As I look back at the wonderful journey we have taken as Bridge Communities, I am struck with an abiding sense of direction given to us through our faith. We didn’t have a plan to grow this large; rather we had a zeal – and still do - to serve homeless families with children.

I am blessed to work with Joyce and Mark. I am grateful for the leadership and dedication that they bring to Bridge. As the chairman of the board, I often think of myself as the cheerleader and “above the trees” executive of Bridge. I enjoy encouraging our staff and board to think big and continue their growth towards excellence and top-notch quality.

As part of my desire to strengthen Bridge’s ability to help homeless and low income families, I also serve as the executive director of Community Housing Association of DuPage (CHAD). The relationship between Bridge and CHAD has been one of great benefit for our Bridge clients.

I want to thank Mark who has been incredibly flexible and adept in handling 20 years of change. He was our first mentor, while I served as property manager and fundraiser. As we grew, he became the supervisor of our mentors, business manager, Program Partner recruiter, fundraiser, human resource director, car donation expert, and poet laureate. And much of this was as a volunteer with no salary.

There have been some fascinating stories, many are shared in this newsletter. I smiled as we reminisced about the families we served, the volunteers who gave of their time and talents, and the many others we have had the good fortune to meet. For many years we approached each “problem” one day at a time and prayed that we would find a solution. Through the grace of God and a little bit of luck, we made it through some difficult challenges.

Thank you to that group of friends who came together to help Mark and I begin this journey. I thank all of you for helping us grow more than we had planned but exactly as much as we hoped.
Connections is a publication of Bridge Communities, Inc., a program providing transitional housing for homeless families.

Bridge Communities is a non-profit 501c3 organization, with offices in Glen Ellyn, whose mission is to: 1) inspire and effect change by advocating for homeless families, 2) provide services and opportunities that connect families to a better future, 3) collaborate with faith-based partners, community groups and businesses to leverage resources and create long-term solutions, and 4) lead by example through our innovative programs and grassroots involvement.

Our Vision: To create communities where families in need have safe and affordable housing.

We Celebrate Our Clients’ Accomplishments!

James graduated with a Bachelor degree in Finance
Mary earned her Associates of Arts degree from College of DuPage
Tammy has paid off all her debt
Jorie earned all A’s in her summer classes at College of DuPage
Lisa has qualified to purchase a condo in Westmont
Sandy graduated from the program debt free
Anna has paid off three credit cards in just three months
Jennifer completed First Institute and is applying for Medical Assistant positions
Heather was hired into permanent position earning $15 per hour
Dione is buying a condominium
Channell paid off all her debt and has moved in to her own apartment
Shante graduated and moved into a three bedroom town-home
Jen was laid off of her job, but found another job making a higher salary
A former client Yin was hired by a local college to teach Chinese
Bethlehem started a new job earning a livable wage for her and her two children
Susan has stepped up to care for her grandmother and transport her to chemotherapy appointments, while holding a full-time job and caring for her toddler
Natasha started a new job and earned a raise
Karen overcame her fear of driving and earned her drivers license

And now let’s hear it for the kids…
Roaa will enter her freshman year at Benedictine University in September
Cashmere will start classes at College of DuPage
James and Anthony are playing youth football for the first time
Marjorie is going to college to study fashion merchandising
Susie will attend college in Milwaukee this fall
I sometimes think about what my life would have been like if I hadn’t come across Mark, Bob, and their band of dedicated volunteers and board members in 1996. They were just completing the apartment building in Glendale Heights to house homeless families. They had the heart; I happened to have the professional credentials and background they needed to help move their work forward. It was a great mix. As we spent time together, I began asking “what if” questions:

- “What if we rented an office instead of meeting at Glen Oak Restaurant?”
- “What if we began to hire staff and provide the structure through apartments and services to church groups wanting to help homeless families?”
- “What if we started our own tutoring program to help children achieve at school?”
- “What if we began to buy more real estate to house more and more families?”

This wonderful alchemy of leadership, vision, dedication, guts, humor, and friendship, has filled my last 12 years with a wonderful mosaic of rich memories and touching stories of homeless families transforming their lives.

What if Bridge hadn’t been there for 20 years providing a safety net in our community? What if we didn’t begin asking these important questions? Where would we be today?

And I’m still asking. Where will Bridge be tomorrow and in the next 20 years? Thanks for allowing me to serve this wonderful cause and keep asking these important questions.

Joyce Hothan
Executive Director

Bridge Communities Receives $300,000 from Ronald L. McDaniel Foundation

On June 9, 2008, Bridge Communities received a check for $300,000 to serve homeless families in DuPage County from the Ronald L. McDaniel Foundation.

President Ron McDaniel presented the contribution, which will be used to complete the acquisition of a six-flat apartment building in Westmont, IL. The apartments will be converted to condominiums and sold in a special equity-sharing arrangement to formerly homeless families who have completed the Bridge Communities transitional housing program. Families will have an opportunity to build real estate equity with a monthly payment that fits their budget. “This is a unique opportunity for low income families who have completed the Bridge Communities program to enjoy the benefits of real estate ownership in DuPage County and raise their families here,” says co-founder and president Mark Milligan.

Bridge Communities has purchased 2 other six-flat apartment buildings in the communities of Naperville and Lombard. The units in Lombard have been sold to formerly homeless families. The Naperville and Westmont units are currently occupied by Bridge program graduates and will be sold once the condo conversion is completed.

Ron McDaniel states, “My wife and I have personally seen the positive life-changes that happen with the help of Bridge and their mentors. These condos are an investment in the stability of our communities.” Through this program formerly homeless families will realize the dream of homeownership, while at the same time, DuPage County will have permanently added 18 units of affordable housing.
Bridge Communities is celebrating its 20th Anniversary of transforming lives of homeless families who live and work in DuPage County. We honor that small but powerful ripple made by Mark Milligan and Bob Wahlgren when they decided, in 1988, to begin to help homeless families, recognizing what has now become a powerful current of change in the lives of thousands.

Neither one of them realized – at the time – what could truly happen if concerned community members banded together, even in some small way to create change and opportunities. Little did they know that Bridge Communities would become the largest homeless housing program in the County and that our program model would be replicated throughout the country. One single rented apartment in 1988 has grown into over 100 families served annually through 17 transitional housing or condominium buildings, 7 learning resource centers, intensive mentoring, employment coaching and educational opportunities.

Each of you has helped create this mighty force of change by donating your financial resources, furniture, and cars; but the real change happens through the giving of your precious time and talents. In the words of a former client, “Thank you for being a ‘bridge’ over troubled waters and a light in the darkness. My children and I can never repay you for a second chance in life.”

Thank you for your part in Bridge. We look forward to what incredible accomplishments we will make together in the next twenty.

**Tutoring the next generation**

**Significant dates in Bridge Communities’ development — which today serves 100 families annually — include:**

**September 1988**
Mark Milligan and Bob Wahlgren share with a small group of friends a new idea they have for helping homeless families transition from despair to hope and rebuild for their future. Their friends join their quest and donate funds to help sustain an apartment for three months.

**October 15, 1988**
‘The Apartment Project’ was founded through First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn which provided mission funding to help house and mentor one homeless family – providing them with the break they need to get back on their feet.

**December 1988**
Our first automobile is donated and a 20 year partnership with Glen Ellyn based Village Garage & Tire begins.
February 1989
Mary Ellen Durbin and Carol Simler of Catholic Charities begin to work alongside Bridge as we expand our number of families served, mentors and church affiliations.

September 1994
As an all volunteer organization, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awards $627,000 to Bridge to build an 8-unit apartment building.

January 1996
Construction on our apartment building in Glendale Heights is completed. Bridge is now serving nearly 15 families annually in cooperation with Catholic Charities and several church affiliations.

May 1996
Bridge partners with Community Housing Association of DuPage (CHAD) to provide management and bookkeeping services.

September 1996
Joyce Hothan, LCSW is hired as executive director. Under her leadership, Bridge begins to develop internal program solutions, including: hiring case management and employment staff, children’s programs, and permanent office space.

December 1997
Bridge experiences a boom in number of families served – 40 families are now enrolled in the program.

Where was our first “office”? —
It was the back corner booth in Glen Oak Restaurant. This “office” served us well for the first 8 years of existence!
July 1998
State of Illinois recognizes Bridge’s leadership in the “Welfare to Work” initiative with a grant to support our programs.

June 2000
HUD recognizes Bridge as an Illinois “Best Practices” winner for our innovative efforts addressing family homelessness in DuPage County.

March 2002
The Bridge Builders group is founded by local residents who are looking for opportunities to provide hands-on programs for our families and raise funds. To date, the Bridge Builders have raised more than $180,000.

June 2003
Ray and Kathy Whalen step forward to build “A Home with a Heart.” R. Whalen Builders recruits many local suppliers and contractors to build – much of the costs discounted or donated - a beautiful Glen Ellyn home that was sold with proceeds donated to Bridge. These funds were used to purchase a new apartment building.

July 2004
Barbara Trczinski and Joyce Hothan co-author What’s It Like to be Homeless? This hands-on curriculum for adults and children is used by more than 1,000 organizations across the country.

September 2004
Strategic planning brings about discussion of creating new exit strategies for graduated families. Economic limitations and housing costs become important factors in developing these ideas.
November 2004
Sleep Out Saturday brings nearly 500 County residents together for one night to experience homelessness, raise awareness and funds. $290,000 has been raised in just 4 years.

December 2005
Rapid growth has increased our statistics to 12 apartment buildings scattered across DuPage County, 38 partnerships with community and faith-based organizations and 70 families served annually.

February 2006
Bridge launches our shared-equity homeownership program with the purchase of a 6-flat apartment building in Lombard. The units are converted into condominiums and a portion of the equity is sold to graduates. Each unit sold fulfills the dream of homeownership for another formerly homeless family.

January 2007
Bridge begins a year-long process of board and leadership strengthening and strategizing. Four new members are elected to the board and several committees are formed to help with long-term visioning and fundraising.

November 2007
Two additional shared-equity homeownership program buildings are purchased in Westmont and Naperville; thus securing 18 affordable homeownership options in perpetuity.

January 2008
Bridge now partners with nearly 400 volunteers who serve as mentors, learning resource “teachers” and professional tutors. 71,000 housing nights are provided in the previous year.

November 2008
Bridge Communities 20th Anniversary celebration will be held at Glen Oak Country Club from 5:00 – 9:00 pm. This party will honor everyone’s participation in the growth and excellence of Bridge Communities. We will reminisce about the past and cultivate our future. Please join us for this festive evening of sharing, laughter, recognition and fun.

October 17, 2008
Home Sweet Home – Sue relaxes in her new condominium
The question I hear most often is: “Did you think Bridge would grow into such a large organization when you started it?” The answer is without doubt or reservation: “NO”. Although when I first told one of my friends that I was going to rent an apartment for a homeless family, he said: “You know Mark, someday that will be ALL that you do.” I guess John had far, far more vision than I did.

However, while I did not envision what we would become, I have always believed that by working together we could help the homeless community in DuPage County. I realized that a new way of looking at homelessness was needed and that the solutions available in 1988 were not necessarily viable solutions for the future.

As I struggled with what part I would play in those solutions, the best thing I did was to call Bob Wahlgren and share my concerns and a new idea. Bob agreed with my concerns and we forged a partnership; but more importantly a deep friendship. Bob has always been a man of large ideas. He carries with him an attitude that created our vision.

I have great fondness for all those who supported what many thought was a crazy idea, and said “yes” when we asked them to help homeless families. You must remember that this was considered a risky endeavor 20 years ago. People from all walks of life: church leaders, businessmen, homemakers, students, young and seniors; each working together to do something meaningful for a family they didn’t even know. Isn’t that incredible?

I also must recognize our incredible staff. I consider each person to be the very best in DuPage County at doing what they have been asked to do. The work is not easy, but they each do it with grace, compassion and dedication. Beginning with Joyce Hothan, each is special.

The past is the past, and while it is always fun to reminisce, it is the future that we can still influence. Our future depends on each of us. Thank you for joining me as our future unfolds.

Bridge Communities invites you to share in our 20th Anniversary Celebration

Glen Oak Country Club
21W451 Hill Avenue
Glen Ellyn

Friday, October 17th
5:00 – 9:00 pm
Recognition ceremony at 7:00 pm

Kindly respond to 630-545-0610, ext. 30 or events@bridgecommunities.org

Entertainment by The Local Favorite

Please note that Glen Oak does not permit guests to wear jeans.
Organized around the theme, “Outside Looking In,” Sleep Out Saturday will help increase awareness, create empathy and raise critical funds for homeless families in DuPage County.

Now in its fifth year, Sleep Out Saturday has raised more than $290,000. Our goal for 2008 is to raise $130,000.

You can participate in Sleep Out Saturday with a group listed or register your group on our website www.sleepoutsaturday.org.

Not a member of a group? Become a ‘Sleep Out Star.’ Individuals and families are encouraged to become a ‘Sleep Out Star’ and participate in activities and fundraising designed just for your family or you. Register as a ‘Sleep Out Star’ at our website.

Sleep Out Saturday culminates at the Rally held at Bridge Communities at 505 Crescent Blvd, Glen Ellyn. The Rally kicks-off at 6:30 pm. Transportation from the Sleep Out group sites to the Rally is available.

Stay current with the latest updates on Sleep Out Saturday by visiting our blog at www.sleep-out.blogspot.com.

Platinum sponsors

2008 Sleep Out Saturday Groups
Blanchard Road Alliance Church, Wheaton
Bloomingdale Church, Bloomingdale
Church of the Holy Spirit, Schaumburg
Community Baptist Church, Warrenville
Cub Scouts Pack 23 (Den 5), Elmhurst
Daybreak of Lisle, St. Joan of Arc
Driscoll Catholic High School, Addison
DuPage Unitarian Universalist, Naperville
Elmhurst First United Methodist Church
Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elmhurst
Faith Lutheran Glen Ellyn
First Baptist Church of Wheaton
First Church of Lombard
First Congregational Church, Glen Ellyn
First Presbyterian Church, Glen Ellyn
First Presbyterian, Wheaton
First United Methodist Church, Glen Ellyn
Floyd Knobs Christian Church, Sellersberg, Indiana
Glen Ellyn Bible Church
Gloria Dei Lutheran, Downers Grove
Holy Family Parish, Shorewood
Lisle Teens with Character
Marmion Academy, Aurora
Monarch Landing, Naperville
Naperville Presbyterian Church
National University of Health Sciences, Lombard
Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Aurora
Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Naperville
Peace Lutheran Church, Lombard
Southminster Presbyterian, Glen Ellyn
St. Daniel the Prophet, Wheaton
St. Elizabeth Seton, Naperville
St. Francis High School, Wheaton
St. Irene Catholic Community, Warrenville
St. James the Apostle Church Youth Ministry, Glen Ellyn
St. John’s the Baptist, Winfield
St. Matthew United Church of Christ, Wheaton
St. Margaret Mary Parish, Naperville
St. Mary of Gostyn, Downers Grove
St. Peter’s UCC, Elmhurst
St. Petronille Catholic Parish, Glen Ellyn
Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Naperville
St. Thomas the Apostle, Naperville
St. Thomas United Methodist Church, Glen Ellyn
Union Church, Hinsdale
West Chicago Church of Christ
West Suburban Community Church, Elmhurst
Yorkfield Presbyterian Church, Elmhurst
The Glen Ellyn Kitchen Walk presented by Glen Ellyn’s Baird & Warner office is scheduled for Friday, October 3rd from 12:00 – 6:00 pm. Baird & Warner Glen Ellyn is part of the Baird & Warner Network whose mission is to help homeless families and those in need in the communities in which we work and live.

“Baird & Warner and Drury Design both have a strong tradition of support for community based non-profits. We thank them both for their enthusiasm and dedication to helping our neighbors in need. The funds raised through the Kitchen Walk have provided more than 1,000 nights of housing and services to homeless families throughout DuPage County.” said Joyce Hothan.

Mitch Williams, a Baird & Warner real estate agent and chair of Glen Ellyn Kitchen Walk 2008, says proceeds benefit Bridge Communities’ mission to connect homeless families to a better future. In 2007, the event raised $8,600.

After touring the homes, ticket holders may attend the annual post-walk gourmet reception sponsored by Drury Design Kitchen and Bath Studio located at 512 N. Main Street in downtown Glen Ellyn.

Chef Joel Chesebro, Corporate Chef for The Westye Group, a Wolf Cooking Instruments and Sub-Zero distributor, will prepare a selection of seasonal delights.

Glen Ellyn Kitchen Walk tickets may be purchased in advance for $25 [the cost of providing shelter and services for one person for one night] at Bridge Communities’ website www.bridgecommunities.org and at these Glen Ellyn locations:

- **Baird & Warner**
  543 Pennsylvania Avenue

- **Drury Design Kitchen & Bath Studio**, 512 N. Main in Glen Ellyn

- **Bridge Communities**
  505 Crescent Boulevard

Tickets may be purchased at homes the day of the walk for $30. For more information, visit www.kitchenwalk.org or call Baird & Warner’s Glen Ellyn office at 630.469.1855.

Thank you to Drury Design, our principal sponsor for this year’s Glen Ellyn Kitchen Walk.

For more information on the Kitchen Walk, visit www.kitchenwalk.org or call Baird & Warner’s Glen Ellyn office at 630-469-1855.
A Day in the Life of the Employment Director

by Patty Kelly

It is 5:30 AM and I’m going for my morning walk. Each morning I tell myself to let this be a time of exercise and relaxation and not think about work, but my mind always goes to our clients. This particular morning I’m thinking about putting together an article on “A Day in the Life of the Employment Director”. As I walk, I begin to map out how the article will take shape. No two days are alike because no two clients are alike.

I get the green light from a client’s case manager and mentors that it is time for me to “work my magic” as they put it. It isn’t magic. I approach each client in a holistic way and try to see where each person’s passion and strengths are in terms of future employment.

I realize that I have a 9:00 AM appointment in Addison with a new client. She entered our program employed, but recently lost her job. When we meet, I spend sometime getting to know her and sharing some of who I am. Then we get to business.

I share information about the Career Vision test and how it can help give her and her support team (mentors, case manager and myself) some future career recommendations. She listens, asks questions and becomes excited about the possibility of a career versus a job.

We also discuss testing her computer skills with Venturi Staffing Partners. I ask her to make the call for the appointment. Then I talk with her about LDS, which provides two-day intensive training on job interviewing, resume writing, networking, job searching, job clubs, etc. I again ask her to call LDS to set an appointment for her intake and training date. It is important that clients make their own calls rather than me scheduling all her appointments. I assure her that I will also help her with interview skills once she has specific interviews scheduled.

We then complete the paperwork for Poised for Success so that she can receive new clothing appropriate for her interviews. It’s amazing to see the joy on the client’s face as she sees all the opportunities that are offered through Bridge and the other agencies that aid us with employment. The last thing I need to give her are the long detailed “Resume Worksheets.” Once she has completed them, I will better understand how she fills out applications and will begin working on a resume. We put together a “Goal Sheet.” The entire process has taken three hours, but we’ve covered a lot of ground. We set a date for follow-up and progress check.

I jump in the car and head to Lisle to meet a client who has applied for WIA (Workforce Investment Act) funding through WorkNet. The client took the Career Vision test and decided to pursue training as a Medical Assistant. We have an hour meeting with the WorkNet counselor to sign her up for College of DuPage classes. While in school, the client will also need to work part-time, so we discuss potential jobs. We update her goals and set our next meeting date.

Now it is off to Glen Ellyn for another three-hour session to get the Career Vision results on another client. As we reviewed the test results, it becomes apparent that she had the intellect to increase her earning potential, but is suffering from depression. We decide now is not the time to begin school. The case manager will make counseling referrals and we will reassess in six months.

It is now 7:30 PM. I’m home and exhausted but know I can’t stop yet. I need to e-mail the resume of my day’s first appointment to Venturi Staffing Partners and also confirm by e-mail her Career Vision testing. Oh, yes, I also need to send an e-mail to the case managers and mentors about the day’s events.

The following morning on my walk, I re-energize myself as I think about how blessed I am to do what I do for Bridge. I realize that our clients have far more on their plates than I do. I learn from each one of them.
Please help us save on printing and postage. If you receive duplicate copies of this newsletter, or no longer wish to receive it, please return your mailing label in the enclosed envelope. Thank you!

Bridge Communities is a non-profit transitional housing program serving residents of DuPage County. The program provides families with housing, case management, transportation, tutoring, life skills mentoring, job readiness and training with the goal of achieving lifelong independence and permanent housing.

Carol Gavin Joins Bridge Communities Board of Directors

Burr Ridge resident Carol Gavin has joined the board of directors of Bridge Communities -- a transitional housing provider working with homeless families in DuPage County. Carol will also serve on the Bridge Communities' Governance and Leadership Committee. Carol shares, "I am especially drawn to Bridge Communities multi-dimensional approach to the problem of homelessness, with a continual focus on long-term solutions.”

Carol is currently the president of Winston Advisors Ltd, specializing in providing consulting services and advice on corporate governance issues. Carol spent much of her career serving as senior vice-president, general counsel and secretary of Tellabs, Inc where she served as the chief legal officer until 2001.

In addition to her involvement with Bridge Communities, Carol serves on the board of directors for Tellabs Foundation and board of visitors for the University of Illinois College of Law.

Carol is a graduate cum laude from the University of Illinois College of Law. In 2000, she was named one of the University of Illinois College of Law Distinguished Graduates.

In addition to her professional accomplishments, Carol is a marathon runner who is training for the Chicago Marathon in October. She and her husband, Joe, enjoy traveling and spending time with their grown son, Joe.

We welcome Carol and look forward to learning from her expertise.

Donate your car to Bridge Communities

Are you thinking about purchasing a new car? Donate your used car to Bridge Communities. By donating your car to Bridge Communities, you may be able to claim a higher tax deduction than donating it to a charity that sells used cars for cash. More importantly you will directly help a homeless family on their road to self-sufficiency. Used cars donated to Bridge Communities are given to clients in desperate need of a safe, reliable car for commuting to work and transporting their children to school and child care.

To donate your used car to help a homeless family served by Bridge Communities, or to find out how to support Bridge in another way, please call Mark Miligan at (630) 545-0610, ext. 10.