



Connections

Connecting families facing homelessness to a better future.

Courtney: “I had to do the hard work, but the support people gave me was why I was able to do it.”

“**E**ven strong people need help sometimes.” Those were the words Courtney’s friend, who was a client in the Bridge program, told her when she didn’t know what to do.

Courtney was leaving a horrible situation. “I was in the process of leaving an abusive marriage. It wasn’t safe for me and my three kids,” Courtney shared. “I just needed someplace safe.”

At the time, her children were 15, 9, and 6 years old. She knew they needed stability, but she felt she was running out of options.

“I wasn’t able to cover the bills because they were based on

my husband’s income and not mine alone,” Courtney said. Soon she found herself facing homelessness.

That was when Courtney’s friend recommended she apply to Bridge Communities. The intake process was difficult for Courtney. It was hard to accept the help at first. But, with her friend’s encouragement and her determination, she completed the process and was accepted into the Bridge program.

“The opportunity to have our own place, the nervousness of completely starting over, and taking care of everything by myself was a lot,” Courtney said. “But after I met my mentors from Families Helping Families, the kindness they showed me—it helped so much.”

Courtney came in with a lot of goals. She wanted to raise her credit score, pay down her debts, build her savings, and purchase a home when she graduated from Bridge.

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“I had to do the hard work, but the support people gave me was why I was able to do it.” *continued*

Now paired with her mentors, Bill, Nancy, and Zoe, and her case manager Veronica, Courtney started working towards her goals.

The budget was a bit of a reality check for her at first, but it helped her to see that she could meet her goals if she followed the rules she set for herself and saved.

In the program, Courtney’s children attended counseling, so they could talk through the two tumultuous years leading up to their time in Bridge’s program. They also became good friends with the other kids in their building and frequently played with their neighbors.

her. She went to the supply closets, attended educational workshops, and took part in the Peer Support groups.

“I understood that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I knew I wanted to take advantage of it,” Courtney said.

Through the program, Courtney accomplished all the goals she set for herself. She built up her savings, paid down her debts, and raised her credit score over 200 points. Best of all, she was able to purchase a home for her family. She even met the person who helped her get her mortgage through one of the Peer Support events at Bridge.

Courtney credits the stability she found while in the program for making it possible to find a job that she truly loves. While at Bridge, she began her role as a director at a childcare center. She has since received a promotion and is now the Executive Director.

Her kids are thriving. Her oldest son has finished high school and is doing well in his new career. Her two younger kids have settled into their new

school and are making friends. Both of them have even been named Student of the Month.

“There’s a calmness that our lives have now because of the stability that we were able to get through the program,” Courtney said. “It felt like a dream while it was all happening. I’m just eternally grateful for it.”

Throughout the process, Courtney felt surrounded by people who held her accountable, supported her, respected her, and loved her. To the people who helped her through her journey at Bridge Communities, Courtney shared, “thank you so much. You are family to me, and you will always be part of my life.”

Courtney’s journey is proof that accepting help isn’t a sign of weakness. It’s an act of courage. Just as her friend once reminded her, “even strong people need help sometimes.” For Courtney, that help became the foundation for creating a life she once only dreamed of. 🏡

“Bridge Communities is a safe place to land when life gets difficult.”

Michelle, Associate Director of Children’s Services at Bridge Communities, helped Courtney find childcare, so she could focus on her work and know that her kids were being taken care of.

Courtney made the most of the resources available to

**Hope Is in
Your Hands!**

**By supporting Bridge Communities,
you give hope to families like Courtney’s.
Please make a donation today and support
your neighbors facing homelessness by
scanning this QR code or visiting
www.bridgecommunities.org/donate.**



Celebrating Growth and Possibilities This Spring



Dear friends,
Spring is a season of renewal, growth, and new beginnings, and that spirit is truly flourishing at Bridge Communities this year. I'm thrilled to share several exciting developments that reflect

not only our growth, but our deep commitment to building a stronger, more supportive future for the families we serve.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of an anonymous donor, we are expanding our Naperville campus with the acquisition of a new building. This meaningful addition allows us to welcome more families into our program and create an even more vibrant community where connection, encouragement, and shared experiences help lay the foundation for lasting stability.

Growth also means caring for what we already have. Renovations of multiple apartments at this same Naperville campus are underway, resulting in eight fully renovated units by the end of this year. Providing Bridge families with beautiful, well-maintained homes is central to ensuring they feel cherished and ready to begin their lives anew.

I'm also proud to share that last year we welcomed more client families into our program

than in any of the past ten years. As our reach grows, so does our need for dedicated mentors. If you, your faith community, or service group would like to learn about mentoring Bridge families, please reach out to me at amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org.

Looking ahead, our 2026–2028 Strategic Plan outlines a vision for thoughtful, sustainable growth ensuring we continue to meet the evolving needs of our community with care and intention. I invite you to explore the plan by scanning the QR code and see how, together, we are shaping Bridge Communities' future.

All this growth is only made possible through the dedication of friends like you. Thank you for all you do to help our neighbors overcome homelessness and move forward with hope, and if you are feeling inspired after reading "Connections," please use the enclosed envelope to make a lasting gift to the more than 100 families we will serve this year.

With deep appreciation,

Amy Van Polen, CFRE
Chief Executive Officer



Join the Bridge Communities Associate Board!

Want to make a real impact while building meaningful connections? Our Associate Board brings together rising business and civic leaders to share our mission and grow resources for families facing homelessness. This year, be a part of the action by helping with a Cornhole Tournament and beer tent at the Glen Ellyn Backyard BBQ!

Join us for our Associate Board Social in October to connect with like-minded leaders and discover the Bridge mission. Interested? Reach out to Lauren Chilvers at lauren.chilvers@bridgecommunities.org.



Q&A with Dave Perkowski | Volunteer

Q. What inspired you to volunteer with Bridge Communities?

A. I began my volunteer work with Bridge as a mentor through the Transitional Housing Ministry at our church, St. Isaac Jogues, 12 years ago. I volunteered because I wanted to give back to the community in a hands-on capacity where I could see the benefits of my involvement.

Q. What do you do as a volunteer?

A. I've mentored four families during this time and was recently asked to lead the Transitional Housing Ministry at St. Isaac's. I also have been fundraising for Bridge the last three years as a Sole Mate for their Wine Women & Shoes event.

Q. Is there a particular moment you're most proud of in your volunteer work with Bridge?

A. Two come to mind. One family I mentored was a mom with an 8-year-old son. When our mentor team met her, she had a job with limited benefits, no advancement opportunities, and a salary just above minimum wage. We worked



with her to develop an impactful resume, coached her on finding career opportunities, and did mock interviews. After a few months, she secured a position with a significant increase in salary and benefits.

The second proud moment was when I became the lead person for St. Isaac's Transitional Housing Ministry. When I started two years ago, we were sponsoring one Bridge family. We increased our funding and mentor teams and now have three families that we sponsor.

Q. What is the most rewarding part of being a volunteer?

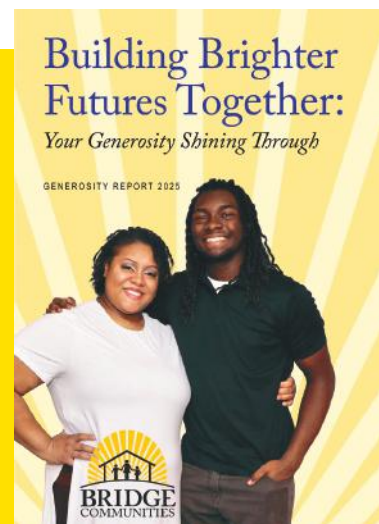
A. For me, it's the opportunity to affect a family's future in a positive manner. It's very gratifying to help a family improve their financial and personal skills and see the lifelong benefits. 🏡

Dave was recently crowned King of Sole at Wine Women & Shoes due to his extraordinary fundraising efforts. Thank you, Dave, 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.

See How Your Support Built Brighter Futures in Your 2025 Generosity Report

Bridge Communities' 2025 Generosity Report is out now! In this year's report, we celebrate outcomes and honor the community that makes our mission possible. As you read the stories and accomplishments within this report, know that you helped turn these possibilities into realities. Scan the QR code to view your 2025 Generosity Report.



Opening New Doors: Building Stability, Transforming Lives

We are now just \$281,000 away from our \$5 million goal for the Opening New Doors Campaign. To date, \$4,719,000 has been raised to help double Bridge Communities' endowment, strengthening our ability to serve families for years to come.

In DuPage County, the face of homelessness is often a single mother with children navigating crises such as job loss, illness, or domestic violence. Despite the county's wealth, the need continues to grow. One in five households earns less than \$35,000 per year, 44% of renters are cost-burdened, and 3,000 children were identified as homeless by schools last year.

Bridge Communities remains committed to a transitional housing model focused on long-term stability and self-sufficiency. Families receive stable housing, financial coaching, case management, counseling, and consistent mentor support. This approach delivers strong outcomes,

with 91% of graduates moving to permanent housing, 86% remaining current on rent, and average incomes increasing by more than 24%.

The Stability Program, launched in 2022, serves families with more complex needs. To date, 34 families have been served, with 85% transitioning into Transitional Housing and all 2025 graduates advancing forward.

Investments in housing quality also remain essential, with ongoing renovations ensuring homes reflect dignity, safety, and pride. As we enter the final stretch of the campaign, thank you to those who have already contributed. Anyone interested in learning more can contact Kristin Short at kristin.short@bridgecommunities.org or 630-403-5101. 🏠



Mark Your Calendars for the Wonderful Events We Have Planned for 2026:

Bridge Communities' Pickleball Tournament

Saturday, August 1

Pickled! Wheaton

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



Glen Ellyn Backyard BBQ

Saturday, September 12

Downtown Glen Ellyn

Don't miss this day of summertime fun featuring a BBQ competition, live music, and delicious food. There will also be fun for the kiddos at our Piglet Playland.



Sleep Out Saturday

Saturday, November 7

Throughout DuPage County

Save the date for an empathy-building night outside to support families facing homelessness! Don't forget to join us for an exciting rally to kick off your sleep out.



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

Never miss an event update! Follow Bridge Communities on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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, Robert R. McCormick Foundation & the Daily Herald

As part of the Neighbors in Need Fund, the Daily Herald featured Bridge in an article that helped raise funds for our mission that were then matched by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.



Thank you, Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation (IICF)

We are so grateful for IICF's dedicated support of our mission. Their continued partnership makes a transformational difference for the families we serve.



Thank you, Endeavor Health

Many thanks to Endeavor Health for their generous grant supporting our Transitional Housing Program. Your investment in our community makes an incredible difference!



Thank you, Wintrust Community Banks

Wintrust was once again the Presenting Sponsor at this year's Wine Women & Shoes event, helping to make it such a success. This is just the most recent example of their generous support from our decades-long partnership.

Opening New Doors

The Investment Campaign for Bridge Communities

Thank you to the Kolschowsky family and all our Opening New Doors donors

The Kolschowsky family and other campaign donors are truly opening new doors to stable housing and a brighter future for the families we serve.

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!



Introducing our Refreshed Mission and Commitment Statements: *Same Heart, Renewed Dedication*

At Bridge Communities, everything we do begins and ends with connecting families facing homelessness to brighter futures. That truth hasn't changed, and it never will. As we launch our new Strategic Plan, we are pleased to share a refreshed mission statement that more precisely captures the work you make possible every day.

Our commitment to helping families overcome homelessness remains exactly what it has always been. What's new is language that better reflects the depth of that commitment. Our transitional housing and mentor models remain the heart of Bridge Communities, time-tested and unwavering.

We are also introducing a new commitment statement, a declaration of the values that shape how we show up for every person we serve to ensure a culture of belonging in our program. Together, these statements connect directly to our program outcomes and guide us as we grow. We are grateful for your partnership in this mission.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Bridge Communities is to partner with families and their children, providing stable housing and transformational support so they are empowered to overcome homelessness and thrive for generations to come.

Commitment Statement:

We believe in the transformative power of hope. Through partnerships built on mutual trust and respect, we empower families to shape their own futures and pursue new possibilities. With each milestone, we honor courage, celebrate growth, and affirm the unshakeable dignity of every person. We hold ourselves accountable for creating a place where everyone feels welcome, experiences support, and has the opportunity to thrive.

Board of Directors

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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 partner with families and their children, providing stable housing and transformational support so they are empowered to overcome homelessness and thrive for generations to come. 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

Get Social With Us!

We want to share all the latest and greatest news from Bridge Communities with you. Connect with us on social media:

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

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!*

www.bridgecommunities.org

Bridge Communities is a nonprofit organization that provides families facing homelessness with stable housing and transformative support to help them thrive.

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

Because of your help

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

- **Client C** accepted her dream job as a financial counselor. She's working remotely which allows her to be closer to her family. She even successfully negotiated a higher hourly rate!
- **Client A** recently secured a new job earning \$70,000 a year.
- **Client C** earned her bachelor's degree! She was inspired to achieve this while attending the Employment & Adult Education team's 4 Weeks to Success workshops.
- **Client K** has graduated from Bridge and moved into a townhome. She has put down roots in the community and looks forward to her daughter's graduation.
- **Client A** finished her final LPN class. She has been working so hard, but her dedication is about to pay off as she progresses into a field she loves!
- **Client C's** daughter made the 7th grade basketball team. Congratulations to this young athlete!
- **Client M** started a new job after a long search process. On his way to his first day on the job, he was so excited that he texted his case manager this picture saying, "First day of my next journey." Way to go, M!



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.