



**Connecting homeless families  
to a better future**

**Bridge Communities, Inc.**

**505 Crescent Blvd.  
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137-4529**

**Telephone: (630) 545-0610**

**Fax: (630) 545-0640**

**Web site: [www.BridgeCommunities.org](http://www.BridgeCommunities.org)**

May 13, 2020

Dear friends,

On behalf of the Bridge Communities Board of Directors, I am excited to announce the appointment of Karen S. Wells as Chief Executive Officer of Bridge Communities, beginning June 1, 2020. We are thrilled and confident that, with Karen's strong record as an accomplished business leader and civic volunteer, she will successfully help to guide Bridge Communities into the future and continue to serve families facing homelessness with compassion and excellence.

Karen brings more than 25 years of corporate and entrepreneurial experience to Bridge Communities. She has held several key leadership positions with the McDonald's Corporation, including serving as VP of US Innovation, VP of US Strategy, VP of Operations, and VP of Nutrition and Menu Development for McDonald's 13,000 US restaurants. Along with other notable achievements, Karen led McDonald's negotiation team with First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" children's health initiative. Beyond her Fortune 500 experience, Karen has owned and operated two small businesses as a franchisee in early childhood development and President & CEO of The AIW Group—a company she founded based on her passion for philanthropy, leadership development, diversity and inclusion.

For nearly 10 years, Karen has gained extensive knowledge and experience in the mission, vision and business of Bridge Communities and its programs as a committed volunteer, brand ambassador, and former board member. She can relate first-hand to the families of Bridge Communities, as she grew up in poverty and is a first-generation college graduate. Guided by this experience, Karen is devoted to helping the underserved in both the community and the workplace. She has a passion for helping families impacted by poverty and is highly regarded for her work in helping and mentoring women. She has built upon this passion in her extensive volunteer work as a certified community trainer in the aha! Process' *Getting Ahead in a Just Getting' By World* as well as *Bridges Out of Poverty*.

Beyond her business experience and volunteer commitments with Bridge Communities, she was a past facilitator and developed the curriculum for Loaves and Fishes Community Services' Moving Up program, a volunteer for the Ora Lee Cancer Research Foundation and the Women's Speaker Collective, and Co-Leader of the Quad County Policy Circle. Karen is an accomplished speaker and author, with her first book, *The Pursuit of Courage*, soon to be published. She has been interviewed on CNN, featured in the Chicago Tribune, named a Rising Star by Fortune Magazine, and covered in many other media outlets for both her corporate and community work.



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Karen has an MBA from Meredith College, NC and a BSBA in Marketing from Xavier University, OH. She is married, has two young adult children, and lives with her family in Naperville, IL.

While Karen will start as Chief Executive Officer on June 1, Retiring CEO John Hayner will remain as a part of the team at Bridge through June 30 to welcome her and help provide a smooth onboarding and transition process.

Please join me in welcoming and partnering with Karen as she moves into her new role with Bridge Communities.

Grateful regards,

Zed Francis  
Chairman of the Board and  
Chair, Bridge Communities CEO Search Committee