



# Connections

*Connecting homeless families to a better future.*

## “Bridge helped me gain my confidence back”

Cassie’s a bubbly, outgoing and kind mother-of-two living in the western suburbs. Her laugh is contagious, she lights up at the mention of her daughters Chloe and Cayden, and she’s passionate about her job helping cancer patients.

You’d never know that, just three years ago, she and her girls escaped from a traumatic life of domestic violence, leaving them homeless.

“I went through a really bad transition when leaving my ex-husband, because it was a domestic situation,” Cassie remembers. “I’d lost myself, and thought I was a failure. And at the time, my credit was shot. I wasn’t able to get anything in my name—not a credit card, not an apartment, nothing. My kids and I had nowhere to go, and I felt so scared and alone.”

They crashed with some relatives willing to take them in temporarily, but “it was a tight situation,” and Cassie was desperate to find long-term stability so her family could heal. A friend from high school suggested she call Bridge Communities, and after a series of interviews, she was welcomed into the program.

Cassie was relieved to find safety in her new Bridge home, but admits there were some initial mixed feelings. “In my adult life, I’d never had anyone tell me what to do with my money, and at first I thought, ‘I can’t do this, there are too many rules, it’s too hard,’” says Cassie.

“But one day, my grandmother said, ‘Bridge is there to help

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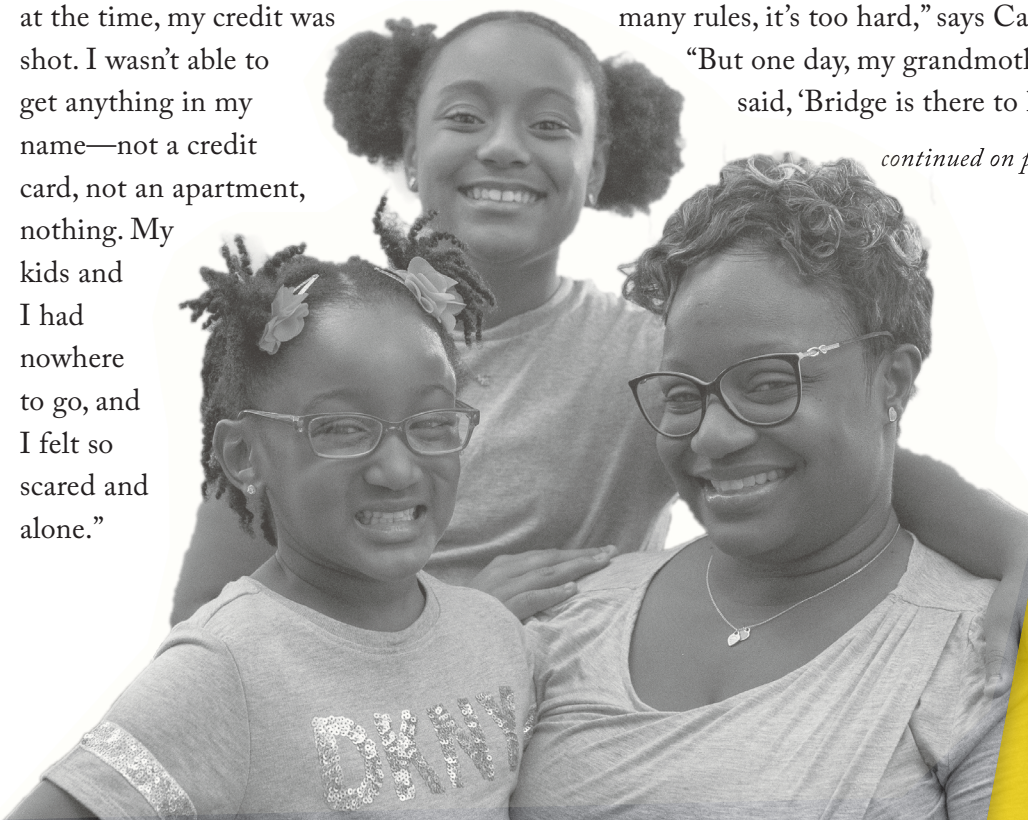
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## “Bridge helped me gain my confidence back” *continued*

you, not hurt you. And this is all to better you and your children.’ So I kept an open mind, I prayed a lot, and with the help of Bridge and my mentors, they guided me through.”

One of the first steps for Cassie’s family was dealing with trauma. She and her girls began domestic violence counseling right away—both in a group for kids and moms together, and through an art therapy class just for kids, which helped the girls express their pain through drawing. “Those courses helped us out a lot, and I found out a lot from my children that I hadn’t known they experienced during my marriage,” Cassie says. “You don’t realize all that you went through until you really see it in black and white.”

**“Cassie is a wonderful example of a person of making the most of a second opportunity,” says her case manager Paul Matthews. “She is hardworking, resourceful, and eager to learn from the experience and expertise of others. With the help of mentoring and her own perseverance, Cassie’s life has been transformed from a place of homelessness to a place of achievement, growth, and self-sufficiency.”**

In fact, one of her daughters had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. “We went through stages when we were in our apartment, and my

kids would always come to my door to ask, ‘Mom, are you okay? Are you okay?’ And I’d have to reassure them, and check on them, and check the cabinets, and look outside the front door,” she remembers.

Bridge connected her daughter to a psychologist from Samaracare, who helped the family work through the trauma and recover their sense of safety. “We came to know that we were in a safe environment, and that no one would ever hurt us again. That transition for us was the most important thing of all.”

Next up was a path to building a better future for their family. When Cassie first came into the Bridge program, she was saddled with a budget-breaking car payment of nearly \$500 per month. Cassie and her mentors soon realized this would be a huge barrier for her to successfully save money. “My mentor Rich went to the dealership with me, and he ended up negotiating with them to get me out of my SUV that I’d gotten brand new, and I was able to lease a compact car for the much lower amount of \$230 a month.”

Cassie continued to improve her budgeting skills, and later, when she went back to school and needed her budget to include her college fees, her mentors obtained a donated 2008 Honda Civic for

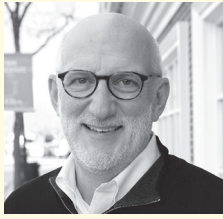


her from their parish. “Now I own my car, and that is really a blessing,” she says.

Cassie considers her mentors—Rich, Barb, Ed and Donna from Daybreak of Lisle—to be the key reasons she was able to succeed. “I love them, and it was a great experience working with them,” she says. “They always went the extra mile to help me and my children.”

Her mentors also saw Cassie’s potential, and encouraged her to pursue her dream of completing her college degree over the next two years—although she knew it would be really difficult, as she already worked full-time. “Three nights a week, I went to class from 6 to 9 in the evening, and that was so challenging,” she says. “There were a lot of times that my girls and I were doing homework together, because I still had to be a mom and not neglect them. But we made it!”

## Thirty Years of Relationships



Dear Friends,

It has been said that the spirit of Bridge Communities, this year celebrating now in our 30th year, is a tapestry of all the relationships forged over

those years. I dedicate this space to the many thousands who have contributed to that spirit.

First, to co-founder Mark Milligan – the master relationship builder – who, along with co-founder Bob Wahlgren, had a vision and was able to draw in a small, but mighty group of people in 1988 to rent an apartment and support the first Bridge family. Mark and Bob both taught us all how to make relationships deeply personal.

Next, to our Program Partner leaders, who built the personal relationships to launch and sustain their ministries over the decades. And, to the thousands of volunteers, connected through personal relationships with our staff and client families, who made deep commitments to see families through the challenges of transitional housing. Our volunteers understood that all progress was possible only after the personal relationship had been solidified.

Then, to the very talented Bridge staff and boards of directors, who over many years built relationships with thousands of donors to help grow and strengthen the program. Very often, those donors were the first to reach out.

Finally, the best for last – the hundreds of Bridge families who had the wisdom and courage to ask for help. They forged relationships with us when we had been strangers to them, and seized the opportunity we offered to help them fulfill their dreams.

More than ever before, Bridge is well-positioned to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of an uncertain future. The tapestry of Bridge may change in color and texture, but it will forever be woven of relationships – our greatest asset.

John R. Hayner,  
*Chief Executive Officer*

This past April, Cassie graduated from Robert Morris University with her bachelors in business management. “I cried sitting in the seat at graduation, I cried walking across the stage, and I cried when I was reunited with my family after the ceremony,” she says. “For so long, I’d cried tears of sadness from going through everything before. But being in Bridge and working with my mentors made everything worth it in the end. That was gratification for me: to see my kids proud of their mom.”

Since graduating from college and Bridge Communities this spring, Cassie has moved into a three-bedroom townhouse, with a big yard for her girls. And at work, she’s been promoted from an entry-level patient registrar to a patient financial counselor, and helps cancer patients find funding for their treatment. “I love my job because every day, I’m making a difference in somebody’s life,” she says. She’s continuing to budget and save like her mentors taught her, and

aspires to work in management one day.

Cassie says that being in the Bridge Communities turned her life around. “Bridge built my self-esteem, and I came out of the shell I’d been in from feeling like I wasn’t good enough,” she says. “To gain my confidence back and take my life back, it made me a better mother, a better friend, a better daughter, and just a better person across the board. And I’m grateful.” 📌

## Q&A with Kay Albach

Resource Closet Volunteer

**Q.** How did you first become involved with Bridge Communities?

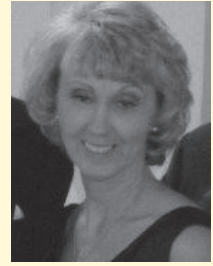
**A.** My husband Steve is a member of the Naperville Noon Lion's Club. Vicky Joseph was the presenter at a weekly club meeting and talked about the need for Bridge's Resource Closet. Vicky explained how the closet needs donations and the families can't purchase cleaning and personal items with public aid. Our son was moving at the time, so we took the U-Haul that he used and went to Sam's Club and purchased items for the closet.

**Q.** What do you do as a volunteer?

**A.** We soon began purchasing the items weekly for the Resource Closet. We are helping families so they can have a better life.

**Q.** What's it your favorite Bridge memory?

**A.** On our wedding anniversary, there was a need for a kids bike and a big wheel for a Bridge family. We purchased the bike and the big wheel as a gift to each other. To see the kids ride their bikes around the street was the best gift I could ever receive.



**Q.** What's the best thing about volunteering with Bridge Communities?

**A.** Everyone in life has struggle; however, you are giving people hope and an opportunity to better their lives. This is not a hand out—it is a helping hand. 🟡

**Cleaning products or personal care items cannot be purchased with food stamps, and we rely on generous donors to help stock our resource closets for Bridge families. Please contact Vicky Joseph at (630) 207-0601 or vicky.joseph@bridgecommunities.org if you would like to donate!**

Suzanne,  
I can't thank you enough for all you have done for myself and my son. What a blessing. Truly, what you and your team have given us is immeasurable.  
You must have seen something in me and my son, and I cannot ever repay the kindness you have shown to us. You have empowered a woman to be the best mother possible, and have given me the peace and motivation to go beyond what I thought I was able to do. Seeing my sweet little child not panic when I leave his room at night, seeing him peacefully playing and watching him as he interacts with others is proof that this is exactly what we needed. If I can give him stability and security because of what you have given me, you must know your work is absolutely unparalleled. Many blessings on you...  
Hosanna

Everyone at Bridge got a tear in their eyes when we received this note. Everything Bridge does is because of the support you give – YOU are changing lives!

Follow Bridge on Facebook to read more heartwarming stories about Bridge families.

 [facebook.com/bridge.communities](https://facebook.com/bridge.communities)

# A Chair Affair

It's an affair to remember! This Friday, October 12, join us at The Community House for the second annual A Chair Affair-Hinsdale.

Even before the event, you'll be able to enjoy in person all the unique artwork in the form of chairs, benches and more designed by local artisans. Starting September 14, they'll be on display throughout businesses in Hinsdale, Clarendon Hills, Burr Ridge and Oak Brook.

Online voting for the chairs will be available through October 12, when they'll be moved to The Community House for the cocktail auction gala. This exciting night will feature live and silent auctions, a 50/50 raffle, a wine pull, a jewelry pull featuring gorgeous pieces from Kendra Scott, and more!

**Tickets for the October 12 event are now available at [www.bridgecommunities.org](http://www.bridgecommunities.org)!** Each \$75 ticket includes a sumptuous hors d'oeuvres and dessert buffet, plus an open bar. Proceeds from A Chair Affair-Hinsdale will support Bridge's transitional housing program and the 130 families recovering from the traumas of homelessness. Join us!

Proudly sponsored by:



## Gala Reception & Auction Event

Friday, October 12, 2018 \$75 ticket

The Community House  
415 W. 8th St., Hinsdale

6:00 p.m. Cocktails and Buffet reception,  
Art Preview and Silent Auction

7:30 p.m. Live Auction

## Partner Spotlight: Delta Dental of Illinois

We are grateful to the human resources department of Delta Dental of Illinois for going above and beyond for Bridge families! Lynn Filippelli, Delta Dental of Illinois' Director of Human Resources, has been key to the successful employment of several Bridge clients since 2016.

"Mary Zienty and Dorothy Douglas of Bridge's employment team met with us, and Bridge seemed like a program that's really needed," she said.

Lynn agreed to help by conducting mock interviews for job-seeking Bridge clients, but she also went one step further to



assist in Bridge's employment workshops. During each four-week session, she teaches clients not only how to interview and write a resume—but also how to recognize their skills and strengths, and gain a much-deserved boost in their confidence.

"You absolutely see how much more comfortable they become

over those four weeks in talking about themselves, and their growth is just phenomenal," says Lynn. "It's very rewarding to see. I really enjoy working in HR, and to use my skills to help people has been a perfect fit."

The true mark of the partnership's success? Some Bridge job-seekers have even gone through the employment process at Delta Dental of Illinois, and have earned full-time positions on staff. Thank you, Lynn and the Delta Dental of Illinois team, for giving Bridge clients the opportunity to succeed!

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE  
**BRIDGE COMMUNITIES 30TH BIRTHDAY BASH**

30 YEARS OF HOMES & HOPE + HONORING MARK MILLIGAN'S RETIREMENT

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2018

PEARLS, POSIES + SURPRISES AT THE PLANTER'S PALETTE

## Bridge Communities 30th Birthday Bash *Pearls, Posies & Surprises!*

Join us to honor 30 years of homes and hope and honor the retirement of our beloved co-founder Mark Milligan on September 21 at the Bridge Communities 30th Birthday Bash!

We'll be partying at The Planter's Palette in Winfield, as their greenhouse will be transformed into "celebration central." This festive night will feature raffles, auctions, food stations, cocktails, music, dancing and more as we thank Mark for his 30 years of leadership and philanthropy in DuPage County.

You won't want to miss out on the party of the year! Tickets are limited—buy yours today at [www.bridgecommunities.org](http://www.bridgecommunities.org).



### Bridge Communities 30th Birthday Bash

Friday, September 21

6:30-11:00 PM

The Planter's Palette

28W571 Roosevelt Road

Winfield, Illinois 60190

Tickets \$100

## The Bridge Communities Founders Fund **Unlock Their Potential**

In honor of cofounders Mike Milligan and Bob Wahlgren, we're proud to announce the creation of the Bridge Communities Founders Fund, an endowment designed to support the educational needs of high school-aged teens in Bridge families. When you donate to this fund, you'll make sure that Bridge teens receive:

- Counseling regarding options for college, technical schools and vocational programs;
- ACT and SAT tutoring;
- Personalized help for teens and their parents to understand and apply for financial aid;
- Career assessment;
- And more.

"Graduating from high school calls for many decisions. Often, a Bridge family has little experience with either college or trade school, so this can be a very difficult time to move through,"

says Mark. "Navigating this process can make the difference between a successful launch or continued poverty. And this will be the work of the Founders Fund."

You can make Mark and Bob's legacy last forever!

Learn how you can change a Bridge teens future, and ask Resource Development Director Amy Van Polen about the Founders Fund today! Call 630-545-0610 x12 or e-mail [amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org](mailto:amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org) to unlock their potential.

**We believe all Bridge teens can achieve greatness, just like Steffi. Please join us in supporting the Founders Fund today to help Bridge teens on their path to success!**



Mark Milligan and Bob Wahlgren,  
Co-founders, Bridge Communities

# Join us at the 15th Annual Sleep Out Saturday!

Saturday, November 3, 2018

You can change a homeless family's life forever! Join us and hundreds of Bridge supporters on November 3 for Sleep Out Saturday. Experience an empathy-building night of sleeping outside in the cold, and gain a better understanding of what it's like to be homeless. **Register today at [www.sleepoutsaturday.org](http://www.sleepoutsaturday.org)!**

**Register today! Who can sleep out? Everybody!**

Here are the 3 types of participants:

- Groups: Adults, children or teens from a community organization, faith-based group, or Scout troop, plus the group leaders who will supervise their group's Sleep Out Saturday participation.
- Sleep Out Stars: Families or individuals who are participating independently.
- Business Leaders for Bridge: Business leaders, networking groups and young professionals looking to make a difference.

Sign up now or make a pledge to support a participant at [www.sleepoutsaturday.org](http://www.sleepoutsaturday.org)

You can't sleep out on November 3rd – no problem! You can still show your support for Sleep Out Saturday with a financial contribution.

Gold Sponsors:



Compass Mortgage

BMO  Harris Bank

Silver Sponsor:



Bronze Sponsors:



## Meet the Families of Bridge Communities

At our Sleep Out Saturday Rally, you'll have the opportunity to hear firsthand how you're changing lives. Join us outside the Bridge Communities office in downtown Glen Ellyn between 6-8 PM to hear the stories of Cassie and Courtney, and how your generosity made an impact. This high-energy rally, hosted by NBC's Patrick Fazio, will also feature music, games, prizes and more to get you ready for your sleep out experience!



**Donate to Sleep Out Saturday at [www.sleepoutsaturday.org](http://www.sleepoutsaturday.org)!**

### Board of Directors

David Larson *Chairman*  
Laura Jensen *Vice-Chairman*  
Bill Strons *Secretary*  
Mike Viola *Treasurer*  
Matt Dmytryszyn  
Chad Fischer  
Ed Foreman  
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Joseph Hoff  
Lainie Kennedy  
Tim MacKenzie  
Mike Quig  
Coleman Tuggle

John Hayner *Chief Executive Officer*  
Mark Milligan *Co-Founder & President*

*Connections* is a publication of Bridge Communities, Inc., a program providing transitional housing for homeless families.








The mission of Bridge Communities is to transition homeless families 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, Empowerment, Integrity, Respect, Hope, apply to everyone involved in Bridge Communities – clients, mentors, program partners, volunteers, donors, board members, staff and community.

505 Crescent Blvd., Glen Ellyn, IL 60137  
630-545-0610

Fax 630-545-0640

[www.bridgecommunities.org](http://www.bridgecommunities.org)

We want to share all the latest and greatest news from Bridge Communities with you. Keep in touch with us by connecting with us on our social networks:

-  [facebook.com/bridge.communities](https://facebook.com/bridge.communities)
-  [@BridgeDuPage](https://twitter.com/BridgeDuPage)
-  [bridgecommunities](https://www.instagram.com/bridgecommunities)
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**Please help us save on printing and postage.**

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505 Crescent Blvd.  
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137  
630-545-0610  
Fax 630-545-0640

[www.bridgecommunities.org](http://www.bridgecommunities.org)

Bridge Communities is a non-profit organization that houses and mentors homeless families who live and work in DuPage County.

TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL  
PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

Because of your help

Your support meant that Bridge families accomplished the following achievements this year:

- **Myesha** purchased a home
- **Myrrha** obtained her driver's license
- **Danah** paid off her debts and boosted her credit score
- **Jenelle** got a job as a project manager
- **Dayyana** took on an internship at an international investment firm
- **K** bought a house
- **Ines** graduated with her degree in Health Information Technology
- **Sonia** obtained her GED
- **Sandrine** got a part-time job
- **Liz** got a raise at her job
- **Cassie** earned her bachelor's degree
- **Gloria** purchased a townhouse
- **Marina** accepted a job as an administrative assistant
- **Tiera** graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in nutrition

- **Linda** obtained a job as a receptionist
- **Sio** was awarded 5 college scholarships

Please consider giving to Bridge families as they work towards their goals of new employment, financial security, and permanent affordable housing.



Congratulations to Bridge graduate K on the purchase of her new house! Says K: "We couldn't have done it without all of your help and support. I thank God for the opportunity to have been a part of the Bridge program, and for all of you who helped, taught, supported and motivated me to accomplish one of my dreams, even through the difficult times. You've truly been a blessing in our lives!"