



Lancaster &
Chester Counties

THE
BRIDGE

Supportive friendships for lasting impact

Vol. XXIV, No. IV Ending and preventing homelessness for women and children Winter 2013

Looking Forward

Organizations, like people, reach a stage in their life where they reflect upon their past, asking “where do I go from here?” Throughout 2013, Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties has had the privilege of celebrating 25 years of serving single mothers, their children and those who mentor them. It has been a full year of activities and we are truly honored to be able to recognize this special milestone. But what comes next?

Our new strategic plan has us moving forward serving more single mothers each year. We know there are more and more single mothers out there experiencing homelessness. The piles of applications on our program directors’ desks are proof of that. Yet **donations are down and we are struggling** to support the women currently in our program.



Francesca Crane
Executive Director

What do we need to move forward and serve these families?

1. **More mentors** will allow us to serve more families. They are what make our model work. With mentors, families in our program have the opportunity to develop healthy support systems so that when another season of trouble comes, they have someone to call upon.
2. **Financial commitments** are necessary for the success of our program. It is a difficult fact of life, but we need approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 per family to move them from experiencing homelessness to becoming whole again. We need you to consider a financial commitment. It can be of any size, one time, monthly or through a special event. Many of you may have **matching funds available through an employer**. That would be a real blessing, as would small fundraisers held on our behalf.
3. We must hire **more front line social workers** to work directly with our moms, children and mentors. Each full time social worker can handle a case load of 12 to 15 families. This means that along with the moms they are working with, they support approximately 30 to 40 children and over 100 mentors.

How does Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties impact the community?

- Our community is strengthened when families are stable.
- Each family that becomes financially secure contributes to our community as tax-paying citizens.
- Children in the families become healthier, miss fewer school days and keep classrooms healthier.
- Our graduates are dedicated to remaining employed, further helping their families to remain stable.
- Our mentors discover a deeper understanding of poverty and are trained to handle many new situations which benefits their community, church and relationships.

Please consider joining us in our mission to change and strengthen the lives of single moms, their children and the lives of our mentors. **We need your time and financial gifts now more than ever.** Please help us to meet the growing challenge right here in Lancaster and Chester counties. **Thank you!**

A Mother's Transformation

Personal growth often progresses at an uneven pace; at times it may even be painful, awkward and uncertain. For one recent Bridge of Hope mom, her growth contained several bumps in the road but she wouldn't give up. Join her as she relates her Bridge of Hope experience.

I reached out to Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties with no clue where I was going or what I was going to be doing. I had a 2½-year-old son and was living in an unstable environment with my sick grandmother. At the time I was going to school, taking care of her, myself, and my son, all on a part time job and her fixed income. I didn't know how I was going to survive.

Our staff saw incredible potential in this woman. Her future looked promising, but concern mounted after a few months when communications slowed, she appeared unmotivated to relocate into permanent housing, dropped out of school and reduced her work hours. Finally, she revealed that she was pregnant. She continued on her Bridge of Hope journey, nervous, but trusting in God.

I had no clue how I was going to raise another kid. I could barely make it with the one I already had. I was pregnant and homeless, but God does hear your cry. I made the decision to keep the child I was carrying, to love and provide for him or her no matter what! After a few months, thanks to the support of Bridge of Hope, my family had a home to call our own. I was able to do what I never thought I could, and I was matched with my mentors, just in time for the arrival of my baby.

Both the mom and her toddler were open with mentors and new friendships began. No one could have known the outcome of those relationships, or how deeply and quickly they would grow. She persevered through the birth of her baby and the hospitalization of her toddler, but her employment was disrupted. With the assistance of her mentors, though, she secured a full-time position and renewed her vision for returning to school.



My life before mentors was just going with the flow. I didn't see the potential in me. I thought I'd be another teenaged mom, a statistic. It's amazing to have someone to call and talk to about the day. I cry just hearing someone say "I'm proud of you!" Now I know where I'm going instead of just knowing where I don't want to be. My mentors have watched me grow through my struggles and enjoyed my accomplishments with me. I learned family isn't necessarily the people you live with at home, or relatives, but people who care, love and support you! Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties has given me more opportunities than ever before—I've gone from sleeping on a couch, to a bed with my children, in our home where I can watch them grow. I couldn't ask for anything else.

This mom so wisely noted, "You look at life so differently when you have people behind you." That sums up Bridge of Hope pretty well. We never know how God orchestrates life, what paths will cross or the impact we leave in each others' lives.

A Season for Everything under Heaven

Last week I noticed signs of the changing seasons; birds flying south, beautiful autumn leaves, a cool crisp breeze. Nature's seasons change like clockwork and we recognize each by specific activities; spring planting, summer growth, autumn harvesting and winter hibernation. Our emotional lives have seasons, too. Most everyone enters spring with a feeling of optimism, thrives in the summer, reflects on their accomplishments in the fall, and often feels loss or hopelessness in the dark of winter.

Our Bridge of Hope families often seek help from us during their winter season. Experiencing homelessness can be a very lonely, fearful, desperate period in a family's life. We are honored when a family allows us to walk with them in their winter season, in partnership with their mentors. We are given the opportunity to



Cheryl Miles
Program Director
Chester County

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Upcoming Events

Ten Thousand Villages Shopping Events



December 5, 2013 (Thurs)

4:00-8:00 pm Exton Store

December 8, 2013 (Sun)

1:00-5:00 pm Rockvale Outlets, Lancaster

Ten Thousand Villages will donate 15% of your purchase on each of these days to benefit Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties.

Garden Luncheon



March 15, 2014 (Sat)

Desmond Hotel & Conference Center

We are pleased to announce our speaker for this year, professional photographer Rob Cardillo. For over twenty years he has captured beauty in the garden through photography.

Practical Ways to Help

- Canned vegetables
- Cleaning supplies
- Dish soap
- Laundry detergent
- Paper towels
- Sponges
- Toilet paper
- Trash bags
- Umbrellas



We are currently in need of quality car donations. Please contact our office for more information.

New Mentoring Teams

Downingtown Friends Meeting

Downingtown, Pa.

Forks of the Brandywine

Presbyterian Church

Glenmoore, Pa.

LCBC Lancaster City

Lancaster, Pa.

A Season for Everything under Heaven *(continued)*

provide love, support and resources to help the family become empowered and move toward securing permanent housing and financial stability. We hope this ushers the family into their spring season of hope and possibilities and gradually moves with them into their fall season – celebrating all their hard work and success at their graduation from our program.

Families will continue through these seasons of life after they graduate from our program. We pray that when they encounter another winter season they will be stronger, with supportive friends in the community and increased coping skills to deal with whatever comes their way.

We recently recognized National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, and now look forward to Christmas, a season of giving. Let us seek ways to be available to the many families who are seeking help in the midst their personal winter season of hunger and homelessness.

Special Gifts Recent gifts given with special purpose in honor or in memory of loved ones.

In Honor of:

A 60th Wedding Anniversary
Bill and Barbara Bogle
Rebecca Cuff
Helen E. Kon
Sandy Lewis (25)
Zachary Meck
Chelita Naula
Beth Saylor
Louise Hanley Snyder
Leah Stoltzfus
Linda Witmer (25)
Dorothy Zynn

In Memory of:

Carol J. Amole
Arlene Baker
Edna Brunk
Cora B. Bryer
Kathleen Bryer
Marian Burkey
Evelyn S. Denlinger
Arlene Esbenshade
Mary L. Fosnocht
Edna C. Harman

Judy Harnish
David Hess
Osmond W. Lawrence
Elmer Mast
Peg Mohr
Joanne Myer
Harold Ridpath
Kathy Seamon-McGowan
Ted Steinmetz
Dorothy Stern

If you would like to give a gift to Bridge of Hope Lancaster & Chester Counties in honor of a special person in your life or in memory of a loved one, please indicate that with your gift in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you, Media Sponsors!



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Volunteer Spotlight

Thank you!

On September 6th, a dedicated group of 18 volunteers from the Hempfield School District worked at our new Lancaster office. They cleaned, painted, weeded and made the office shine! The timing was perfect with the open house quickly approaching. Their efforts were part of the United Way Day of Caring. We are so grateful for their cheerful service to our staff, the families we serve and the community.



Staff from the Hempfield School District

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- Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce
- The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Leave a Legacy
- Mennonite Foundation
- Western Chester County Chamber of Commerce
- WRN of Chester County

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