Tiwana Moore is determined to achieve the dreams she has for herself, her five kids and six grandkids. So far, she’s off to a great start, much better than the start she got in life.

Tiwana’s early years were plagued with disruption, disturbance and divorce, bouncing from her mother’s home to her father’s, ending up with her grandmother until she was 14, when she ended up back with her mother. However, instead of her mother taking care of her, Tiwana found herself caring for her mother along with her two brothers.

“I took on a lot of responsibility when I was very young,” she recalls. That was her first foray into being the sole provider of loved ones in her care.

Tiwana had three children before meeting her husband, with whom she had two kids. However, “it wasn’t a functioning relationship,” Tiwana shares with sadness in her voice. “I didn’t want to be like my parents, but I stayed with it for 17 years.”

While married, Tiwana obtained her CDL so she could work driving a school bus and be home when her children were home. She also earned some extra income styling hair, her real passion. “I’ve always done hair, on my own and in salons; I’ve always had a talent for it.”

Tiwana wanted out of her verbally abusive marriage for her own sake and her children’s. “I didn’t want that for my children. I wanted better. I wanted my children to see me in a healthy relationship, instead of always in turmoil.”

Tiwana turned to God. “I knew God would have better for me in His timing,” she reflects. “I started praying, and the Lord gave me the strength to move away from something unhealthy for me and my children.”

After her divorce, she continued driving and doing hair, but the income was barely enough to support herself and her kids, one in high school and the others in college and beyond. While caring for her family, Tiwana continued to work, earned her GED and enrolled in cosmetology school. “I persevered,” she declares. Then she lost her job.

continued on page 4
As part of Bridge’s efforts to improve success rates for our client families by enhancing our Transitional Housing Program and processes, Bridge’s intake and program staff are taking a long, hard look at opportunities for improvement. Will Moeller, Bridge’s Intake Coordinator, is analyzing Bridge’s current intake interview process.

“I’m asking what questions we’re asking and what we aren’t asking at intake. I’m figuring out the best ways to identify the clients best prepared for success,” explains Will. He’s doing so by reviewing current practices, researching poverty and self-sufficiency factors, and asking LOTS of questions. Will also plans to visit some of the other transitional housing programs in the area to find out how they are evaluating clients on intake and learn from their best practices.

On the other side of the Program, Susan Pearson, Bridge’s Program Evaluation Specialist, is taking a hard look at the surveys Bridge uses and how to improve them to get better information.

“We’re striving for self-sufficiency at client exit,” Susan says of Bridge’s ultimate goal. Through surveys, “we measure maintaining employment, securing and maintaining affordable housing, and reducing debt,” all key factors in the clients’ – and ultimately the Program’s – success. And while the surveys themselves aren’t changing much, the administration is changing greatly to reach more clients. In addition to traditional mailed surveys, Susan is implementing phone and online survey instruments with the goal of higher quantity and quality results.

Additionally, Bridge conducts Program Partner and Mentor evaluation surveys that request feedback on the Program, staff and resources. As a result of that data, “Bridge is considering changing – improving – the way it presents mentor training as a direct result of that feedback,” Susan explains. “We may also have some follow up training for mentors who’ve been with us for a while, sharing new strategies and ideas with them.”

All the data point to more good works for Bridge client families!
Imagine: Sleep Out Saturday 2012

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 3rd, 2012 is your chance to imagine homes for homeless families...To imagine 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 – can bridge the gap between homelessness and hope by participating in Sleep Out Saturday.

Since 2003, more than 7,500 participants have helped to make a change in the lives of families in DuPage County, having raised over $800,000 to date. This year’s goal is $135,000.

Over 1,500 teens, children and adults will spend the night outside on November 3rd, 2012 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.

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.

Register today by visiting www.sleepoutsaturday.org!

“I wanted to make a difference. I was able to achieve my goals. I don’t know what it really feels like to be homeless. I don’t really want to. But I know that if I help, I can make a difference.”

Brittney Wells, SOS Participant and Fundraising Champion
“It became very difficult, because I couldn’t afford to pay rent,” she painfully reflects. “My landlord was willing to work with me, but eventually he couldn’t do it any longer because I fell behind a few months.” After receiving her eviction notice and facing homelessness, Tiwana’s friend Adrienne told her about the Bridge Program; she’d been in it herself. Initially, pride kept her from making the call.

“I thought I could continue persevering and trusting in God. However, God did make a way for me, because I finally applied for the Bridge Program, and Adrienne and I were on the phone talking and praying for me to be accepted into the Program. My other line rang, and it was Eduar from Bridge calling! The Lord gave me favor.”

The interview process was emotionally challenging for Tiwana, because she felt exposed answering personal questions about her background, her finances and the choices she’s made. But her prayers for patience and humility were answered and she was accepted by Program Partner St. Elizabeth Seton in Naperville.

With her mentors’ guidance and the safety and assurance provided by Bridge Communities’ Transitional Housing Program, Tiwana completed her cosmetology training, and her future’s looking very bright indeed. A year into the Bridge Program, Tiwana says she’s learned a lot about goal setting and budgeting. She’s worked with her mentors to identify her short and long term goals, which include owning her own business someday.

While continuing bus driving and caring for her 15 year old daughter, Tiwana rents a salon chair at Ruby’s “True” You Salon in Darien three days a week and works at a salon in Warrenville on Saturdays, building clientele for her ultimate goal of business ownership.

She’s also working with Bridge’s Employment Coordinator, Mary Zienty, to identify and pursue better career opportunities both in driving and as a stylist.

Working with Tiwana has been a delight for Mary, who reflects, “Tiwana will put aside all her interests, wants and needs to take care of her kids and put roofs over their heads. She’s now at a time where she can focus on herself, which is why she went back to earn her GED and her cosmetology license, all the while focused on achieving financial independence.”

“Mary is so positive,” Tiwana shares. “She really helped me to have confidence, to believe I could achieve my goals. She helped me put together resumes that were phenomenal. When I was sluggish, she encouraged me. Right now, we’re planning to get together to get me a better CDL job and move forward in cosmetology. Mary has a wealth of knowledge she shares with her clients. She makes you feel like you can accomplish anything!”

Tiwana can’t say enough about Bridge being an answer to her prayers. “Bridge is an awesome Program. As a single parent, it really has helped me to feel that I can make it in life. This is a second chance for me to get back on my feet. Bridge gave me hope that I can make it. I love my mentors; they support me in anything I want to accomplish. My mentor Jean – I cut her hair, and I also cut her daughter’s hair. It’s really good to have people in your life who support you. [Employment Director] Patty Kelly is also very resourceful, positive, and down to earth, just like Mary. And my case manager Tom is great; he always finds a positive out of negative things.”

Every day, Tiwana is getting closer and closer to realizing her two dreams: to be a salon business owner, and to provide the best she can for her children and grandchildren. With Mary’s help, Tiwana is forming a plan to take business courses to help her on that journey.

“The beauty of her being in the Bridge Program and the support of her mentors is that she is financially able to give this a go,” Mary explains. “She needs to invest in this and then find clients. If she wasn’t in Bridge, she couldn’t even afford to try this. I think it’s a fantastic opportunity, and her mentors felt the same way and wanted to help her make this happen under the care and support of Bridge so she can do this without the risk of ending up out on the street.”

Tiwana lauds the Bridge Program, sharing, “Bridge really is all about family. They helped me and my kids in so many ways, not just giving us a home and helping me with my career, which is huge. My daughter Jimmie took advantage of the tutoring program. They helped me get a car when I needed one. Bridge is really well rounded in the help it provides. God will provide for you if you
The great works of Bridge Communities are the result of compassionate people – staff, mentors, donors, board, other non-profit partners – coming together with a common goal and collaborating to achieve a result much greater than the sum of their parts.

Bridge Communities is now faced with some of the greatest challenges in its history – falling wages, scarce affordable housing, and ever-increasing numbers of families at risk of homelessness. How does a small non-profit with limited resources meet these challenges? Collaboration and the time-honored power of “group work.” In Human Services, group work means bringing together groups of individuals with common needs, providing them a framework and setting for problem solving, and using their common experience to move them forward; mutual accountability and empathy are important driving forces in group work.

We report separately in this newsletter on the expansion of Bridge’s employment program, led by staff members Patty Kelly and Mary Zienty and volunteer Jodi Fegter; one aspect of this is the expansion of a previous group work program for unemployed clients. In this expanded pilot program, unemployed transitional housing clients are coming together in Naperville to form bonds, learn job search techniques and help each other meet challenges associated with finding gainful employment. We expect to expand this program to other areas in DuPage County in 2013 with trained volunteers as the primary facilitators.

Group work and collaboration also play into our education program, led by Pam Howe. Bridge recognizes that the long-term impact on children can be as great as that achieved for the total family in helping them from crisis to stability in our two year program. With this in mind, in collaboration with District 203’s Parents as Teachers program, our clients will come together every month at our Naperville Learning Resource Center to build skills and knowledge in areas like discipline, play, separation anxiety, reading to children, and accessing community resources.

Pam has also formed the “Go Girlz” group for girls ages 13 to 18. Go Girlz is based on an adolescent development framework that focuses on responsible decision-making, building a healthy body image, peer relationships, and planning for the future.

The story of Bridge’s great works can’t be completed without acknowledging the role of our donors and volunteers. Our mentors and other volunteers are the fuel on which Bridge runs, making it possible for a small professional staff to have a profound impact on so many families. The very existence of the staff that is working to leverage Bridge resources with these programs would not have been imaginable over the past several years without our generous donors.

Thank you to all of you who give your time, talent, and treasure to the families of Bridge Communities. By this time next year, I hope to be reporting to you that the steps we take now have taken their place among our great works.

John R. Hayner, Chief Executive Officer

Building a Beautiful Future continued from page 4

will humble yourself and allow yourself to go through this Program. It will allow you to go forward in life.”

“As a single parent, I think I did pretty good,” she beams. “Jimmie’s doing well in high school. My daughter Marcia has two kids and is pursuing her math teaching degree. Dominique is 20 and is at COD for early childhood development and wants to open her own daycare. David is 23 and is a barber in Bolingbrook, and Shanin, 26, is an accountant. Even with the dysfunction, I truly believe my children have grown up to be very successful kids.”

You have, too, Tiwana.
Fond Farewells and Happy Hellos

Bridge Communities bids fond farewell to three of its longtime contributors: Bob Wahlgren, Nancy Payne, Janet Gaza and Laura Allen.

Bob put his heart and soul into the formation, growth and success of Bridge Communities, which he co-founded with Mark Milligan in 1988. Bob has been and continues to be a passionate, creative, dedicated advocate for homeless families ever since. He served as Board President for twenty years and retired in May, 2012 after 23 years of faithful service to Bridge.

Nancy Payne, Professor of Business and Management at the College of DuPage, served on Bridge’s Board of Directors for 3 years.

Janet Gaza served as a case manager for 13 years, helping client families achieve their dreams. Janet was a dedicated servant, approaching her responsibilities with kindness and wisdom. We are grateful for all of their many contributions, and we wish them well.

Laura Allen joined the Bridge Board in February, 2002 and served as President for three years of her term, retiring from the Board in September, 2012. Laura has been a tireless advocate for homeless families and we thank her for all her efforts and are happy she will continue in a leadership role on both the Property and Grounds and Governance Committees.

Bridge is excited to announce some new faces and changes to the team.

Longtime donor and volunteer mentor Zed Francis has joined the Board of Directors. Prior to retiring in 2007, Zed was Managing Director and Head of Global Portfolio Strategies Execution for the Bank of America.

Tim MacKenzie has accepted the role of Chairman of the Board. Tim serves as Managing Director of Merit Capital Partners, a Chicago-based private equity firm and has been active as a Program Partner and mentor for Bridge since 2001; Tim joined the Bridge Board in 2009.

Mary Zienty and Will Moeller have recently joined the staff of Bridge Communities. You’ll read more about Mary later on the next page. Will is the new Intake Coordinator for Bridge, interviewing all potential client families for consideration into the Program. He is focused on analyzing the current intake process and making significant changes to increase success rates of Bridge clients. Will earned a B.S. in Psychology from North Central College and a dual MSW/MPH program with a focus in disaster mental health from Tulane University.
Bridge Work Ahead

Bridge Communities has hired Employment Coordinator Mary Zienty to expand its employment program, working with Bridge’s Employment Director Patty Kelly to help Bridge’s 100+ clients find jobs and/or increase their earnings at their current jobs.

Bridge’s mission to help homeless families transition to financial stability, permanent housing and self-sufficiency is deeply rooted in our belief that clients need to maximize their earnings potential.

“Our vision is to develop the capacity and efficiency of the employment program to help our clients more efficiently, effectively and consistently,” Employment Director Patty Kelly explains.

Adding Mary to staff provides Patty support in meeting with our clients to identify their skills, interests and abilities and then pursue employment opportunities, and also in developing relationships with employers, staffing agencies and other employment-related non-profits.

Mary’s role includes building relationships with hiring managers at staffing agencies and also at large employers. Bridge also provides ongoing mentoring and support so that, once a client is hired, he/she has a better chance at success in a position.

Bridge is also collaborating with West Suburban Job Council, which consists of non-profit agencies in DuPage that collaborate to share job leads and provide skill-building programs for clients.

Mary says, “We’ve got a greater awareness of what other agencies are doing and what our clients can take advantage of.”

Another improvement to Bridge Communities’ employment program that Mary is expanding is a group approach to job skills training, as mentioned in John Hayner’s article on page 5.

“We see the importance of job clubs and networking. Networking strategies are more important than ever, and we’re focusing on that. We plan to do group training, which will then develop into job clubs that will offer our clients peer support and accountability,” Mary explains. The vision is to bring groups of clients together to not only acquire job search skills but also create relationships where they can learn with and from each other and support each other.

With a career background in human resources, Mary had spent a lot of time developing resumes, career coaching, and assisting job seekers in establishing and reaching goals. Initially a volunteer for Bridge, Mary took on a client, then another and another. After several months of making a significant contribution to Bridge’s employment program, Patty invited Mary to join Bridge’s staff team. Mary lives in Glen Ellyn with her husband and two children.

In 2011, 55 clients worked with our employment team, up from 31 the previous year.
Consider the Cornerstone Society

Planned giving makes a personal statement about your passion and your values. 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

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 through a planned gift, such as a bequest, living trust, life insurance, charitable gift annuity or other arrangement.

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. The simplest act is to leave a bequest in your will. If you choose to include Bridge Communities in your estate plan, you may wish to provide the following language to your attorney in preparation of any will:

**Form of Bequest**

“I give to Bridge Communities, Inc., located in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, the sum of $____, for its general use and purposes.”

**Form of Residuary Clause**

“I give the residue of my estate, both real and personal [or a specified fraction or percentage thereof], to Bridge Communities, Inc., located in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, for its general uses and purposes.”

If you provide for Bridge Communities through your estate plan, please let us know so we can thank and you recognize you as a member of the Cornerstone Society. All gifts made through your will, trust or other type of estate plan can be established as an enduring tribute to a family member or loved one.

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.