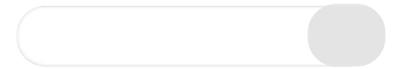




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A Bridge to the Future

by Ann Marie Scheidler • February 9, 2016 • Leave a Comment



For many, the word “homeless” evokes a mental image of a single male with some type of substance abuse or mental health problem loitering in a public place. This is the image of the visible homeless. In reality, the picture of homelessness in America today is a family portrait. Glen Ellyn’s Bridge Communities serves the homeless family, who we know as the “invisible” homeless. Typically, this is a single parent with children in school that are bouncing from home-to-home of family and friends.

“Bridge Communities is an incredibly important foundation in DuPage County,” explains Hinsdale Junior Woman’s Club (HJWC) Gala 4 Good co-chair Kristen Hull. This year, Bridge Communities is the beneficiary of the Woman’s Club’s signature event. Cara Omiencinski and Lauren McLaughlin are also serving as co-chairs.



Gala 4 Good co-chairs Lauren McLaughlin, Kristen Hull, and Cara Omiencinski

“Bridge Communities provides 128 homeless families the fresh start and support they need to become self-sufficient through transitional housing and mentor services,” adds Omiencinski. “HJWC is honored to support them in the second year of our partnership as our philanthropy. Through our fundraising efforts, we have become connected to the families and leaders at Bridge and they have touched our lives forever,” she adds.

Based in Glen Ellyn, Bridge Communities offers transitional housing and support services to homeless families that live and work in DuPage County. Founded in 1988 by community volunteers Mark Milligan and Bob Wahlgren, Bridge has grown to include nearly 100 units of transitional housing and 18 shared-equity home ownership condominium units.

Transitional housing provides apartments, supportive service, and a stable environment to homeless families who are working to improve or develop the skills necessary to live independently.

This is typically defined by a two-year time period. Bridge Communities works with local faith-based and community action groups that provide mentors and essential financial support. Bridge provides professional case management, education tutoring, career counseling and coaching, and donated automobiles.

“The dollars raised at Gala 4 Good will be used to create an endowment for our children’s services programs,” explains Amy Van Polen who is in Resource Development for Bridge Communities. “This endowment will ensure that Bridge kids will always be able to receive tutoring, scholarships, counseling, and other critical care so that they can recover from the trauma of being homeless.” Other funding uses will include the creation of a Learning Resource Center in a new apartment building in Glen Ellyn, and refurbishment of temporary housing in Glendale Heights and Westmont.

HJWC is working hard to produce an unforgettable event for its anticipated 800 guests on Saturday, February 20, at the West Loop’s Venue One in Chicago. “In addition to live entertainment, delicious food, libations, and surprises, we’ll have an Art Gallery featuring work from the children of Bridge available for purchase,” says McLaughlin. “This will allow our guests to connect with the cause and see hope through their eyes. This is a chance to give back to people in our own county who deserve and need our help.”

“Bridge is forever grateful to HJWC for all they have done to improve the lives of Bridge

families,” Van Polen says.

To learn more about Bridge Communities, visit bridgecommunities.org. For tickets and sponsorship information, visit g4ghjwc.com/buy-tickets.html.

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