Margaret and Tracy were Bridge clients back in about 1990 or 1991. They lived in the same building, along with four other clients, and I have fondly remembered them over the years and retold their stories countless times. That was a very special group of six women that taught me a great deal about working with homeless families.

The lunch had been their idea and was their treat. Margaret, with whom I am in touch once every several years, had called me and asked me if I would join them for lunch. I’m not sure if they wanted to thank me, or to see what I looked like in my old age, or just to see how I remember them, but I am very glad they called.

We spent some time just reminiscing about how it was back then, gossiped a little about some of the other four women from the building who were not at the lunch, and shared what life had brought us by way of children and grandchildren. I was interested in what the two of them remember of the time they spent with Bridge. Did they recall that time fondly? Was it a time of impact in their lives? What did they take from the experience?

One of the women told me about a difficult time for her in the Program when she became pregnant. She was afraid that the rules of the Program might force her out, back to a situation where she lacked housing for her and her family again. But instead, her mentor told her that she had some difficult choices to make about the pregnancy and that she would support her, whatever her decision was. She said it was the first time in her life that someone had offered her complete support without trying to dictate the outcome. She made the decision to keep the child, and today just can’t imagine what her life would be like without that child in her life.

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2013 Kitchen Walk

What started as a service project of the Baird & Warner GoodWill Network in Glen Ellyn in 2003 has become one of the most highly anticipated design events on Chicagoland’s calendar! Mark your calendar for October 11th and prepare to be astounded and inspired by the latest in kitchen design in six beautiful Glen Ellyn homes.

Sponsored by Baird & Warner, the Kitchen Walk supports Bridge Communities’ Transitional Housing Program.

Kitchen Walk tickets are on sale now for $25 ($30 the day of the event) at Baird and Warner (543 Pennsylvania Ave.), Drury Design (512 N. Main St.), Bridge Communities (505 Crescent Blvd.) and online at www.bridgecommunities.org. Admission includes access to all houses on the tour and also to the AfterWalk hosted by Drury Design Kitchen & Bath Studio, 512 North Main Street in downtown Glen Ellyn. Tickets for the AfterWalk alone are available for $10.

“Baird and Warner is proud to have hosted the Kitchen Walk over the years,” said Carrie Morris, event coordinator, Baird and Warner realtor, and Bridge Builder. “All of the branch offices for Baird and Warner were asked by Corporate President Stephen Baird to give back to the community through an organization that provides or assists with housing. Baird and Warner has heeded the call, giving significantly to Bridge and helping spread the word about family homelessness in DuPage County.”

The gourmet AfterWalk reception takes place from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at Drury Design. Craig Bell, Wolf and SubZero corporate chef, brings back his broad range of culinary experience and insight, preparing mouthwatering appetizers for the AfterWalk. Key Mortgage will provide wine. The evening will also feature a raffle for a variety of inspired gift baskets to raise funds for Bridge Communities.

The Kitchen Walk takes place Friday, October 11th from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at six homes throughout Glen Ellyn. For more information, please call 630-207-5538 or visit www.kitchenwalk.org.

Board Changes

Darryl Baltimore has resigned from Bridge Communities’ Board of Directors. Darryl chaired the Audit Task Force, served ably as Bridge’s Development Committee Chair over the past two years, and for three years as a board member, bringing in several new volunteers as well as better access to a number of organizations. We will miss him and his many talents. Please join us in thanking Darryl for his service to Bridge and wishing him great success going forward.
Cornerstone Society Ensures Bridge’s Future for the Next 25 Years and Beyond

When you designate Bridge Communities as the beneficiary of your planned gift, you are inducted into the Cornerstone Society, a distinction that honors those who have made a commitment to the future of Bridge Communities.

Alicia and John Rasnic have been members of the Cornerstone Society for about five years now. An avid Bridge volunteer, most recently for Bridge’s 25th anniversary celebrations, Alicia shares, “I look at my family and count our blessings. We’re so fortunate to have stability in our lives, roofs over our heads and food on our tables. We have each other. Not everyone is so lucky. If we can help just one family, I feel our donations have impacted Bridge Communities’ mission.”

The Rasnics feel so confident in their decision to include Bridge in their estate planning that they encourage others to do the same.

“You could not pick a better organization for your legacy. If you have any doubts, just talk with some of the clients of Bridge,” Alicia suggests. “They are totally dedicated to making their lives and their children’s lives better. Working with one of them on a garden project made me realize just how much these folks want to succeed. They’re fiercely independent and want to earn their own way. What better way to help someone and feel really good about what you’re doing than to donate to Bridge Communities?”

With a smile, Alicia adds, “I could not feel any better about our decision to support Bridge Communities. I’m very proud to be associated with all of them – staff, board, volunteers and clients.”

Like Alicia and John, you can make a personal statement about your passion and values through planned giving. By creating a charitable gift through a will or estate plan, your planned gift to Bridge Communities can help you:

- Create a legacy of generosity that will last forever
- Secure the future of Bridge Communities’ Transitional Housing Program
- Be assured that families in need in DuPage County will get help for generations to come
- Realize personal fulfillment and peace of mind in your estate planning

There are many ways to make a lasting legacy, provide for your loved ones, and receive the assurance that your personal philanthropic goals will be achieved in perpetuity. If you would like to explore planned giving through Bridge Communities’ Cornerstone Society, please contact Amy Van Polen today at (630) 545-0610 ext. 12 or amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org.

If you provide for Bridge Communities through your estate plan, please let us know so we can thank and recognize you as a member of the Cornerstone Society.
Hello, Goodbye

After 12 years, Danita Hines has bid a fond farewell to Bridge Communities. Danita served as a case manager to over 100 clients during her tenure, celebrating with many of them as they graduated college, moved forward in careers and even purchased their own homes. Danita and her husband, Bernard, have moved to Atlanta for a career opportunity and to be closer to their children and grandchildren.

Heather Wachter, who joined the Bridge team in June 2011, is leaving to take on a challenging new career opportunity much closer to her home. During her time with Bridge, Heather made a significant impact on communications and also coordinated all the year-long 25th anniversary celebration. Heather shares, “It’s terribly difficult to leave Bridge. I’m so grateful to have had the chance to work with a phenomenal team and a great group of volunteers.”

We wish Danita and Heather all the best in these new chapters of their lives!

Sharon Drucker has joined the Bridge team as Children’s Activities’ Coordinator. She has recently extended her educational experience by obtaining a degree in Library Science from College of DuPage and is passionate about enriching the lives of children through reading and other educational activities. Sharon has 20 years of experience as a volunteer in her community through her church, her children’s schools, cub scouts, girl scouts and Alden Nursing Home. Prior to becoming an employee at Bridge, she established a library at the Glendale Heights Learning Resource Center. On her new job, Sharon says, “I’m so excited to be a part of Bridge. I really believe we are making a positive difference in people’s lives!”

Susan Hacker recently joined the Bridge team as Manager of Major Gift Development. Susan’s a fundraising professional with over 20 years’ experience helping professional associations, higher education institutions and community organizations grow their fundraising programs. As a volunteer for 10 years at a local food pantry, she met many homeless families without the hope of changing their situation. In her own words, “I was drawn to Bridge because through a cadre of volunteers and partners, Bridge Communities provides the guidance, support and structure families need to create a new future.” Susan enjoys competing in canine agility with her two dogs and spending time with her friends and family.

Robyn Mason joined the Bridge team as a Case Manager. Robyn has spent the past 10 years working as a human services professional within multiple departments at DuPage County Government (LIHEAP, Psychological Service and WorkNet DuPage). Robyn will be working with Bridge clients, providing transitional housing assistance and case management services. Robyn is a native of central Ohio and has been a resident of Illinois for 16 years. She enjoys spending quality time with her husband Clifton and attends church regularly with her family.

Theresa Misher joined the Bridge team as Manager of Education Services. Theresa holds a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Behavioral Science and a Master of Science in Written Communication, both from National Louis University. She is an adjunct English instructor at College of DuPage, and, as a long-time member of Community Christian Church, she serves as a vocal team leader and choir member. In her spare time, Theresa enjoys writing and is a published author for her poem “Me and Blue: Childhood Memories” and her short story “Losers.” Theresa and her husband Ron have three children and are residents of Woodridge. Theresa shares, “Whenever asked what my dream job is, I’ve always answered that I would like to provide transitional housing for struggling families. So now, working for Bridge Communities is a dream-come-true for me.”
Many of you are aware that Mark Milligan, Bridge co-founder and my good friend, mentor and colleague, has stepped into semi-retirement. Fortunately for both Bridge and Mark, he is still focused on the duty that was his first love – as Bridge’s liaison to our Program Partners.

Mark is a story-teller extraordinaire, and also has a remarkable gift for re-telling a story in ways that provide strong visuals, sharpening the original storyline. He has been asked frequently how he feels about his transition in responsibilities. I’ve heard his response, and it is worth the re-telling today because it is an important part of the great story of Bridge’s first 25 years. Mark says that he feels very good about taking a step away from Bridge, because he knows that on almost any day of any month, a mentor team will be sitting down across the dining table with their clients, doing the challenging work of helping to move a family toward self-sufficiency.

Over 25 years, the mentoring process has changed, and the technology has changed. What has not changed at all are the caring spirits, the capacity of both client and mentor to enrich each other’s lives, and the end goal of self-sufficiency. This is Bridge’s legacy. We are committed to continuing it, and nurturing it, so that in 25 more years we can look back and know that the foundation story of Bridge remains the same.

You, our friends, mentors, and donors, can help us to form the narrative for the next 25 years. Perhaps it will go something like this:

Bridge served 600 families in its first 25 years, and well over 3,000 in its second 25 years, moving them from the crisis of homelessness to self-sufficiency. Parents were able to make permanent changes to achieve stability in their housing and financial independence, and their children – some 7,000 of them – were able to break out of the poverty they once knew.

Many of the families served became truly connected to the communities they moved to when they first began with Bridge, so connected to the schools, churches, and community services that they decided to stay. Often times, parents and their children became homeowners, community leaders, and even Bridge mentors. Some took the lead in forming new Program Partnerships with Bridge.

Bridge became the recognized leader in affordable housing development in DuPage County by leveraging the generosity and wisdom of its donors; creativity of its board, staff, and advisors; and strong partnerships with community leaders, government, corporations, and foundations.

And as Bridge had been studied by others as a model for transitional housing for its first 25 years, so went the second 25 years. All this happened simply because Bridge Communities continued to tell a compelling story, one only made possible because of the generosity of its thousands of supporters in DuPage County.

So we move into the next quarter century with the responsibility to continue the work started by Mark Milligan and Bob Wahlgren. We will continue to tell the story of mentors and families together at the kitchen table, to nurture the process, to equip our mentors, and to celebrate our clients’ successes, for many, many years to come.

Sincerely,

John R. Hayner, Chief Executive Officer
As co-chair of Bridge’s 25th anniversary Silver Jubilee, Jennifer Darnall just may be one of Bridge’s most steadfast supporters, fiercely committed to its mission of helping families cross the bridge to self-sufficiency.

“We support Bridge Communities because we know we are very fortunate to have a home and steady income. It must be such a scary situation to find yourself homeless, without a job...even more so if you have children. The Bridge program is so amazing and impressive in the ways it assists people in building the skills and resources necessary to get back on their feet.”

The passion Jennifer puts into volunteering crosses over into her philanthropy, too. Jennifer and her husband Matt believe in Investing in Homes + Hope, Bridge Communities’ Capital and Endowment Campaign, because they want to see Bridge change lives well into the future.

Investing in Homes + Hope is designed to support the purchase of five new buildings, strengthen program services and build a $2 million endowment. As Bridge CEO John Hayner explains, Bridge will continue its growth “to serve about 140 families by 2016,” up from the 124 families currently served annually.

“The Capital Campaign allows Bridge to accumulate funds to expand the reach of its programs,” Jennifer adds. “We hope that in the future, Bridge will be able to house and assist more and more families who need help getting back to self-sufficiency. I would encourage people to contribute to the campaign with the knowledge that their money will be benefitting families in their own communities.”

To date, Investing in Homes + Hope “has raised nearly $4.8 million,” states Resource Development Director Amy Van Polen. But there’s still much work to be done to ensure the viability of this endeavor. Bridge needs your help in funding the final portion of the campaign in order to ensure that its goals to serve even more families are met.

How can you be sure that your investment is being used wisely? “Over 85% of Bridge’s income goes directly to Program,” Van Polen explains. You can trust Bridge to wisely invest and allocate your funds to maximize their impact on the families we serve.

If you would like to join Jennifer and Matt Darnall in investing in homes + hope for homeless families in your community, please contact Amy Van Polen at (630) 545-0620 ext. 12 or amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org.

Mark’s Perspective continued from page 1

The other woman told me about her son. He had gone to college. No one in her family had ever gone to college, but he did. She told me how difficult it was before the family found the stability of Bridge, and what a toll that instability had taken on her son. She and her son had lived in chaos before Bridge, and as a six or seven year old child is apt to do, he felt responsible. But, Bridge had allowed him to be a child again. Then, while in the Program, she made the decision to never, ever hit her children again. She decided the violence must stop with her, and her children would not suffer in the same way she had.

So, here we were at lunch 20 years after their Program had ended, and I began to really understand what Bridge mentors had done for these families and the impact the mentors had on these clients. Lives had been changed. The simple acts of mentors had changed the outcome of lives for generations to come.

As we finished lunch, both women promised me that if I ever needed anything, I should call them. They said they would be happy to help. They really did not know how much help they had given me already that day, and how much hope they had given me for the future.

So yes, I wept softly at dinner that night. But it was a sense of joy that overwhelmed me. There was reassurance that the efforts of the mentors who helped forge the tone and spirit of Bridge Communities back in the late 80’s and early 90’s was effort well spent. And there is a certain knowledge that the river keeps flowing with new families, new clients, new hope, new dreams, and lives being changed.

This has been such a wonderful journey.

Mark Milligan, Co-Founder
Imagine not knowing where you’ll sleep tonight. Imagine not being able to provide your children a safe, stable home. Imagine your car as your family’s living room, bedroom, closet and transportation.

For homeless families in DuPage County, this is not imagination – it’s reality.

As family homelessness hits crisis levels in DuPage County, you have the opportunity to imagine and create a different reality.

Sleep Out Saturday on November 2nd, 2013 is your chance to help provide homes for families in need...To feel firsthand the need for safety, loving care, guidance, and resources to create better futures...To raise funds to ensure that those families’ needs are met.

Please visit www.sleepoutsaturday.org to register for Sleep Out Saturday. You – yourself, your family, your church group, your youth group, your scout troop and even your corporate group – can bridge the gap between homelessness and hope by participating in Sleep Out Saturday.

Since 2003, more than 8,500 participants have helped to make a change in the lives of families in DuPage County, having raise over $950,000 to date. This year’s goal is $135,000.

Over 1,500 teens, children and adults will spend the night outside on November 2nd, 2013 in tents, boxes and cars to raise awareness about family homelessness and funding for Bridge Communities’ Transitional Housing Program.

Groups, families and individuals can register at www.sleepoutsaturday.org. A Group is typically comprised of children or teens from a faith-based, Scout or community group; group leaders direct educational activities, encourage group participants to raise funds, and supervise the Sleep Out. Sleep Out Stars are families or individuals who are not participating with an organized group; Stars commit to raising awareness and funds to support Bridge Communities and are encouraged to participate in special Sleep Out activities. New this year is the Sleep Out Saturday Corporate Challenge. Business people, young professionals, networking groups etc. are invited to join us as we bring hope and homes to homeless families.

This “wake up call” invites participants to give back to their community, raise public awareness about family homelessness, and arouse empathy for families in need.

An inspirational Rally – complete with music and inspiring stories from Bridge clients – kicks off Sleep Out Saturday at 6:30 p.m. at Bridge Communities, 505 Crescent Boulevard, Glen Ellyn. Transportation from Sleep Out Saturday group sites to the Rally is provided.

Stay current with the latest on Sleep Out Saturday by visiting www.sleepoutsaturday.org.

Register today by visiting www.sleepoutsaturday.org!
The stars will shine brightly over Esplanade Lakes in Downers Grove on Friday, October 4 as we reflect on 25 years full of joy, success, achievement and growth.

Board member co-chairs Stephanie Pierce and Jennifer Darnall invite you to join Bridge Communities in celebrating 25 years of providing homes and hope to homeless families at Bridge’s Silver Jubilee.

Enjoy dinner, drinks and dessert, along with a short program providing a flashback of the past and a sneak peek into the future of Bridge Communities. Live music by Local Favorite and dancing will complete the evening.

Purchase your own keepsake Bridge Communities ornament for $25 and you’ll be entered into a drawing to win a stunning silver bracelet valued at over $500! You can also bid on live auction packages, like:

- Wine Cellar Starter featuring French and California reds
- Luxury vacation package with airfare
- Exclusive Chef’s Table at the Wyndham, hosted and prepared by award-winning Chef Kevin Jones
- Chicago Sporting Events Ticket Spectacular

Reservations are required for this special celebration, and tickets are on sale now at www.bridgecommunities.org. For more information, please contact Amy Van Polen at (630) 545-0610 ext. 12 or amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org.