



INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE
OF BUFFALO

A Time for Welcoming



As we enter the season for holidays for reflection, atonement, counting our blessings, and offering goodwill to our fellow humans, let's take a moment to remember that a simple gesture of a smile or a wave of "hello" can be a small but effective first step to welcoming.

Except for our indigenous neighbors, we all come from somewhere else. How we are welcomed is as crucial as if we are welcomed, and welcoming comes in many forms.

A local church parish sponsored [Thom Tran and his family](#) to come to Western New York as refugees after the Vietnam War. To this day, he considers many of them "family."

For Finnish art historian and [Director of the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Janne Sirén](#), his welcome was so robust that his wife wondered if the Buffalonians they met were all actors staged for their arrival.

For the migrants seeking asylum bussed here from New York City, their welcome was mixed, if we are being honest. Some in our community have made it much more difficult than it should be.

However, I want to applaud the folks in our community who live up to the moniker, the City of Good Neighbors, welcoming the asylum seekers and others who are foreign-born, and giving them the opportunity to pursue the American dream.

I had a chance to discuss this and our century-long history of welcoming recently at [the Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries IMAGINE Buffalo Speaker Series](#).

If the opportunity arises, I hope you'll join the community of welcomers with a gesture of welcoming however you define it.



Handwritten signature of Jennifer Rizzo-Choi in black ink.

Last chance to get tickets!

From Refugee to Comedy: An Evening with Thom Tran



Thursday, September 28th at 6 pm!

The big day for our major fundraising event of the year is here!

Thom Tran and his family came to Buffalo as refugees from Vietnam in the 1980s. Today, he is a successful comedian/actor in Los Angeles. He's coming home to present his one-man show to support our mission of making WNY a better place for, and because of, immigrants and refugees. We'd love to see you there!

Be part of a great night! Have some laughs, eat international food, and enjoy wonderful music! [Click here for more info and to get tickets.](#)

Presenting Sponsors



**WELCOMING
WEEK**



Welcoming Week is a national campaign to celebrate communities that welcome people, including those who are foreign-born. We put a 716-spin on it. Since Buffalo's nickname is "The City of Good Neighbors," we tailored the theme to *Being a Good Neighbor Starts with a Welcome!* [We included profiles that represent the tapestry of our community.](#)



The celebration started mid-month, so through October, we'll honor the achievements of Hispanic immigrants and refugees. So far, we've celebrated:

[Franklin Chang-Díaz](#), astronaut/scientist from Costa Rica

[Oscar de la Renta](#), fashion designer from the Dominican Republic

Stay tuned, there will be more to come!

Donations



Thanks to our friends at the local non-profit, Wheels for Workers 716, who generously donated 13 bicycles, helmets, and locks for our newly arrived refugee clients. Thanks to the donation of the bikes, they'll be able to get to and from work, school, and other essential destinations.

If you'd like to donate bicycles you no longer want for a refugee family in need, [you can click here for information on how to drop them off for repairs](#) through Wheels for Workers 716.

In addition to bicycles, we are specifically looking for new bed linen sets, bath towels, deodorant, shaving cream, and bottles of all-purpose cleaner. [Click here for the complete list of goods that are most needed.](#)

Meet Linguist, Andrée Khangí



She is fluent in Arabic, French, and English! But there's more to Andrée Khangí than the languages she speaks. [Learn more about her!](#)

The people who do our interpreting and translation are the best in the business! They help businesses, schools, governments, and other organizations better serve their stakeholders.

They provide important nuances of communication between people of different cultures that simply can't be done by a software program.

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

Welcome New Americans!



In September, we were part of two at the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Naturalization Ceremonies, [one at the federal courthouse downtown](#) and the other at the [Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site](#). In total, we welcomed 82 New Americans from 32 countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Burma, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Ecuador, Eritrea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, India, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Syria, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Vietnam, and Yemen.

New American Integration



September was a busy month! We resettled 19 families, totaling 77 people, and most arrived to join relatives here whom they hadn't seen in years! The families are from Afghanistan, Burma, Congo, Colombia, and Eritrea. Family reunifications are some of the most rewarding parts of our work at the International Institute of Buffalo!

We have also been supporting a family of five that we recently resettled from Colombia. Unfortunately, they lost most of their belongings in a house fire that spread from an adjacent building. We recently secured a new apartment for them and are working to furnish it for them.

Reception and Placement (RP) is the jargon used for the resettlement work we do for our New American neighbors. We are building on that team and want to welcome them to their new positions within IIB. Most are former interns who have now moved into employment with us! They include:

- Abu, post-resettlement case manager
- Emmanuel, integration case manager
- Jake, housing coordinator
- Mia, R&P case manager
- Summer, R&P case manager

We're also happy to announce that Ejura (another former intern), a former compliance case manager for us while she completed her master's degree, has assumed the role of resettlement program manager.

[Click here to learn more about how we help our newest neighbors become part of the community!](#)

Survivor Support

The Survivor Support team is welcoming two new members!

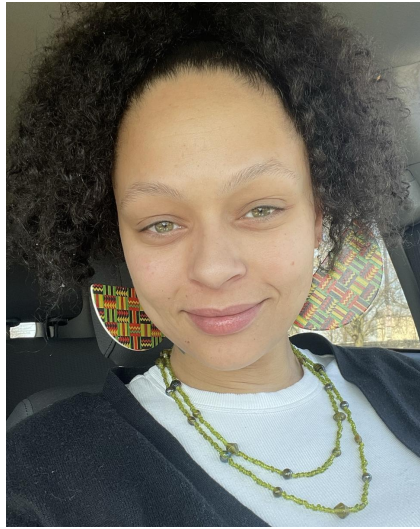
Our new Domestic Violence Advocate, Hannah, graduated in 2022 with a bachelor's in criminology and criminal justice. She's finishing her master's in criminal justice administration, with a research area in gender-based violence.



Hannah has been with IIB since July 2022 as a legal assistant. She said she pursued working here "because it is a passion of mine to be able to assist disadvantaged populations in getting access to the resources they need, which I am grateful to have done within my legal role, and I am hoping to expand my knowledge from my previous role into the DV Advocate position."

As a DV survivor, Hannah's goal is to build a career where she can assist and support other survivors on their journey. We're incredibly excited for Hannah to begin her career in our Survivor Support Department.

Also, please join us in welcoming our new High-Risk DV Lead, Maggie. Maggie is educated in communications, human services, trauma and crisis counseling, sociology, and psychology. She spent several years working with victims and survivors of domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) in various areas such as advocacy, education, prevention, and DV/SA hospital response.



Maggie says, "I was interested in pursuing a leadership role in domestic violence with an organization that does quality work backed by compassion and trauma-informed practices. Through working with IIB in other capacities, I knew the quality of work and wanted to be a part of the IIB family." We're incredibly excited for Maggie to begin her career in Survivors Support Services.

[For more information on how we offer safe, free, and confidential services for people affected by domestic violence and human trafficking, click here.](#)

International Exchanges and Education

In September, International Exchanges and Education has been quite busy welcoming International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) visitors, including those from:

- Kyrgyzstan researching Transparency and Accountability in Government
- Germany investigating Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience
- Algeria studying Border Security Management

In addition to their professional meetings and cultural outings, two of these groups were also welcomed into the homes of local families for dinner.



We were also honored to welcome Ulan Nogoibaev through the Distinguished Humphrey Fellowship Program on Leadership. Mr. Nogoibaev, Kyrgyzstan's Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, met with several local resources, including IIB's Survivor Support department, the Diplomatic Security Service Buffalo Resident Office, the Westminster Economic Development Initiative, and Judge Pridgen of the Human Trafficking Intervention Court.

We also conducted cultural competency training for UB Child Psychiatry Structural Competency series, Lt. Col. Matt Urban Human Services Center of WNY, and D'Youville University's Physical Therapy Department.

Finally, we're gearing up for Model UN 2024! We've started receiving registrations from local schools and are looking forward to the competition on Tuesday, March 19, 2024. [Please get in touch with us](#) if your school would be interested in joining us!

[Click here to learn more about how we connect cultures and educate our community.](#)

Interpreting & Translation



This is Alpha Diallo. He is a Pulaar interpreter doing voiceover work for a local refugee agency working with the influx of migrants from NYC for a presentation about the process of applying for asylum. Pulaar is the second most spoken local language in Senegal.

Our Interpreting team recently received 990 requests to provide interpreting services in 41 languages. The most requested languages were Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Dari, Pashto, Rohingya, Somali, 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 107 individual projects last month. 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 but were not limited to 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 for your business or personal needs.

Through our robust Recruiting and Training program, Robert continuously supports the Interpreting and Translation department. We can better provide first-rate language access to our immigrant communities by sourcing talented local interpreters and translators. Are you multilingual and interested in joining our team of linguists? We are always looking to add quality linguists. [Click to apply.](#)

[Click here to view our workshop calendar](#) for linguists and other language professionals to improve their skills.

Head to our [website](#) or 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!



We've welcomed many people to the IIB team over the last few months. We'd like to welcome you, too! [Let us know if you're interested in career opportunities with us!](#)

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