Bridge changed my life, my mentors and Molly became my teammates. My savings account started to grow, my credit score went up 200 points, and I earned a new job! But more than anything, I feel great about myself. I am no longer relying on family, friends, or a relationship for stability. I have never felt this way before, but now I know I can do it by myself. My kids and I can thrive all on our own now. Your kindness and support helped me get to this place in my life – thank you!

It’s not just my life that you’ve changed. My children are much more grateful. They appreciate so much now – big and small – because they see the positive change in me and because they are now safe; secure in their home, with their family. My children will never know homelessness again.

I just purchased a home. This was something I never thought would be possible. But, thanks to your support of Bridge Communities, I had the chance to learn, to heal, and to rebuild my life.

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me a fresh start. It was a blessing and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Bridge changed my life, and I am so grateful.

Yours Truly,

Our mission is made possible because of your commitment and support.

2021 Generosity Report
Bridge Communities
A Snapshot of 2021 Bridge Families

91 families were housed
(comprising of 95 adults and 172 children)

22 new families were welcomed

94% female head of household

100% low to very low income, with 94% employed

Median savings of $0

87% identified as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, of Person of Color)

55% survivors of domestic violence

63% of children were under age of 12

77% were living double/tripled with family and friends, with an additional 14% in shelters

55% report at-risk or crisis employment status

50% report at-risk or crisis childcare and family safety status

80% report food scarcity concerns

38 families exited

Review client outcomes on the centerfold
Hi! I’m Joy, and first and foremost, I am a mom to three incredible kids. I’m also a college graduate, a full-time HR professional, a daughter, and a friend.

And two years ago, I was facing homelessness. I was in the midst of a high-risk pregnancy, on my own after a split from my partner who had tormented me and our two children for many years. I was working, but there was never enough money to pay all the bills. I tried everything to keep our home, but just before my baby girl was born, the kids and I became homeless.

I began to bounce around from friend to family member – but it would only last a few days – and then we were out again.

I had almost given up hope, but then I found Bridge Communities.

You have never met me, but you changed my life when you welcomed us into the safety of a Bridge apartment.

When I first moved into the program, I’ll admit – it was tough. There were so many people asking me to do things I had never done before. And, I was so scared to trust Molly, my case manager, and my mentors. I kept asking, “Why do they want to help me?”

But Molly and my case managers held firm with me and helped me begin to believe in myself. My first step was attending employment classes. Afterwards, I was so motivated, that I began to embrace my mentors’ advice – on everything from budgeting, to my job, and I began to set goals.

My mentors and Molly became my teammates. My savings account started to grow, my credit score went up 200 points, and I earned a new job!

But more than anything, I feel great about myself. I am no longer relying on family, friends, or a relationship for stability. I have never felt this way before, but now I know I can do it by myself.

My kids and I can thrive all on our own now.

Your kindness and support helped me get to this place in my life – thank you!

It’s not just my life that you’ve changed. My children are much more grateful. They appreciate so much now – big and small – because they see the positive change in me and because they are now safe; secure in their home, with their family. My children will never know homelessness again.

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Yours Truly,

Joy

Bridge changed my life, and I am so grateful.
Dear friends,

This past year has been one of growth, challenge and change around the globe for each and every one of us. It’s launched us into a learning curve we never expected, but one we continue to carefully navigate. We have also seen firsthand that a pandemic does not stop homelessness.

Because of your support, Bridge’s doors and phone lines remained open throughout the pandemic. We continued to welcome new families into our program—families with great needs, who have sought us out for not only safe housing, but for the transformative services we provide as well. Since August 2021, we have seen the number of families contacting us for help steadily climb. The needs of families facing homelessness in our communities are immense as they continue to cope with the ongoing pandemic, scarcity of affordable housing and childcare, and increased mental health and family safety concerns. In 2021, we fielded more than 3,000 phone calls seeking help for housing instability and homelessness. Now more than ever, there are families in need of our support.

Though we have seen challenging times, we have persevered thanks to your faith in us and your support. This is a result of not only our experience and the dedication of our staff and volunteer force—but also because we are passionate about our mission and committed to our belief that helping empower our neighbors in need is simply the right thing to do.

We are proud to stand alongside you—our constituents, donors, community partners, mentors, volunteers, board members and more—united in our passion to serve and support families facing homelessness in their journey to self-sufficiency. Our mission is made possible because of your commitment and support of Bridge for the past 33 years. For that, and for so much more, we thank you.

With gratitude,

Karen S. Wells
CEO, Bridge Communities
“When I lost my job, I was panicked. My mentors so understood. I kept looking for a job and worked closely with my employment counselor. And, I put all my unemployment and stimulus funds into savings because I knew what my goal was.”

– THERESA, BRIDGE CLIENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment and Adult Education: Creating a New Path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>77 received targeted skill development and coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 attended “4 Weeks to Success: Getting hired, retained, and promoted” classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 secured full-time jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 worked toward post-secondary or vocational degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 received scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 earned a college degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 earned a professional certification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 visits to the Bridge Clothing Boutique for 1-1 career clothing coaching and up to 3 outfits and accessories each visit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Program: Stabilizing the Next Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>165 received home visits (virtual or in-person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 received mental health supportive services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 families were engaged in parenting support via 1-1 support and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129 received gifts to support basic, recreational, safety, and academic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145 attended summer camps and enrichment activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 received academic tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 youth were matched with Big Brothers Big Sisters and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 families were assisted with childcare subsidies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 adolescents participated in post-secondary education and career services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 current and alumni adolescents received academic scholarships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition: Improving Health and Eating Habits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 participated in the mobile food pantry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 participated in the on-site gardening program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 attended an online nutrition workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 received one-on-one coaching learning to plan, shop and cook healthy meals on a budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 benefited from organic farm shares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I’m proud of myself and how far I’ve come compared to where I was before Bridge, and I’m proud of the life I’m able to make for me and my children because of this program. It’s not always easy, but when you come out on top of the obstacles, it’s so rewarding.”

– JASMINE, BRIDGE CLIENT

“I want to thank the awesome kindness from the farm and the volunteers who dropped off the beautiful veggies. The generosity helped to provide much needed healthy nourishment for my family.”

– MIA
Our Plan for the Future
Bridge Communities Strategic Plan 2022-2024

We have a long-standing tradition of regularly allocating time and resources for the development of a strategic planning document that will guide our actions for the next three-year period. Through the work of a Strategic Planning Task Force, extensive environmental scan, and input from dozens of external stakeholder, the following five initiatives will serve as our guide for our 2022 – 2024 Strategic Plan.

• **Evolve the Bridge Transitional Housing Program** – development and test of a pre-program to stabilize families in a shorter timeframe, support volunteer mentor needs, and ultimately result in stronger outcomes; additionally, strategies to expand post-program support, employment services, and client peer support.

• **Drive and Expand Community Engagement** – diversify and increase our Program Partners, strengthen our anti-racism and social justice culture, and deepen our branding throughout our service area.

• **Increase Financial Sustainability** – secure and increase charitable giving through expansion of donor pool, estate planning, and limited government funding.

• **Build Data and Evaluation** – refine how we communicate our data and research findings as we strive to become the regional thought leader on family homelessness, housing insecurity, and affordable housing.

• **Sustain and Develop Our People** – diversify our staff and volunteers to include more experiences and expertise, as well as deepen engagement of our staff and all key stakeholders through regular assessments, trainings, and communications.

Updates to the implementation and subsequent successes and challenges will be shared annually. Please connect with us with your interests and inquiries.

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Mentor Engagement Survey

Since its founding in 1988, Bridge Communities has been set apart by its service model, which is led by volunteer mentors. More than 250 volunteer mentors are the primary deliverers of Bridge’s services.

Knowing that the pandemic dramatically changed how mentors engage with client families – moving from in-person to primarily virtual — Bridge conducted a comprehensive Mentor Engagement Survey exploring factors affecting working with families experiencing trauma, mentor retention, and challenges resulting from the pandemic. Survey results showed:

• Mentors are united (100%) in their passion to serve Bridge families and empower families in making long-term change.

• 78% reported they became mentors as a way to give back to their communities.

• 99% reported they have a passion for helping families with young children and a passion for families in need of permanent affordable housing.

Because volunteer mentors are the essential heart of Bridge Communities, their feelings of effectiveness and satisfaction are critical.

• Mentors had an overwhelming positive response to the training and support they receive from case management and service coordinators.

• 86% reported they felt effective in their role as a mentor.

• 84% reported they had a meaningful and trusting connection with their client.

• 82% of mentors shared that understanding people from different backgrounds and helping others were benefits of mentoring. However, mentors also acknowledged a lack of diversity in the Bridge cadre of mentors, which Bridge is actively working to change through intentional networking and outreach.

Every week, volunteer mentors coach and counsel their client family through budgeting, goal striving, and essential life-skills, bringing hope, healing, and learning to all involved. We call this: neighbors bringing neighbors back from the brink. And that is the heart of Bridge Communities.
Client Outcomes: Laying Groundwork for Lifelong Success

Throughout each client’s stay in Bridge Communities, their progress is measured to ensure it aligns with their goals. The statistics below reflect the clients who exited Bridge Communities in 2021. At the time of their exit:

- 79% of heads of households were stable to thriving in employment at the time of exit.
- 68% of families maintained or increased income.
- 79% of families reduced or maintained zero debt.
- 89% of families increased their savings while in Bridge.
- 77% of adults reported satisfaction with their quality of life.
- 92% of families reported safe child well-being.
- 100% of families reported their children are doing better in school.
- 95% of families reported safe and stable mental health.
- 100% of families reported their children are doing better in school.
- 82% of families were thriving in relation to food security.
- 89% of families exited the program to permanent housing.

**Graduates reported improvement in financial stability:**

- **Median Monthly Income**
  
  moved from $1,948 to $2,903

- **Median Saving**
  
  increased from $0 to $13,930

- **Median Debt**
  
  decreased from $19,592 to $5,319

- **Median Hourly Wage**
  
  moved from $11.25 to $16.77

“This can be scary at first. It seemed like a long journey, but at the end, I saw that it was all worth it. I kept up with my budget, meetings, and goals, and just pushed myself. I had great team behind me, no matter what.”   – Josie, Bridge graduate

**Graduates reported they grew in important life skills, including:**

- 98% improved decision-making skills
- 92% increased financial management skills
- 77% improved time management skills
- 92% reported success in goal striving and achievement
- 92% families developed a trusting relationship with at least one mentor
- 77% families reported a sense of community within Bridge housing
- 100% families shared they felt their Bridge housing unit was safe
- 80% adult shared they felt very strongly in their confidence in their employment search skills
## Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Partners</td>
<td>$863,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental Income</td>
<td>$878,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>$916,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>$1,681,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events, net</td>
<td>$231,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$664,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(includes corporate &amp; foundations, capital and community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Funding</td>
<td>$698,805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Kind</td>
<td>$71,775</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$15,885</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$6,022,198</strong></td>
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</table>

## Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program services</td>
<td>$3,431,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>$752,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$674,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$4,858,277</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Monetary Donation Sources

- Program Partners
- Rental Income
- Investment Income
- Donations
- Events
- Government Funding
- In-Kind
- Other

[Include a pie chart showing the distribution of monetary donation sources]
How You Can Get Involved at Bridge Communities

Sponsor a Bridge Special Event
Contact Director of Community Engagement Jenifer Bystry at 630-403-5095 or jenifer.bystry@bridgecommunities.org

Tutor or Volunteer
Contact Volunteer Coordinator Mary Slade at 630-403-5098 or mary.slade@bridgecommunities.org

Mentor a Bridge Family
Contact Associate Director of Program Partnerships, Marti Deuter at 630-403-5109 or marti.deuter@bridgecommunities.org

Volunteer for Bridge’s Employment Program
Contact Director of Employment and Education Services Jodi Fegter at 630-403-5111 or jodi.fegter@bridgecommunities.org

Donate Your Car to Bridge
Contact Senior Case Manager Paul Matthews at 630-403-5104 or paul.matthews@bridgecommunities.org

Give to Bridge Communities
Contact Senior Director Amy Van Polen at 630-545-0610 x 12 or amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org

Organize a Donation Drive or Fundraiser
Contact Volunteer Coordinator Mary Slade at 630-403-5098 or mary.slade@bridgecommunities.org
Our mission 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.