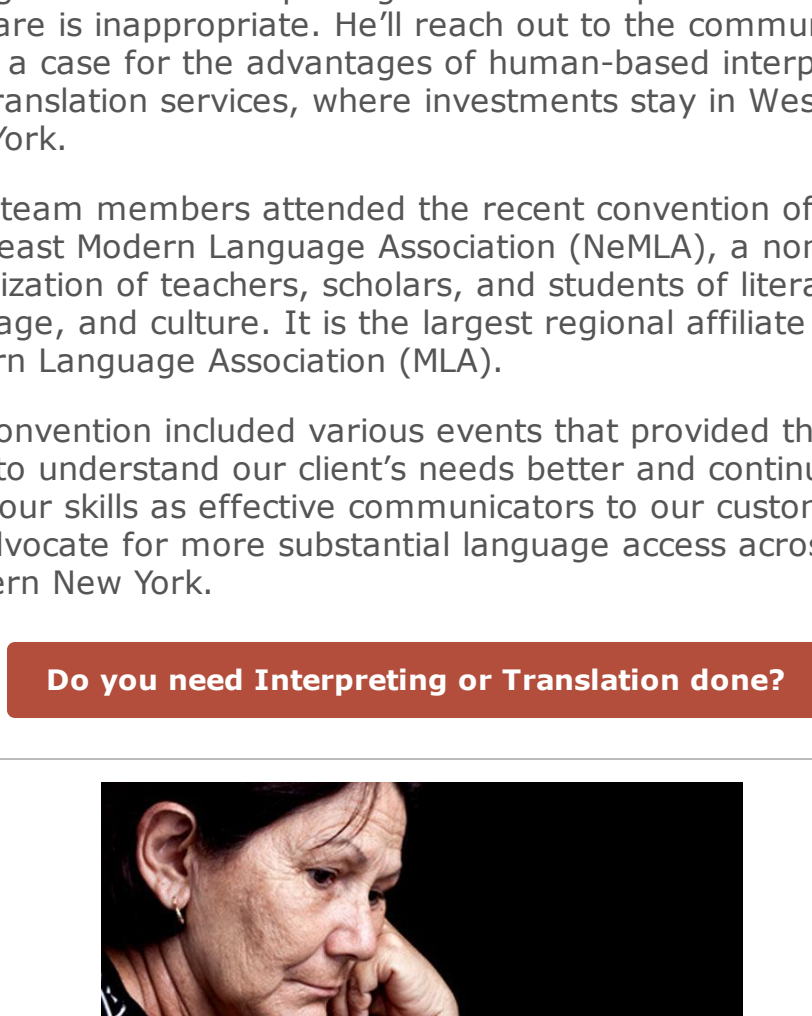
[Click here to learn more about IIB history.](#)



Artifact of the Month

Since we have occupied it, our building has always been a location for the community to join for weddings, lectures, dances, and concerts. One of the larger rooms is called the Music Room. The bust of famed classical music composer and pianist Frederic Chopin is in it. It was a gift from the Polish community for providing them and other immigrant groups with a place to meet.

If you have memorabilia or artifacts related to IIB from your family's journey and you want to show us, we'd love to see them and learn more about them! [Contact us and let us know!](#)



International Exchanges and Education

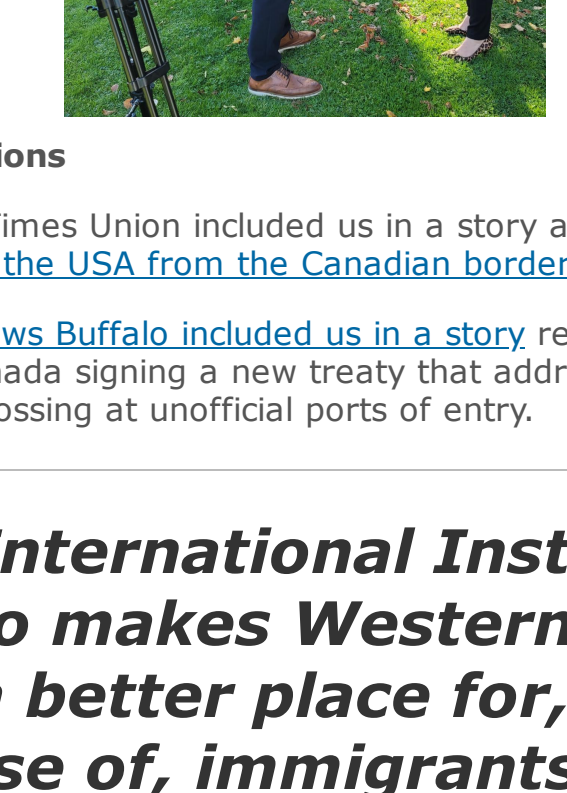
We recently held our annual Model U.N. at the University at Buffalo, bringing together 568 students from 36 high schools across Western New York. As part of the Model United Nations, they represented 58 countries in seven committees. The students' hard work to prepare and collaborate with their colleagues resulted in a deeper understanding of world issues and diplomacy. [Click here to see photos and this year's award winners!](#)

In April, we'll welcome six Italian delegates as part of the International Visitors Leadership Program to learn best practices in promoting human and civil rights for minority communities. They'll meet with local experts to explore subjects including creating a successful transition into U.S. society for immigrants and refugees, local government perspectives on immigrant and refugee integration services, and economic development initiatives for immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs. They'll also be celebrating Easter while in WNY.

We continued our health education sessions for immigrants and refugees this month. With funding from the New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance (OTDA)-Bureau of Refugee Services, we presented on mental health and colorectal cancer in collaboration with Erie County Cancer Services. About 50 participants gained essential knowledge to improve their health and that of their loved ones.



The Great Decisions Speaker Series season is halfway done! We have four sessions remaining in April and look forward to welcoming new attendees. Our speakers present on topics affecting people around the world today, and the ensuing discussions are always lively and productive! To order tickets, [download the 2023 Registration Form.](#)



[Donate to help immigrants and refugees in WNY!](#)

New American Integration

On April 5, IIB's New American Integration Department will resettle 33 refugees! That's ten percent of our annual number in one day. That's more than we had in the first quarter of our fiscal year combined and more than the entire month of February 2023. Even if you know nothing about what we do, you can see that is a herculean task!

They hail from Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We're happy to report that many are related to folks we resettled earlier this year. It's always nice to reunify families!

We can always use donations of household items to help these families. If you have a second, please check out the items on our list. [It is a quick and easy way to do a good deed.](#)

Also, our Preferred Communities case manager successfully helped a family of four obtain hearing aids! Two members of that family can now work and have obtained employment through our employment program!

Interpreting and Translation

For over 30 years, we've helped thousands of people and organizations solve their interpreting and translation challenges. This social enterprise also provides employment opportunities for many of our multilingual New American neighbors.

We welcome Dominic Floro to lead our Interpreting and Translation Department. There are many instances when relying on remote interpreting or translation providers or software is inappropriate. He'll reach out to the community to make a case for the advantages of human-based interpreting and translation services, where investments stay in Western New York.

I & T team members attended the recent convention of the Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA), a non-profit organization of teachers, scholars, and students of literature, language, and culture. It is the largest regional affiliate of the Modern Language Association (MLA).

The convention included various events that provided the team tools to understand our client's needs better and continue to hone our skills as effective communicators to our customers as we advocate for more substantial language access across Western New York.

[Do you need Interpreting or Translation done?](#)

Survivor Support

April will be both National Sexual Assault Awareness Month and National Child Abuse Awareness Month. It's a reminder that we must all be vigilant and work together to know the signs of these abuses and be a resource for survivors.

IIB's Survivor Support Services program provides trauma-informed services with low barriers to access to survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

This month, we would like to highlight the language access barriers that are overcome by staff serving domestic violence survivors. Domestic Violence Services Coordinator Rikki Nawotka-Ace leads a team of five exceptionally qualified professionals who provide core domestic violence services utilizing a trauma-informed lens, for intervention and advocacy. Some services include court accompaniment, assistance with orders of protection, linkages to immigration & civil attorneys, and safety planning. While we can serve everyone with an interpreter, members of the team serve our clients in the following languages without needing the assistance of an interpreter:

- Spanish
- Karen
- Bengali
- Urdu
- Hindi
- Arabic (not complete fluency, but close!)

The International Institute of Buffalo offers safe, free, and confidential services for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. [If you or someone you know need help, contact us.](#)

Do you want to help make WNY a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees? If so, we are hiring! Please review our ever-growing list of open positions on [our Careers webpage.](#)

We are also looking for motivated volunteers and interns! [Please take a moment to look at those opportunities!](#)

[Check out our Career Services webpage!](#)

Media Mentions

The Albany Times Union included us in a story about [refugees crossing into the USA from the Canadian border.](#)

[Spectrum News Buffalo included us in a story](#) regarding the USA and Canada signing a new treaty that addresses the issue of asylees crossing at unofficial ports of entry.

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

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