After everything that happened to her, it’s understandable that Anna (name changed to protect privacy) wants to keep a small circle of trust around her and her children. Thanks to the Bridge Communities program and working with her mentors, that circle is getting bigger by the day.

“I had lost my confidence,” said Anna. “Working with my mentors helped me get it back. They are like my best friends. I can talk to them about anything, and I don’t have to worry about what they are going to say to me.”

Anna was born in India, uniting with her husband through an arranged marriage when she was only 21. The couple moved to Milwaukee and then settled in Chicago for her husband’s work, eventually having two daughters — Audry and Sherri. Anna and her husband’s relationship was volatile and unhappy, but she could never have predicted what would happen next.

Once the family returned to India for a visit, her husband immediately filed for divorce, transferring the family’s bank account to himself and taking away their daughters. With no family left in India, Anna needed police assistance to get her passport back from her husband and was left with no other option than to move back to the United States by herself. For two years, Anna worked a variety of jobs with shifts of almost twenty hours a day at times while living with a friend from work. Once she saved enough money, she traveled back to India and with the help of the Bridge Communities program and working with her mentors, that circle is getting bigger by the day.

“She’s [Anna] really driven, . . . She’s goal-oriented and really appreciates education. From the beginning she was driven to make the most of the Program.”
LaTeisha started a new job at a legal company making $14.50 per hour.
Joan changed from a part-time to a full-time job with a major credit company now making $17 per hour.
Keisha passed her Certified Nursing Assistant classes.
Nahla, Trisha, and LaTonja started classes at College of DuPage as part of the Office Technology and Information Program.
Cendrina will soon graduate. She has pre-qualified for a $125,000 mortgage and plans to purchase a home in Plainfield.
Lucy has paid off all her consumer debt and has now started a monthly saving plan.
Anna has passed her pharmacy technician classes and is studying for her Illinois state license.
Susan received a promotion after she passed her nursing assistant courses.
Marjorie purchased a home in August. She became the 41st graduate to purchase a home. Congratulations!
Colleen was promoted from a part-time to a full-time position with her employer, a chiropractic medical office.
Lila was accepted to purchase a home through the Habitat for Humanity homeownership program. Her and her children have begun to invest their “sweat equity” into their home.
Debra was accepted into the Radiology Technician Program at College of DuPage. This is a very competitive program that accepts less than 50 persons per year. Way to go!

And now let’s hear it for the kids…
Shannon worked two jobs this summer to earn money for her first year at College of DuPage.
James earned a spot on the freshman football team at his high school.
Nine scholarships were awarded to college-bound students.
Nathan worked two summer jobs to save money for when he goes to college next year.
Sheila got a summer job through WorkNet and was asked to stay on now that she is back in school.
Join DuPage County residents and give a “wake-up” call to all Chicago area residents to ask for help for homeless families in our community. More than 1,500 teens, children and adults will spend the night outside on November 6th in tents, boxes or cars to raise awareness about family homelessness and money for Bridge Communities’ Transitional Housing program. This unique event offers opportunities for participants to give back to their community, raise public awareness about family homelessness and create empathy for those in need.

You can join Sleep Out Saturday by registering as a Sleep Out Group or a Sleep Out Star at www.sleeponesaturday.org. A Group typically is comprised of children or teens from a faith-based, Scout or community group. As a Group leader you will direct educational activities, help the participants raise funds and supervise the Sleep Out overnight. Sleep Out Stars are families or individuals who are not participating with an organized group. As a Star you can participate in activities designed just for your family or you. Stars also commit to help raise awareness and funds to support Bridge Communities.

Sleep Out Saturday culminates at the Rally held at Bridge Communities at 505 Crescent Blvd, Glen Ellyn with entertainment by 101.9 The MIX on-air DJ, Koz and road crew. 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.

Do you want a quick and easy way to give your financial support to Bridge Communities and Sleep Out Saturday?

**Text BRIDGE to 20222 and make a $10 donation**

It only takes a minute and it will help a homeless family stay warm on November 6th.
of the US Consulate was able to bring her daughters back to America in 2008.

Trying to support herself and her kids was a day-to-day struggle, especially balancing home life and her daunting work schedule. Through an acquaintance she heard about Bridge Communities, but was still hesitant to let outsiders into her and her daughters’ lives. After hearing all the positives from her friend, Anna knew it would pay dividends for the future of her family and made the call.

"Originally she was very protective of the children, so she was afraid to trust people," said Renee Lange, one of Anna’s mentors. "Once she believed in us, everything changed."

“She began to admit her fears, and we all began to bond with one another,” said Bobi Siembieda, Anna’s other mentor. “We started to organize her financial and career goals, we broke them down, looked at ways we could address each and make them happen.”

In the Bridge program, Anna was able to not just budget her money wisely, but also her time. After discussing career aspirations with her case manager, Karen Stewart and mentors, Anna realized she was always interested in the medical field. Anna tested with Career Vision and learned that she had a high aptitude for math and science. After taking classes at the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Anna was able to get certified as a pharmacy technician and is currently studying to get her state license. Anna also got Bridge’s help in finding a donated automobile, vital for her hefty commute to work and to bring her daughters to and from school everyday.

“She’s really driven,” said Siembieda. “She’s goal-oriented and really appreciates education. From the beginning she was driven to make the most of the Program.”

Anna already has her sights set on her next big challenges. She hopes to find a pharmacy technician job at a hospital, buy a house, and eventually gain full custody of daughters Audry and Sherri, now 10 and 7, respectively. All of these goals revolve around her one central mission, giving her daughters the opportunity to someday follow their own personal and career dreams.

“My circle is my kids,” said Anna. “My whole life’s goal is to raise my kids. I want them to be good people. Whatever they want to learn or grow up to be, I want them to do it. If I can provide that, I will be fine.”

Anna is a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when a person is given support and guidance,” said Karen Stewart, Anna’s case manager. “She has excelled at every opportunity provided. I believe she and her daughters will go on to make a very positive impact to our world.”

Bridge Welcomes Three New Board Members

Bridge Communities is pleased to welcome Darryl Baltimore, Tim Boyd and Tim MacKenzie to its Board of Directors. All three nominees were appointed at Bridge’s annual meeting on September 18th. “I am very impressed with the professional talent that each of these new members brings to our board of directors,” said Laura Allen, board chair. “Each possess a vast array of talents and knowledge, as well as a deep passion for serving our most vulnerable community neighbors.”

Glen Ellyn resident, Darryl is chief executive officer of Allstate Bank and assistant vice president of Allstate Life Insurance Company Life Finance. Prior to his eleven years of leadership with Allstate, Darryl has held increasingly executive positions with LaSalle Bank and Anderson Consulting focusing on commercial and retail banking services. Darryl earned his Bachelor of Science in Accountancy from University of Illinois and an MBA from Northwestern University’s Kellogg Graduate School of Business. Darryl, along his wife, Jodi is an active member in several local service clubs and First Congregational Church.

Tim Boyd has spent much of his professional career working with the Chicago Board of Option Exchange and
With school back in session, I feel like I am writing the tried and true assignment about “How I Spent My Summer Vacation”. Gone are those days, but my summer at Bridge Communities was all about strategic planning. The board and staff have been hard at work researching, discussing and deciding the direction Bridge Communities will take in the next three years. Much of the discussion has focused on the limited affordable housing resources available in our county and the continued increase in families who are losing their housing due to economic conditions. Our underlying motivator continues to be the children and the burning question of how can anyone raise a family without the H-word?

Bridge Communities has followed a trajectory of housing and program growth. We had one apartment building in 1996 and now we have 14 program buildings, which are mainly 6 flats. We have three condo buildings our graduates can purchase into through our equity sharing homeownership program and one office building where the staff hangs their hats. This rate of growth is now burned into our DNA. How could we not be thinking about planning for more housing, as long as our phone continues to ring with more homeless families? We have been blessed with a stable staff, a dedicated board of directors, very generous and committed donors and the motivation that comes in all shapes and sizes starting from infants to teens. Since homeless children make up the bulk of our clients, we can never run out of motivation to provide as much of the H-word as possible!

The ink is just dry on our new “Strategic Plan” and the Bridge Board has formally accepted the document. No surprise that it includes a continued trajectory of growth in many exciting areas, which definitely include the “H-word”. Yes, we will be working toward purchasing more buildings in order to house more families and assist each one with their own unique formula for making a stable life for their children. But actually housing isn’t the “H-word” I’m referring to. Even though housing is critical to providing the basics for a family to function, I am taking about something much more ethereal.

It is something that we provide our homeless families at Bridge Communities that can’t be measured in square footage. It is not tangible, but recognizable the minute a homeless family walks through the door of their transitional housing apartment. It is written all over a mom’s face when she sees her children run into their bedrooms and she knows she no longer has to worry about where they will be sleeping tonight. That “H-word” we need to continue to provide is Hope! It is the precious ingredient we all need to keep moving forward. Always in short supply when homeless families have few if any good options. Hope is what Emily Dickinson referred to as “that thing with feathers…that perches in the soul.” We have an ambitious and soulful Strategic Plan of helping more families with housing and hope!

Executive Director

Letter from the Executive Director . . . Living without the H - word!

Board Members continued from page 4

as a business entrepreneur. He has been a member of the CBOE finance, market performance, stock selection and several other committees. Currently Tim works with Western & Southern Life Insurance Company as an agent and financial planner. A long-time Wheaton resident, Tim and his family are active members at St. James the Apostle Catholic Church.

Tim MacKenzie and his family have been actively involved with Bridge for many years as volunteer mentors and program leaders. Tim serves as managing director of Merit Capital and is responsible for sourcing and managing investments on behalf of Merit, as well as serving on the board of directors for selected portfolio accounts where he brings his extensive knowledge of strategic development, audit and management issues. Additionally, Tim serves as a director of Chicago Fellowship where he coordinates a variety of ministries. Tim lives in Hinsdale with his wife, Mary and three children.
A few early rain showers did not keep hundreds of supporters from enjoying delicious BBQ at the 2nd Annual Glen Ellyn Backyard BBQ held September 18th. This event welcomed amateur and professionals alike to show off their grilling skills in a friendly competition that awarded braggin’ rights to the winners of Best Dish and Best Ribs. Trophies and awards were given to the top five competitors in each category. Blues singer, Amy Kelly provided soulful musical entertainment as guests mingled with friends and family and sampled the tasty entries.

Founded by Glen Ellyn residents, Tom Nelson and Tom “Pig Daddy” Koprowski the Backyard BBQ has quickly become an up-and-coming Glen Ellyn event and fundraiser for Bridge Communities. “We wanted to create an event that showcased Glen Ellyn and raised money and awareness for a good cause,” said Tom Koprowski. “Bridge has been incredibly supportive of the event and its potential for growth. I also cannot say enough about our committee members; they have brought such energy and enthusiasm to the event.”

Plans are already underway for next year’s event as organizers hope to expand the scope of the event and turn it into a community festival with double the number of BBQ competitors and family-centered entertainment. Keep your eye on the official Glen Ellyn Backyard BBQ website at http://gebbq.blogspot.com as event details will be posted throughout the year.

Bridge Communities thanks all the members of the event committee, sponsors, judges, Village of Glen Ellyn, Amy Kelly and the Bill Ande Band, Terry Thome for his raffle donation and all the donors and event guests. We look forward to welcoming you to next year’s event.

Thanks to Cooper, Charlie and friends who sold lemonade and cookies to help raise funds during the BBQ.
Your decision to make a planned gift is a personal statement about what you care about and who you are.

Your planned gift to Bridge Communities can help change the lives of homeless families in DuPage County, achieve your financial goals and leave a lasting legacy of generosity.

When you designate Bridge Communities as the recipient of your planned gift, you are included in the Cornerstone Society membership. The Cornerstone Society 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.

Charter members of the Cornerstone Society, Zed and Cheryl Francis, longtime volunteers and financial supporters to Bridge Communities, felt it was only natural to include Bridge as they drafted their wills and estate plans. “Bridge Communities certainly represents one of the organizations that have demonstrated a successful track record to provide a better life for disadvantaged people by helping people help themselves. We have seen the dramatic impact Bridge has made on the lives of the people involved, including the client family, the mentors and the entire support group.”

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. Should you decide 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.”

How will you be remembered?

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

You too can become a charter member of the Cornerstone Society. If you are interested in exploring your planned giving options, please contact Bridge Communities today at (630) 545-0610 ext. 12 or amy.vanpolen@bridgecommunities.org.
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.

Bridge Builders Support Nine College Students

Bridge Communities, in cooperation with the Bridge Builders, presented college scholarships to nine formerly homeless teens. Each student was awarded the scholarship based on their academic achievements and a personal essay that told of their future pursuits.

Each scholarship winner shares a past that includes homelessness, but they also each share a future that is built on big dreams, hard work and a strong education, including careers in international business, medicine, chemistry and law enforcement. Each applicant was asked to write an essay that answered: “How would you describe your future goals?” Based on the answers we read to this question, we feel confident that these young adults have a very bright future.

Thank you to the Bridge Builders for their continued hands-on involvement with the children served by Bridge. The Bridge Builders have raised more than $42,000 in the past three years to support college scholarships and other child enrichment activities, such as summer overnight camps, sports camps, music lessons and family-fun outings.

I will be studying International Business and was directly admitted to the Kelley School of Business and into the Hutton Honors College. I really enjoy analyzing the interactions between different regions of the world. With all the experience I will gain over the next four years, I know I will succeed.

When I set my mind to strive for something, I won’t give up until I get it. My mother always told me that school is before everything and that I should never take the easy way out. I just want to see her smile as I receive my diploma and begin make the first steps towards my long-term career goal, which is to become a Supreme Court judge. I know this will require long hours, hard work and years of schooling. I’m ready for the challenge.

One of the most important things in my life today is education. Knowledge is something no one can ever take from you, so I work hard to learn as much as I can. My goal is to be the first person in my family to graduate college, as well as to be a role-model and example for my younger siblings.