



Connections

Connecting families facing homelessness to a better future.

Gabriela: “When I left the program, I knew I had the tools to continue the life that I started at Bridge.”

When Gabriela’s eldest son graduated high school, it was truly a special day. Not only because he was graduating with high honors and had a very bright future ahead of him, but because it showed how far the family had come.

Twelve years earlier, Gabriela faced an uncertain future for herself and her two boys, Mateo and Daniel. She was leaving an abusive relationship with her ex-husband, and she only had a few days to leave the house that had long been her family’s home.

“I was in a very bad spot,” Gabriela recalls. “I remember feeling desperation. I didn’t have enough income working part time and taking care of my kids. No one would give me a chance to rent.”

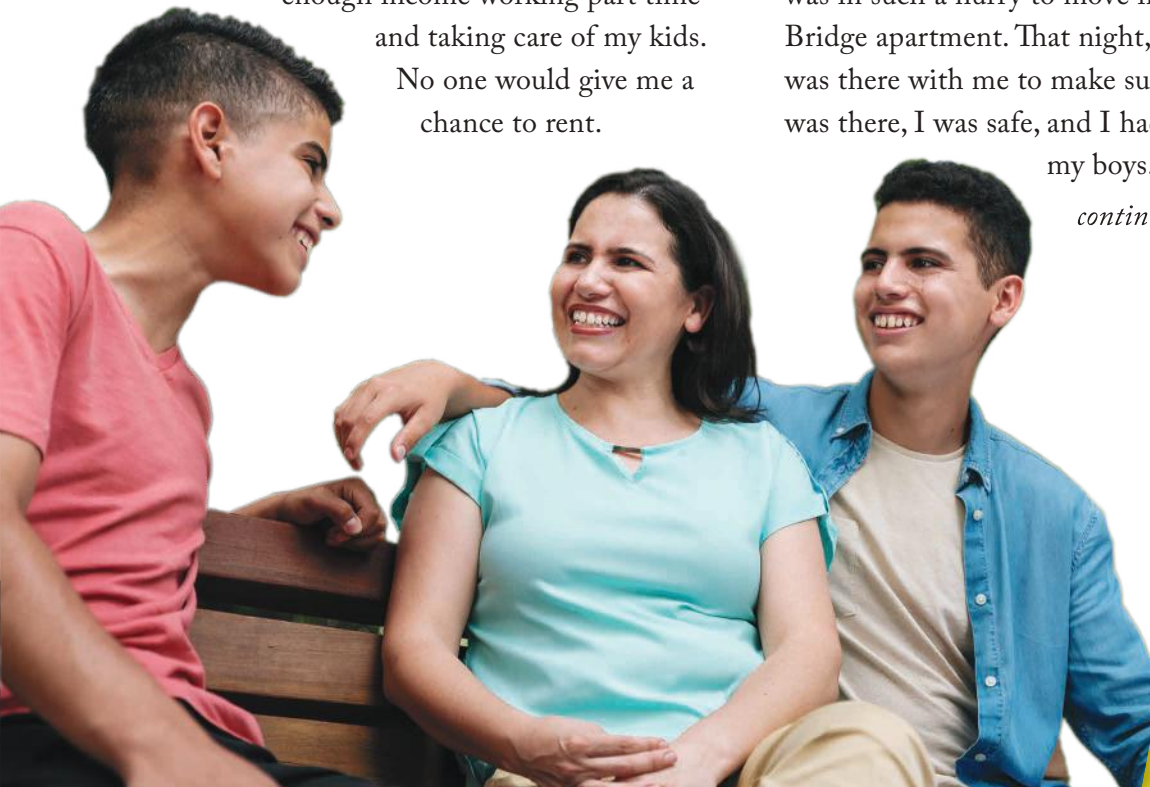
You can imagine how stressful it was knowing I had two little ones with me.”

Things began to change when a coordinator at her son’s early education program recommended Bridge Communities to her.

“Because of my situation, the application process went pretty quick,” said Gabriela. “It was an immense feeling of relief when I got a call from Molly, and she said I was accepted.”

Molly would become Gabriela’s Case Manager and one of her biggest supporters. “She was like an angel. I was in such a hurry to move into my Bridge apartment. That night, Molly was there with me to make sure I was there, I was safe, and I had my boys.”

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“When I left the program, I knew I had the tools to continue the life that I started at Bridge.” *continued*

As Gabriela settled into the program, she began working with Molly and was partnered with her mentors. She began identifying her goals, creating a budget, and went back to school to earn her associate degree in health science.

She recalls that the start of the program was challenging for her. Gabriela wanted to make the most of her time at Bridge. She worked hard to build up her savings, but she became very hard on herself about spending. It was then that her mentors gave her some guidance that she still carries with her today.

“They told me, ‘You have to learn how to enjoy life, create memories, and have fun times with your kids. Life doesn’t have to be that hard. You are with us now, and we’re telling you it’s ok to invest money in that too. Those moments are important for your boys and for you.’” Gabriela said. “Looking back on those days, they were so right.”

Throughout Gabriela’s journey in the Bridge program, she worked towards her goals, built her savings, built friendships with other parents at Bridge, and took steady steps

towards independence.

She began to see her hard work pay off as she earned her associate degree, completed her dream certification program, and started a new career as a surgical technologist. With the savings she built, Gabriela and her boys were able to exit the program into permanent housing.

“I learned I could be more self-sufficient and had a safety net. I learned that I was enough for myself and my boys,” said Gabriela. “Even though I didn’t have any family members to support me, I discovered I had a whole community at Bridge that could help me overcome. It was like a brand-new life.”

It wasn’t until her children were older that she realized just how much her family’s time with Bridge had impacted her boys’ lives.

“All the tools that I learned from Bridge helped me help my sons to create good habits, do the right thing, dream for more, and aim for more,” shared Gabriela. “I tell them, ‘You can make it.’ That helped me support them and encourage them to dream for more.”

Today her younger son, Daniel, is thriving in high school

as he enters his sophomore year. Her older son, Mateo, who graduated high school with honors and leadership awards, is now attending college on an academic scholarship to an excellent university.

While her sons give Gabriela plenty to be proud of, Gabriela herself is excelling in her career and assisting in one-of-a-kind surgeries. She does crucial work to help her patients on the road to recovery.

“To those that helped me in the program, I don’t know where I’d be if it wasn’t for you. I will be forever grateful to have met all of you. I keep you in my memories with great love.”

— Gabriela

Gabriela has one powerful message for parents currently in the Bridge program: “Listen to your mentors and don’t lose hope. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel.”

Through Gabriela’s hard work, perseverance, and the guidance of her support team, that light at the end of the tunnel has become something even greater: a very bright future for Gabriela’s entire family. 🏡

Hope Is in Your Hands! When you support Bridge Communities, you give hope to families like Gabriela’s. Please make a gift today and support your neighbors facing homelessness by scanning this QR code or visiting www.bridgecommunities.org/donate.



Thank You for Being the Key Ingredient to Our Secret Sauce



Dear friends,

As I reflect on another impactful year at Bridge Communities, my heart is full of gratitude for you, our amazing supporters who make our work possible. What makes Bridge Communities truly special is what we call

our “secret sauce:” a unique, proven model built on the simple yet profound idea of neighbors helping neighbors. Whether you serve as a mentor, give generously, or advocate for our mission, you are part of something extraordinary. You are helping to create change that lasts, not just for today, but for generations.

Our holistic approach means every family we serve receives services tailored specifically to their unique circumstances. From job training and financial literacy to childcare support and tutoring, you ensure families get exactly what they need to succeed. This individualized care, made possible through your generosity, addresses root causes of poverty and homelessness.

Every day, I’m inspired by the resilience and determination of our client families. These hardworking, highly motivated parents and

children don’t just receive help. They actively partner with their mentors, support teams, and you in building their futures. When you see a family move from crisis to self-sufficiency, you’re witnessing the power of your investment multiplied by each family’s unwavering commitment.

The vast majority of our clients exit into permanent housing, and you help make it possible. Your support not only changes lives, it strengthens our community.

As we look ahead, I invite you to deepen your partnership with Bridge Communities by joining Community Builders, our new sustaining giving society. Through consistent monthly support, you can ensure this life-changing work continues, month after month and year after year. Please scan the QR code to join today.

You are the heart of our mission and the most important ingredient of our “secret sauce.”

With deep appreciation,

Amy Van Polen, CFRE
Chief Executive Officer



Create Your Lasting Legacy with the Cornerstone Legacy Society



With National Estate Planning Awareness Week approaching (October 20-26), it’s a good time to consider how you want to be remembered. Your legacy gift to Bridge Communities can transform the lives of families facing homelessness in DuPage County while achieving your financial goals.

By making a legacy gift, you will become a member of the Cornerstone Legacy Society, which honors individuals who support Bridge’s future through estate gifts such as bequests, trusts, or life insurance designations. Members receive special recognition and invitations to exclusive, mission-focused events.

Whether through your will, IRA, 401(k), or other assets, your planned gift creates a lasting legacy of generosity — supporting families facing homelessness for generations to come.

Call Kristin Short today at 630-403-5101 or visit our website to learn how you can create your legacy.



Q&A with Kari McGinn

Bridge Communities Boutique Volunteer

Q. What inspired you to volunteer at the Bridge Communities Boutique?

A. My family has been involved with Bridge in various capacities over the years. Once I retired from teaching, I decided to pursue volunteer opportunities, and Bridge was the logical choice because I believe so strongly in their mission.

Q. What do you do at the Boutique?

A. I manage the boutique - collecting and laundering donations, arranging the items for display, and scheduling volunteers. It takes a group to keep the place operating, and we have a fabulous team of volunteers who all pitch in to keep the place organized and to get clients outfitted in amazing clothing.

Q. What is your favorite part about helping clients find the perfect professional outfit?

A. I love their excitement when they walk in and see the boutique and when they see how amazing they look in their new clothing. I especially love their happiness when they realize that everything we offer is free to Bridge clients!

Q. Can you share a memorable moment you've had with a client at the Boutique?

A. I met with a client who was literally on her way to an interview and dressed in sweatpants. We got her outfitted in a beautiful professional ensemble and off



she went. She texted me later that day to let me know she got the job!

Q. What would you say to someone who's thinking about volunteering with Bridge Communities?

A. Do it! The reward of bringing a little bit of joy to others is so worth it. 🏡

Thank you to Kari for your dedication to helping the families of Bridge Communities. To learn more about unique volunteer opportunities at Bridge Communities, please contact Mary Slade at volunteercoordinator@bridgecommunities.org.



Never Miss an Update!

Sign up for our text list and get notified about important updates from Bridge Communities.

Scan the QR code to sign up today. It takes just seconds to register, and you can opt out anytime. Be among the first to know how your support is making a difference in the lives of families facing homelessness in our community.



**Scan to join
our text list**



Trade A Night in Your Cozy Bed for a Cause That Matters!

Ready to trade a night in your warm sheets for something way more meaningful? Join us for **Sleep Out Saturday on November 1st!**

By teaming up with your friends, family, teammates, or coworkers to sleep outside on a chilly autumn night, you can ensure that 100+ families facing homelessness have a safe place to call home. It's empathy in action. Your experience will be a meaningful night.

You can sleep outside safely in your backyard or in a car. You can even hold a meaningful sleep out event inside your home.

But wait, there's more! Don't miss our **SOS Kickoff Rally at College of DuPage on November 1st from 6:30-8pm**. There's going to be live entertainment with School of Rock Glen Ellyn, games, prizes, soup and bread, plus an inspiring story from a former Bridge client. It's the perfect way to fuel up before your sleep out adventure!

Since its launch, Sleep Out Saturday has raised more than \$1 million to support the families in our program. Your night outside creates lasting change for families working toward financial independence and stable housing.

Whether you're flying solo or rallying your crew, this is community action at its finest.

Ready to make a difference? Head to **SleepOutSaturday.org** right now to register or learn more.

See you outside on November 1st!

**Saturday,
November 1, 2025**

*Or choose any night between
October 25 and December 7*

Thank you to all our sponsors,
especially Bank of America,
Comcast, and Northwestern Medicine!



Scan to register



Thank you for your support!

Our friends in the community make a world of difference to the families we are honored to serve.
Thank you for your support of Bridge families!



Thank you, Nicor Gas

During a three-year partnership, Nicor Gas and Inspire, their women's employee resource group, raised over \$100,000 at an annual event benefiting Bridge. They also organized donation drives for our client supply closets and boutique.

We are so grateful to Northwestern Medicine whose recent grant is helping expand mental health services within our Family Wellness Program. They are a long-time supporter of our mission and a valued Sleep Out Saturday sponsor.



Thank you, Northwestern Medicine



Thank you, BMO

Thanks to a generous matching grant donation from BMO, donations made during this Giving Tuesday will go even further in supporting the families we serve.



Thank you, The Gardenworks Project & Whole Foods Market

Thanks to the GardenWorks Project and a grant from Whole Foods Market, we replaced garden beds for our clients across several campuses, revitalizing the gardens so they can grow fresh, nutritious produce.



Thank you, Harbaugh Family Fund of the DuPage Foundation

Many thanks to the Harbaugh Family Fund of the DuPage Foundation for their generous grant to support our Children's Program.

Thank you to these generous, new donors!

Your generosity is transformative for the families we serve. We look forward to growing our partnership and making a lasting impact together.

Huntington Bank, Jackson, and Helen Brach Foundation

GetInvolved!

Would your business, family, service or social club like to make a difference for families housed and mentored by Bridge Communities? Check out our Get Involved Guide for opportunities!



Your Generosity Takes Root: Native Trees Bring New Life to Bridge Campus

This summer, something special took root at one of our Glen Ellyn campuses: 20 beautiful native trees, planted with care by a community that believes in making a difference.

The wide variety of native trees planted will help beautify the neighborhood and our clients' homes, offer habitat for local wildlife, and help replace some of the aging trees in the area, ensuring a healthier landscape for years to come. As these trees grow, they will also provide shade to our clients' homes and create inviting spaces for children in our program to play.

We are so grateful to have partnered with Go Green Glen Ellyn and The Morton Arboretum on this project. Not only did they make the planting possible by donating the trees, but the expertise

of their staff and volunteers helped the planting run smoothly and ensure that the trees were planted properly and set up to thrive. Over the past few months, we have watched them take root and begin to grow.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered to dig, plant, and nurture these young trees. Your time, energy, and commitment helped create a greener, more vibrant community and a more beautiful home for the families we serve at Bridge.



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"Connections" is a publication of Bridge Communities, Inc.

The mission of Bridge Communities is to transition families facing homelessness to self-sufficiency by working with partners to provide mentoring, housing, and supportive services. Our vision is a community where all families are healthy, financially stable, and living in affordable housing. Each of our core values—Partnership, Hope, Integrity, Respect, and Empowerment—apply to everyone involved in Bridge Communities.

500 Roosevelt Rd, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
630-545-0610

www.bridgecommunities.org

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500 Roosevelt Rd
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
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Bridge Communities is a nonprofit organization working to transition families facing homelessness to self-sufficiency by working with partners to provide mentoring, housing, and supportive services.

Please help us save on printing and postage.

If you receive duplicate copies of this newsletter, or no longer wish to receive it, please return your mailing label in the enclosed envelope. *Thank you!*

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

Because of your help

With your generous support, families of Bridge Communities recently reached these milestones:

- **Client K**, a teen in our program, is starting her senior year of high school and doing a half-day program to start building college credit. When her family joined the program, K was struggling in school, but she worked hard and is now thriving academically.
- **Client T** accepted a new position, with a base salary of nearly \$80,000. She put a lot of work into the job search process. We're so proud to see it pay off for her!
- After working hard to earn her degree, **Client M** was offered a registered nurse position, starting at \$37 per hour.
- **Client A**, a child in the Bridge program, has been working hard with his tutor to improve his reading skills. With his mom working tirelessly to advocate for her son, he has been making fantastic progress!
- **Client F** wrote a thank you letter to her support team, stating, "Thank you, from the bottom of my

heart, for your kindness, your guidance, and your unwavering belief in my ability to succeed. The impact you have made in my life is immeasurable, and I will always remember how much it meant to have someone walking beside me on this journey."

- **Client T** moved into her new Bridge apartment right before her birthday. She said it was the best birthday gift ever!



Clients' names changed to initials to protect their privacy.



When you journey alongside the families of Bridge Communities, you empower them as they work towards permanent housing and long-lasting success. You can make a gift today at www.bridgecommunities.org.