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Building Bridges

The Bridge takes on largest program expansion in its history

In its 41-year history, The Bridge has been committed to working with adolescents. Its first program was a drop-in center that provided after-school activities for area teens, keeping them safe and off the streets.

As years passed, research and best practices showed that children respond better to services that begin at an earlier age. “Early intervention” and “prevention” became the industry buzzwords, and The Bridge started serving younger children. Currently, The Bridge serves youth 6-17.

The question arose: Is 6 early enough? The Center for Evidence-Based Practice and other experts in the field say no. They proved that starting behavioral and emotional health services with 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children increases the probability of positive outcomes. They believe it is never too soon to start services, working with both children and parents to develop a stable emotional foundation.

Five years ago, The Bridge conducted a study to determine what services are available for preschool children in the northwest suburbs. “We found that although there are wonderful programs for young children with developmental delays, there are few services available for those with emotional or behavioral disorders,” said Peter Cunneen, executive director of The Bridge.

The Bridge started tracking calls it received from parents of preschool children and from referral sources. Staff spoke with healthcare providers and community partners. It was clear that the need was real.

“With our proven track record and expertise, we knew we were the right organization to offer these services,” said Cunneen. “What we didn’t know was how we would manage to add a hundred additional children to our case load.”

The Bridge needs to add two full-time child therapists who specialize in services for



preschool children. The annual cost to add an Early Childhood Program at The Bridge is \$100,000.

“Although the expense is cost effective, adding this program still requires a united effort from our staff, board and volunteers,” added Cunneen.

This year, The Bridge embarked on the Building Bridges Campaign to raise \$500,000 to fund an Early Childhood Program for five years. During that time, The Bridge will collect the empirical data necessary to attract long-term funding from sources such as townships, the State of Illinois, United Ways and individual donors.

To date, the campaign committee has raised an incredible \$415,000 for the Early Childhood Program.

Continued on Page 2

Building Bridges Committee

Debra Strauss

*Chair, Building Bridges Campaign
President, School District 211
Board of Education*

Ron Buch

Northwest Community Healthcare

Sharon Devereaux

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Steve Dodge

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David Hill

Kimball Hill Homes

Kris Howard Jensen

Community Volunteer

Ann Lawrence

Family Attorney

Mike Moorman

Community Volunteer

Ken Nelson

Mayor, Rolling Meadows

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“This exciting new program will, for the first time, address the behavioral health needs of our youngest children,” said Debra Strauss, chair of the Building Bridges Campaign. “Being able to provide services at an early age dramatically enhances the prospect for success. It is my privilege to help establish this ground-breaking program.”

The Early Childhood Program will include child assessments, parent education and training, play therapy, and family counseling.

The main goals of the program are:

- Promote the mental and emotional wellbeing of preschool children in Palatine Township
- Provide parents with resources and training so that they are better equipped to deal with early childhood behavioral disorders
- Prevent child abuse and neglect

“It is not often that you get to be involved with an initiative that has such a tremendous impact on your community,” added Strauss. “I hope many more will join us in building The Bridge for our youngest and most promising community members.”

What the Experts Say

According to the Center for Evidence-Based Practice, behavioral problems in a child’s preschool career are the single best indicator of delinquency in adolescence, gang membership and adult incarceration. Addressing issues at the first sign of a problem will ensure better outcomes, happier families and a healthier community.



Executive Director Peter Cunneen with Building Bridges Chair Debra Strauss announcing the campaign at the Dinner Dance on April 8.

Facts about children’s mental health:

- An estimated 10% of American children have serious diagnosable emotional or behavioral health disorders resulting in substantial to extreme impairment.*
- Students with emotional disorders miss more school than do students in all other disability categories.**
- More than half of students with serious emotional disorders drop out of grades 9-12 (the highest rate for all disability categories).**
- Of those with serious emotional disorders, 73% are arrested within five years of leaving school.*

Children who are identified as hard to manage at ages 3 and 4 have a high probability of continuing to have difficulties into adolescence. In fact, when aggressive and antisocial behavior has persisted to age 9, intervention has a poor chance of success.

For information about the Early Childhood Program or making a gift to the campaign, contact The Bridge at (847) 359-7490 or e-mail bridge1@bridgeyouth.org. ●

*Center for Evidence-Based Practice

**US Department of Education, 1994



When a Child's Play Isn't Just Child's Play



By Amy Baur, LCSW, RPT-S, Clinical Supervisor at The Bridge

Do you ever observe your children at play? As a Registered Play Therapist I have the opportunity to witness children's play and see that it is more than a frivolous pastime. Play is the work of childhood and contains many clues to a child's understanding of their world and emotional state.

Play Therapy is an effective tool for therapists that allows them to observe children's play, gaining insight into a child's thoughts and feelings. It also provides a non-threatening forum for therapists to correct challenging behaviors.

Years ago, I used Play Therapy to help a young man named James. James was a "gang-banger wannabe" with an angelic face and chip on his shoulder the size of a sequoia. He was referred to Play Therapy due to "non-compliant" behavior. In other words, he rarely did what he was told at school or at home.

His problem behavior was fueled by anger at being abandoned by his drug-addicted mother and placed in foster care with his confused and weary grandmother. Predictably, James tested limits from the start. Over and over, I had to set limits in Play Therapy, telling James what things were for or not for: "I am not for painting," "Toys are not for breaking," and "Books are not for throwing out the window."

James complied with each request but this time he asked, "What is for throwing out the window?" Together, we decided that tissues were okay for this purpose. We spent the remainder

of the session setting tissues free to sail away in the breeze or waft slowly to the sidewalk six stories below.

When the session was over I wondered what we had accomplished. James left the playroom and ran down to the waiting area and dove into the staff coat closet. No longer being in a therapeutic setting I said, "James, get



out of the closet." From deep within the coats I heard him say, "I am not for finding!" using perfect Play Therapy limit-setting language.

James had indeed been listening and absorbing the interaction. He had felt supported enough and accepted enough to be able to develop a relationship. By playing with James that day and over the next several months he learned to control his impulses and to respect himself and others. He learned how it felt to have someone appreciate him and his abilities. He learned to give and receive and to like himself. He learned that he was worthy of love and was able to use this knowledge to change, grow and learn new behaviors.

People think I became a Play Therapist because I like toys. And while there is truth to my love for toys, what I really love is the ability of children to transform the toys into communication. Kids don't always know what it is that they are communicating, and neither do I, but I do know that magic happens when I can witness a child transforming their inner world into something visible in their play. Play is more than a frivolous pastime, it is an opportunity to grow and learn.

Next time you see your child playing, recognize that he or she is participating in something more powerful than simple make-believe. Your child is expressing him or herself in a unique and powerful way. Recognize your child's play as a language that will give you information that you won't get from verbal exchanges. Ask your child what he or she did today and you are likely to get a reply of "nothing." But if you watch your child's play you will get more information about thoughts and feelings, experiences and relationships. This can help you appropriately respond to and connect with your child.

For more information about interpreting your child's play, contact The Bridge (847) 359-7490 or e-mail abaur@bridgeyouth.org.

The Bridge's 2006 *Champagne* Safari

The 325 attendees at The Bridge's annual dinner dance experienced a night of excitement and fun while raising a record-breaking \$111,500 to support the families served by The Bridge. The dinner dance was Saturday, April 8 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare.

The Champagne Safari theme provided guests with the opportunity to experience the adventures and elegance of Africa without leaving the area. The live auction featured an incredible safari in South Africa. The silent auction had a large selection of items from weekend get-aways to priceless trading cards featuring Michael Jordan. Following dinner and the live auction, guests enjoyed the music of Phase IV.

This year's grand raffle winner was Sue Kach, who chose the \$15,000 cash prize over the new Mitsubishi Eclipse. Florence Marquis won the diamond necklace donated by Ultra Diamonds.

A champagne toast was the highlight of the evening as The Bridge kicked off the Building Bridges Campaign (see page 1). Another special moment was when the Board of Directors presented Peter Cunneen with a gift for 20 years of service as Executive Director of The Bridge.

Ron Buch and Leslie Lilly were the event co-chairs, leading the team of 40 volunteers who made the dinner dance a great success.

For information about helping with next year's dinner dance, please contact Carrie McHaley at (847) 359-7490 or e-mail cmchaley@bridgeyouth.org.



2006 Dinner Dance Co-chairs
Leslie Lilly and Ron Buch



Mike Sage bidding on the foursome at
Firestone Country Club.



Tom and Donna Anderson looking at
photos that were taken in front of a
painting of beautiful African scenery.



Kris Howard Jensen and Jack
Jensen dancing up a storm at
this year's event.



2006 Dinner Dance Sponsors

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Anette and David Musich
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Rotary Club of Palatine
Debra and Michael Strauss

Other Sponsor

Von Sydow's Moving & Storage



Dinner Dance volunteers Meghan Roggenbuck and Shirielle D. Williams work hard to ensure check-in and check-out runs smoothly.



Mike and Gloria Pefley (left) and Michael and Debra Strauss dancing to the music of Phase IV.

2006 Dinner Dance Committee

Gala Co-Chairs

Leslie Lilly and Ron Buch

Attendance Chair

Kris Howard Jensen

Auction Chair

Donna Anderson

Basket Raffle Chair

Kelly Clegg

Decorations Co-Chairs

Anette Musich and Joe Serio

Development Chair

Steve Whited

Grand Raffle Chair

Dan Silverman

Public Relations Chair

Shirielle D. Williams

Sponsorship Chair

Liz Noe

Technology Chair

Roland Marquis

Maureen Goggin, Diane Mathews, Neil Mathews, Mariela Maurius, Florence Marquis, Suzanne Moody, Julie Plancon, Paul Plancon, Gloria Pefley, Mike Pefley



Youth Council Coordinates Another Successful Battle of the Bands

The Youth Council has once again turned their love for music into a form of community service at one of their most successful events!

The third annual Battle of the Bands on March 3, 2006, raised over \$900 with 200 attendees. The competing bands were: Borderline, Earthbound, Improper Fraction, and The Skandel. The Youth Council worked hard in securing over \$600 in prizes for the participants, along with treats for the attendees.

Battle of the Bands is a collaboration between Fremd High School's Service Club and The Bridge's Youth Council. Youth Council members audition bands and choose the four final teen bands that perform at the event. Teen volunteers then promote Battle of the Bands at the high schools and ask

local businesses to provide prizes for the participating bands.

Battle of the Bands is not only a great fundraiser for The Bridge, but it also allows for a fun, substance-free evening that promotes the talents and creativity of area teens.



Youth Council members Kate Brown and Lisa and Katie Christ volunteering at Dinner Dance. Kate and Katie were recently elected co-presidents for the 06/07 school year.



Upcoming Events

The Youth Council car wash is June 11 at The Bridge's office at 721 S. Quentin Rd., Palatine. The car wash is from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., and all proceeds benefit the families served by The Bridge.

On July 15, Youth Council members will volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House from 3-9 p.m. They are cooking for the families that are staying at the house.

If you are interested in Youth Council activities or becoming a member, contact The Bridge at (847) 776-3730 or e-mail bridge1@bridgeyouth.org. ●

2005 Honor Roll of Corporate and Foundation Donors

Thank you to the following organizations for making a monetary contribution to The Bridge in 2005.

Ahlbeck and Company
 Alexian Brothers Behavioral Health Hospital
 Alexian Brothers Hospital Network
 All Saints Lutheran Church
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 Kiwanis Club of Palatine
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 United Way of Metropolitan Chicago
 Village of Hoffman Estates
 Village of Inverness
 Village of Palatine
 Von Sydow's Moving & Storage
 W.W. Grainger, Inc.
 Webpassage, Inc.
 Willow Creek Community Church
 Women's Club of Inverness
 Workplace Solutions
 Zurich North America



Connections

Teeing Up for Another Great Outing

On September 11, 2006, The Bridge Youth & Family Services will host its 8th Annual Golf Classic at Boulder Ridge Country Club in Lake in the Hills. Join us for an outstanding day of golf, food and camaraderie in support of the families served by The Bridge.

Golfers will once again tee off at the beautiful championship golf course designed by Fuzzy Zoeller. Golfers will be treated to a buffet lunch, 18-holes of golf and a wonderful chef-quality dinner. This year marks The Bridge's eighth annual golf outing, which raises more than \$64,000 annually. Michael Strauss and Dan Silverman are co-chairs for this year's event.

Space is limited. Reservations are available for \$350 per golfer or \$75 to attend the dinner and awards only.

Sponsorship opportunities are still available. All sponsorship levels provide ample publicity as well as the opportunity for your company to align itself with one of the oldest and most

2006 Golf Classic Chairs
Michael Strauss and Dan Silverman



respected community organizations in the northwest suburbs.

Fundraising events such as the golf outing provide The Bridge with the funding necessary to provide services to all families, regardless of income.

For information about the 2006 outing, call The Bridge (847) 359-7490 or e-mail cmchaley@bridgeyouth.org.



Mike Thompson, Roland Marquis, Florence Marquis and Ken Keller at the 2005 Bridge golf outing.



2005 Co-Chair Tom Noe watches golfers try their luck at the Bucket Toss.

2006 Golf Sponsors

Silver Sponsor

Harris Bank Palatine, N.A.

Grand Sponsors

Northrop Grumman Corporation

Northwest Community Healthcare

Palatine Bank & Trust

R.C. Schoppert & Associates, Inc.

Streamwood Behavioral Health Systems

Bronze Sponsors

Harper Educational Foundation

Meltzer, Purtil & Stelle, LLC

Schedule

- 10:30 am** Check-in
Putting Contest
- 11:00 am** Lunch Buffet
- 12:30 pm** Shotgun Start
- 5:30 pm** Shoot-out and Open Bar
- 6:30 pm** Dinner, Auction, Prizes

Making a Gift to The Bridge Youth & Family Services

No matter the size, each charitable gift enables The Bridge to continue providing vital services to the community.

Here are a few giving options...

- Cash gift
- Pledge – Pledges can be paid over time in cash or stocks.
- Stock – By making a gift of stock, you'll receive a tax deduction while avoiding capital gains tax.
- Tribute or memorial – Make a gift in honor of someone, living or deceased.
- Birthday gifts – Make a gift in honor of someone's birthday and we will send him or her a card.
- Matching gifts – Some companies will match, double or even triple your charitable gifts. Check with your human resources department for details.
- Planned gifts – Leaving a gift to The Bridge through a bequest, endowment or other planned gift can be rewarding and provide you with substantial tax benefits.

To make a gift, please contact The Bridge at (847) 359-7490.

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