



Connections

Connecting families facing homelessness to a better future.

Jasmine: “Bridge sets you up for success.”

On top of being a dedicated mother to two young boys, Jasmine is a 911 dispatcher, where she helps people respond to emergencies during some of the most stressful times of their lives.

Through her hard work, Jasmine has accomplished some amazing feats in her career. She has helped talk callers through the delivery of two baby girls, assisted in life saving CPR, and provided support through so many other emergencies.

Her work is truly life-changing, but not too long ago, she wouldn't have thought that it was possible for her to achieve something like that.

Shortly after Jasmine became pregnant with her second son, she and her partner split up. She wound up having to move in with family, but it wasn't a good environment for herself and her one-year-old son, especially with another child on the way.

Despite struggling to find other options, Jasmine knew she and her boys needed a space of their

own. “I always told myself I didn't want to bring a child into this world without being able to fully support them and myself,” Jasmine said. “I felt like I was defeated and let my kids down.”

When she didn't know where else to turn, she found Bridge Communities.

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“Bridge sets you up for success.” *continued*

Being accepted into the Bridge program was a big relief for Jasmine, but at the same time, she was nervous and unsure of what to expect. Still, for the first time in a while, it felt like her life was going in the right direction.

Her family finally had the safe, stable housing they needed, and Jasmine began working hard to identify and pursue her goals.

“I love the way everything played out. Even through the hard times, I could never thank Bridge enough for being there and being what I needed to help me become who I am today.”

At times, the program felt too challenging, and Jasmine even considered leaving early. “Back then, I was very much in flight mode,” she said. “I wasn’t sure I could do it because it made me uncomfortable. I had to learn to be ok with being uncomfortable because I knew it would improve my life.”

She soon found someone who helped her overcome her uncertainty and discomfort—Jodi Fegter, then Employment Counselor and current Associate Director of Program



Partnerships at Bridge Communities.

“Jodi was my number one person helping me get through that. She was there for me to confide in and talk to,” shared Jasmine. “She came into the picture and helped me learn how to interview better, fill out applications better, be more prepared, and find jobs that would be a good fit.”

While at Bridge, Jasmine found a better paying job that she loved and even

got promoted. She learned budgeting skills and put them to good use, building up her savings and raising her credit score. She worked with the Children’s Program to get her boys into daycare and even art classes to help them get socialized.

Since leaving the program, Jasmine accomplished one of her biggest goals: owning her own home. She moved into a house big enough for her whole family and put down roots in

Your Support Changes Lives!

By making a gift to Bridge Communities, you can help families like Jasmine’s reach self-sufficiency. Please donate today by scanning this QR code or visiting www.bridgecommunities.org/donate.



Celebrating Growth and Possibilities This Spring



Dear friends,

As we welcome spring, I find myself reflecting on the new growth this season brings. Just as dormant seeds burst from the ground with renewed life, our clients at Bridge Communities are blossoming with hope, potential, and new

beginnings. This season of transformation mirrors the journeys of the families facing homelessness we serve as they move from uncertainty and struggle to stability and strength.

This season reminds us that growth requires nurturing. At Bridge Communities, we witness this daily as our clients plant new roots for future success, develop critical life skills, and cultivate confidence. Each family's transformation is made possible by the fertile ground of support that you, our dedicated community, provide.

Your generosity helps our clients flourish in our program and reach self-sufficiency. As you may have seen in our 2024 Generosity Report, Bridge Communities continues to thrive both in our mission and financial health, thanks to the hard

work of our staff, volunteers, and generous supporters. Bridge doesn't rely on government grants to pursue our mission, which allows us greater flexibility, and as our clients face steeper challenges than ever before, we are able to respond to their needs efficiently as they arise.

Your commitment ensures we can consistently offer pathways to stability when families need them most. You make possible each new beginning, each small victory, each transformed life. To learn more about your impact and accomplishments in 2024, as well as Bridge Communities' financial security, you can explore our 2024 Generosity Report by scanning the QR code below.

As opportunities bloom in this new season, we are deeply grateful for your partnership in nurturing hope and creating lifelong change. Together, we're growing something beautiful—a community where everyone has the chance to thrive.

In Service to You,

Amy Van Polen, CFRE
Chief Executive Officer



**Read our 2024
Generosity Report**

the DuPage community.

Her newfound financial stability and permanent housing helped her pursue another dream of hers: becoming a 911 dispatcher. Her job has a very difficult job training process, but it was through this that Jasmine noticed a lot of personal growth within herself.

"Bridge helped me to build a foundation enough for me to feel comfortable and encouraged to explore a career

in this field," said Jasmine.

"If it was me prior to Bridge that applied to my position, I would've given up within 3 weeks. But when I really felt like I couldn't go further, Jodi popped into my head. Her advice helped me take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

"Bridge helped me to realize that even if I'm uncomfortable for a little bit, I can still make it through."

Through Jasmine's hard work and perseverance, she built a bright future for her family, and today, Jasmine and her boys are thriving.

"Bridge Communities helped me to be a better mom and make the right choices for myself and my kids. I will always be grateful to Bridge. I don't know where I would be without you all. Bridge has helped me more than I can even express." 🌟

Q&A with Mavis R. Hawkes | Mentor

Q. What inspired you to become a mentor for Bridge?

A. Bridge is one of the few non-profit organizations that genuinely move families out of homelessness and poverty into a self-sufficient lifestyle. Its impact is long-lasting and transcends generations.

Q. What do you do as a volunteer?

A. As a volunteer, my focus is mentorship to the families Bridge serves. This involves connecting with them to provide positive relationships and advice and guidance on things such as budgeting, life-skills, savings, debt reduction, financial literacy and overall support in making wise decisions and building self-esteem.

Q. What advice would you give to someone who is considering being a mentor?

A. A mentor first needs to look at things through the eyes of the mentee, so you can meet them at their level and build trust. Treat them with respect and be sure you schedule time to meet with them regularly.

Q. What is the most rewarding aspect of being a mentor?

A. The most rewarding aspect for me is when the mentee graduates from the program, and all their



goals coming in have been met. Some examples are when they are able to purchase a house, rent a place on their own, pay off a large debt, receive higher education, advance in their career and overall self-improvement.

Q. If you could describe mentoring with Bridge in one word, what would it be and why?

A. Life-changing! The program is a blessing. It provides hope and a great future for those who once felt hopeless and, in many instances, had gone through some type of trauma or misfortune. 🏡

Thank you, Mavis, for your dedicated support of the families you have mentored!

Mentor a Bridge Family!

If you're interested in making a life-changing impact on the lives of families facing homelessness, just like Mavis, consider mentoring a Bridge family. When you're ready to take the first steps in your mentoring journey, you can join us at our next Mentor Training session on Saturday, September 27.

To learn more about becoming a mentor or Mentor Training, please scan the QR code or contact Associate Director of Program Partnerships, Jodi Fegter, at jodi.fegter@bridgecommunities.org.



Transforming Lives Through Leadership:

Board & Committee Opportunities at Bridge Communities

Our dedicated Board of Directors and the members of our committees' unwavering commitment to Bridge Communities' mission has been instrumental in reaching an incredible milestone, over 1,000 families facing homelessness served.

Our current Board and committee members contribute countless hours, invaluable expertise, and passionate advocacy to ensure that families in our community have access to stable housing, mentoring, and support services. Their leadership during the past year has helped us further our mission and expand our reach to serve more families in need.

If you are passionate about breaking the cycle of homelessness for families in our community, you may be interested in joining one of our leadership committees.

With our Board of Directors, committees focused on Program, Development, Finance, and more,

and even an Associate Board, there are plenty of service opportunities that will provide a meaningful way to contribute your unique skills and perspectives to an organization that transforms lives daily.

Whether your background is in finance, marketing, social services, education, or any field that brings fresh insights to our work, we would love to hear from you, especially if you have lived experience similar to our client families.

If you're interested in learning more about leadership committee service opportunities with Bridge Communities, please contact Amy Van Polen at amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org to discuss how your talents might align with our needs. Together, we can continue connecting families facing homelessness to a better future. 🏡

Help Us Restock Our Supply Closets!

Right now, our supply closets are running low. The families in our program rely on these essential personal care and cleaning items every day. We urgently need shampoo, toothpaste, cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, and more to ensure parents can provide for their families without extra financial strain.



You can help parents in our program focus on their goals by donating items. You can contact Volunteer Coordinator, Mary Slade at mary.slade@bridgecommunities.org to learn more or organize a donation drive. You can also make an immediate impact by donating items from our Amazon wish list, by scanning the QR code.

Every contribution helps a family facing homelessness.



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.



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, College of DuPage (COD)
and Stephanie Land

COD is a longtime partner of Bridge, supporting events like Sleep Out Saturday and last year's An Evening with Stephanie Land. They've also been a great partner in our adult education programs. Thank you, COD, for all your incredible support!



Thank you, DuPage Community
Transformation Partnership (DCTP)

Many thanks to the DCTP, a collaboration between DuPage County and DuPage Foundation. Their generous grant helps us to serve even more families facing homelessness in our Stability Program.

Home 2 Home Project has been doing incredible work furnishing and decorating some of our clients' apartments to help make our clients feel at home. Thank you for your life changing work!



Thank you, Home 2 Home Project



Thank you, Science of Spirituality

We are deeply grateful to Science of Spirituality. On top of selecting us as their Divine Beauty Women's Retreat's charity partner, they donated carloads of personal care, and household cleaning products for our supply closets and \$1,500.



Thank you, Old National Bank

A longtime partner to Bridge, Old National Bank donated two tickets to Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour. The raffle we had for the tickets helped raise a lot of excitement and funds for Bridge's mission, and the winner had a fantastic time at the concert!

GetInvolved!



Bridge Communities seeks to grow corporate and foundation partnerships that are mutually fulfilling, multi-faceted, and enduring. Learn more about how organizations can get involved in Bridge's mission!





Mark your calendar for some of the wonderful events Bridge Communities has planned for 2025:

An Evening of Philanthropy & Art

Thursday, June 19

The McAninch Arts Center & Cleve Carney Museum of Art

Join us for an inspiring evening to connect with fellow Bridge Communities supporters, explore how you can leave a lasting philanthropic legacy, and experience the exquisite "Hokusai and Ukiyo-e: The Floating World" art exhibit.



Bridge Communities' Pickleball Tournament

Saturday, July 26

Pickled! Wheaton

Save the date for our Bridge Communities' Pickleball Tournament and serve up against homelessness! Participants will play against fellow community members, all while raising funds for Bridge families in need of vehicles.



Glen Ellyn Backyard BBQ

Saturday, September 6

Duane Street Public Parking Lot

Don't miss this day of summertime fun featuring an amateur BBQ competition, live music, and delicious food and drink vendors. There will also be plenty of fun to be had for the kiddos at our Piglet Playland.



Scan the QR code to visit our website and learn more about these exciting, upcoming events.

To learn more about these upcoming events, follow Bridge Communities on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram and never miss an update!

Board of Directors

Robert Mitchum, *Chairperson*

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Matt Dmytryszyn, *Treasurer*

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Amy Van Polen, Chief Executive Officer

"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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Glen Ellyn, IL 60137
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www.bridgecommunities.org

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:

- After a long journey navigating the special education system, **Client F's** son is now receiving the support he needs to succeed in school. In Client F's own words, "The support from Bridge Communities did not just provide an advocate; it gave my family a voice when we were being overlooked. It gave my son a chance to thrive, not just survive."
- **Client M** earned her nursing degree in December.
- **Client N** purchased a condo for her family, an accomplishment she never thought possible!
- **Client R** received a new job offer, negotiated her salary, and is now making \$24 an hour, a significant increase.
- **Client K** finished her apprenticeship and is now officially licensed by the state. She works in a hard industry to break into, yet through her perseverance, she found a full-time job at the director level!
- After completing our Transitional Housing Program, **Client A** joined our Pathways program—and now she's moving into permanent housing with her two sons, \$13,000 in savings, and a baby girl on the way.
- **Clients J and D** graduated from the Bridge program and became homeowners in partnership with Habitat for Humanity! Through their hard work, they've built a future full of stability and hope for their family.



Clients' names changed to initials to protect their privacy.



When you journey alongside the families of Bridge Communities, you empower families as they work towards self-sufficiency, permanent housing, and a lifetime of success. Please make a gift today at www.bridgecommunities.org.