



Bridge Communities, Inc.

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Homeless Families Hit the Big Screen in DuPage

On Monday, September 19, an award-winning documentary entitled *on the edge*, which itinerant DuPage resident Diane Nilan and homeless advocate made along with Professor Laura Vazquez of Northern Illinois University, will hit the big screen at Ogden Theaters as part of the 4th Annual Naperville Independent Film Festival. The 60-minute film will screen at 8:20 p.m. on Monday, September 19 at Ogden 6 Theaters, 1227 E Ogden Avenue in Naperville for \$5.

Beneath the surface of one of the wealthiest counties in Illinois – DuPage – invisible families struggle to survive without homes of their own. No stranger to the issue of homelessness, Nilan wants to elevate this issue several notches, so she's teamed up with esteemed Bridge Communities to do just that.

on the edge invites seven women to share their stories of homelessness. Their narratives resonate with families served by Bridge Communities, one key reason why Bridge wants its current and future volunteers and supporters to experience the eye-opening film. Bridge Communities accomplishes its mission “to inspire and affect change by advocating for homeless families while at the same time providing services and opportunities that connect those families to a better future” mainly through its Transitional Housing Program, an intensive two-year program that helps families successfully cross the bridge from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

For the past six years, Nilan, a long-time Fox Valley resident, has forsaken a permanent place to live in an effort to “give voice and visibility to homeless children, youth and families,” the mission of her Naperville-based national nonprofit HEAR US Inc. After selling her 1,100 square foot townhouse, car and possessions, she bought her spartan mobile home, which serves

as her home and office, and has traveled over 126,000 mostly backroads miles. She and Vazquez have collaborated on several projects. Bridge Communities provided administrative and moral support for the HEAR US start up.

Nilan, a prominent national homelessness activist, teamed with Congresswoman Judy Biggert (13, IL-R) to help homeless children, most recently screening *on the edge* for federal officials.

“The profound impact of this film can’t help but ratchet up both awareness and assistance,” declares Nilan. As a former shelter director, she knows the critical nature of strong volunteer and funding base, the foundation of Bridge Communities’ continued mission to provide transitional housing to families throughout DuPage County.

“In 2010, Bridge Communities provided 70,563 housing nights,” states Bridge Communities’ executive director Joyce Hothan. “As staggering as that is, what’s even more staggering is the fact that Bridge Communities simply does not have enough resources to support the huge number of people in need. For as many people as Bridge serves, there are hundreds more in need of housing. That’s why *on the edge* is so important for people to experience. The more people who see *on the edge*, the better awareness there will be in DuPage County about the homeless crisis and the more people and resources we can mobilize for our mission.”

Jennie Gates, event manager at Bridge Communities, adds, “The movie screening is a great kick-off for Sleep Out Saturday, Bridge’s flagship event that provides an opportunity for individuals, families, and community and church groups to actually do something about homelessness. By sleeping out in tents, cars and boxes on November 5, participants will raise awareness of the plight of homeless families while raising much-needed funds to support the families in the Bridge program.” More information about Sleep Out Saturday can be found at www.sleepoutsaturday.org.

All those attending this screening of *on the edge* will receive a gift from HEAR US, a keepsake to remind people of the need to assist this invisible population of families in DuPage and across the nation.

The 60-minute film will be screened at 8:20 pm on Monday, September 19 at Ogden 6 Theaters, 1227 E Ogden Ave., Naperville, for \$5. Representatives from both Bridge Communities and HEAR US will be on hand to answer questions. Nilan, the film’s producer,

and Vazquez, the director, will do a brief Q&A following the film. For information, visit www.hearus.us, call (630) 225-5012, or email diane@hearus.us.

Bridge Communities, Inc. is a dynamic, grassroots, nonprofit organization committed to transforming the lives of homeless families in DuPage County through partnering with talented, resourceful individuals and groups in the community. Its program of transitional housing, mentoring and supportive services empowers families to increase life skills and earning power to promote self-sufficiency, sustain permanent housing, and break the cycle of poverty within the family unit. To donate to Bridge Communities, or to find out how to support Bridge in other ways, please call Mark Milligan at (630) 545-0610, ext.10 or visit www.bridgecommunities.org.

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