



INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE
OF BUFFALO

Learning Through Stories



Part of advocating for immigrants and refugees (and asylum seekers) is telling their stories. Our community can become more empathetic and welcoming by understanding what immigrants and refugees experience.

We are honored to bring a master storyteller back to Buffalo. On Thursday, September 28, comedian and actor Thom Tran is doing a benefit performance for IIB--[From Refugee to Comedy: An Evening with Thom Tran](#).

His story is compelling. His family came to Buffalo as refugees from Vietnam in the 1980s when Thom was just a little boy.

He served in the US Army, and just a few days into his tour in Iraq, Tran was wounded in combat. Like many of our service personnel, he endured PTSD; however, Thom used comedy to work through it.

He started the *GIs of Comedy* tour, featuring other comics who were also veterans, and he's appeared in major motion pictures (The soon-to-be-released *My Dead Friend Zoe* with Morgan Freeman), television shows (*Bosch: Legacy*, *United States of AI*), and video games (*Call of Duty: Black Ops*).

We hope to see you at this unique fundraiser, [From Refugee to Comedy: An Evening with Thom Tran](#), on Thursday, September 28, 2023, from 6 pm-8:30 pm at the WNED Studios, 140 Lower Terrace, in downtown Buffalo.

Please tell your friends!

Jennifer Pizz-Choi

Asylum Seekers in the News



Recently, [WIVB's Tara Lynch interviewed me about](#) the differences between refugees, the population we usually serve, and asylum seekers.

Regardless of how you feel about asylum seekers being sent here from New York City, I will respectfully ask that you remember their humanity. These are people! They've gone through very real trauma to come to America. Contrary to what some say on social media, they are not "illegal aliens"; they are in America pursuing humanitarian protection.

We are helping with ancillary engagement services, including education, fitness, and employment readiness classes. We are also providing help with language access.

It costs nothing to be kind. It's my sincerest hope that we live up to our moniker, "The City of Good Neighbors."

Donations!



The most vulnerable of the people who we serve are the babies. These kids were likely born in a refugee camp without many things we take for granted. Since we are projecting the arrival of many families in the next few months, we could use your help with everything from car seats to baby bottles to toys appropriate for children up to four years old.

We brought in a little over \$4,000 worth of physical donations last month! If you made donations, thank you!

A special thanks to Molina Healthcare, [who donated 100 backpacks full of school supplies!](#) It is a great help to get school off to a fantastic start for our New American students.

Breadhive Bakery and Cafe has agreed to run a donation drive for IIB through September. They will focus on donations of personal hygiene items or financial contributions to support our Refugee Resettlement efforts.

Also, we started a new partnership with Wheels for Workers. They will help provide refugees with bicycles. In addition to a bike, they'll donate one new bike lock and a new helmet for each of our clients.

[Click here if you would like to donate goods.](#)

Of course, if you'd like to donate cash, that helps too! [Please contribute today.](#)

Welcome to our New Director of Survivor Support



Shannon Riley is our new Director of Survivor Support! He's worked in Human Services for 21 years, gaining valuable experience within the Child and Adult Mental Health System, managing staff, leading programs, managing program budgets, managing grants, staffing, and community outreach. He's held leadership positions at Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers, Endeavor Health Services, Baker Victory Services, Recovery Options Made Easy (ROME), and the Family Help Center.

Right now, he's building his team and reaching out to our community partners to continue our work helping survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

Learn more about our [Survivor Support department](#).

Welcome New Americans!



In August, [we joined the community in welcoming 51 New Americans](#) from 20 countries at the US Citizenship & Immigration Services Naturalization Ceremony in Buffalo. They came from Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Burma, Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Grenada, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Yemen.

New American Integration



We welcomed 15 overseas refugees for resettlement in August, including four families and one person reuniting with their family here. They hail from Afghanistan, Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, and Syria.

So far, our year-to-date total is 221 people resettled, and we're looking at 57 arrivals for September, including several large extended families (over ten people).

After they settle into their new homes, we offer our clients job training so they can more easily become part of the American workforce. [Our Job Club is a comprehensive program](#) that includes resume building, mock interviews, and other job searching skills. This month, we launched new worker's rights classes in collaboration with the New York State Department of Labor. During each session, Kristin Hibit from the Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs will educate them on their rights under the law.

[Learn more about how we help our New American neighbors get successful careers.](#)

Interpreting & Translation



When businesses, schools, and other organizations use our interpreting and translation services, their investment stays in our community; it helps support our mission. We also hire local immigrants and refugees to do the work, so it helps them achieve their American dream. Aside from the excellent work that we do, we care about our community and have a stake in what happens here, which distinguishes us from out-of-town interpreting and translation services.

A special shout-out to our Interpreting & Translation team! Thanks to them, folks in Western New York will be healthier! They worked with Erie County's new Department of Health Equity to translate monthly newsletters filled with health information into Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Swahili, and Burmese. These are the top languages spoken in Erie County in addition to English.

Last month, the I&T team supported our local communities in 53 distinctive language groups, including the Southeast Asian language of Jawi (Djawi).

The Interpreting team offers on-site interpretation, on-demand phone and audio/video remote services in over 85 different languages. These invaluable services provide comprehensive language access to limited English speakers in WNY and beyond. *We are recruiting speakers in the Bengali, Burmese Karen, Kurdish, Pashto, Spanish, Tamil, Thai, and Wolof languages.*

The Translation team completed over 80 translations projects last month. July saw most requests coming in from individual community members with personal documents such as birth certificates and school records. *Our translation team is looking for document translators in the Karen, Malay, and Somali languages.*

The Interpreting & Translation department is continuously supported by our robust Recruiting and Training program. Are you multilingual and interested in joining our team of linguists? We are always looking to add quality linguists. [Apply here!](#)

[View our workshop calendar.](#)

[Visit our website to learn more about the Interpreting & Translation department.](#)

International Exchanges and Education



August has been full of exciting projects and events for the International Exchanges and Education department! We have hosted five groups of international visitors through the Department of State International Visitors Leadership Program:

- Combating Trafficking in Persons: 5 visitors from Armenia

- Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement: 8 visitors from the United Kingdom
- Migration in the Americas: 12 visitors from Spanish-speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere
- Innovation in US Energy and Transportation Sectors: 8 visitors from Germany
- Transparency and Accountability in Government: 6 visitors from Portuguese-speaking countries

Our potluck picnic at Ellicott Creek Park was a great success! Our international visitors and volunteers had a wonderful evening of games, food, and conversation. Thank you to all who came to lend a hand; we appreciate you all so much!

We have one upcoming cultural competency training for the students in UB's School of Public Health and Health Professions, focusing on diversity in WNY and how to work effectively with immigrant and refugee patients.

As we move into the last bit of summer, we look forward to welcoming more international visitors to Buffalo and planning our educational programs, including cultural competency, Global Kids, and Model UN.

[Learn more about how our International Exchanges and Education department connects our community with the rest of the world.](#)

Come Work with US!



You can help make WNY a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees; please look at all the exciting [jobs on our Careers page](#).

"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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