




Annual Report 2012



Every Family. Every Child. Every Time.



The Mission of the Bridge Family Center is to foster the courage and strength in children and families to meet life's challenges and build fulfilling lives.

- Founded in 1969, the Bridge Family Center, Inc., based in West Hartford, is a comprehensive, regional nonprofit agency that provides a broad range of services for children and families throughout the Greater Hartford area.
- The Bridge offers child and family counseling; intervention in times of crisis; prevention programs; supervised after-school alternatives for children and teens; personal development programs for parents, children, and youth; shelter for homeless youth; and assistance with the transition from youth to adulthood.
- The Bridge is recognized as a leader in bringing the community together to assess issues and needs, and plans, coordinates, delivers and evaluates services in a cost-effective manner.
- Last year the Bridge Family Center served more than 8,250 young people and families.
- The Bridge's annual budget is \$7.6 million. Our services are funded by private donations from individuals, foundations, corporations, and organizations; the Town of West Hartford; the State of Connecticut Departments of Children and Families (DCF) and Education.
- The Bridge is governed by a Board of Directors composed of 16 individuals from West Hartford and the Greater Hartford community.
- 198 staff members (88 full-time and 110 part-time) carry out the programs and services of the Bridge. Of our employees, 57% are people of color, and 80% are female.
- More than 175 volunteers assist staff.

Letter from the Executive Director



This year, I have made a point of spending more time with the young people in our residential programs, with our Teen Center kids, and visiting our Family Resource Center programs. I needed to bring myself closer to the heart of the Bridge mission—to witness our work first hand on a deeper level. As Executive Director of the Bridge, I am immersed in our work every day on varying levels, but I needed more.

Our children and families are the center of our work. By eating dinner with the young people in our STAR (Short-Term Assessment & Respite) programs and group home, I was able to witness hope and joy in the kids despite their traumatic circumstances. Our Family Resource Center programs support children and families through numerous school-based programs. The Bridge Outpatient Clinic helps children and families through the darkness and into the light so that they can get back to the business of living.

I am privileged to be able to witness our work up close. I am inspired by the strength of the families we serve, the resolve of the young residents in our programs, and the never ending smiles of the children.

As you read this year's annual report, I hope you are inspired as well. We are so thankful to have the support of our generous donors, board of directors, volunteers and staff. Thank you all so much for your ongoing support.

Very truly,

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Margaret A. Hann". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Margaret A. Hann
Executive Director

A Grandmother Raising Her Granddaughter

The Bridge's Family Resource Center Offers Support

Barbara has been caring for her 5-year-old granddaughter, Lilly, since she was 6 months old. "It's hard," said Barbara. "I'm going on 73 years old." Lilly's mother has ongoing issues and is unable to care for Lilly. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is involved with the family, and there are many challenges. Though other family members are involved, Barbara is Lilly's primary caregiver and advocate.

For a few years, Barbara was home alone with Lilly. She heard about the Bridge's Family Resource Center (FRC) at Charter Oak School through another grandmother caring for her grandchildren. Barbara started taking Lilly to the FRC's early learning playgroups (for children ages birth to 4 and a parent/caregiver) when she was 2½.

"Lilly had difficulty socializing with her peers at first and could not control herself to sit at circle time," said Kim Townsend, a parent educator at the FRC. "In fact, many times, Barbara had to leave because Lilly was disruptive and complaining that she did not like the noise (singing)."

Barbara considered not returning, but having DCF involved with her family, she knew attending was important on many levels. She persisted in going to playgroups, and eventually Lilly was able to participate in all of the activities.

"The group did so much for her," said Barbara. "FRC staff members do wonderful work with children. I could bring her here and she was occupied with things to do, and I learned what to do with her at home. The staff worked with me and helped me out. I feel better, and I'm more relaxed."

Barbara has participated in many other programs at the FRC. She joined the *Grandparents Wisdom Circle*, a bi-weekly support group for grandparents raising their grandchildren. She has attended *Family Academy* and participated in *Pizza and Parenting* workshops and the *Raising Readers* program. Kim paid monthly visits to her home to help with her care of Lilly.

Because Lilly did not go to preschool, she was invited to participate last summer in *1,2,3 Read With Me*, a program for children entering kindergarten in the fall. Now that she is in kindergarten, she also attends *SAIL*,





an FRC after-school enrichment program, which extends her school day and allows Barbara to feel secure knowing that she's in a safe place after school.

"In January, I went to visit our *SAIL* kindergarten group during snack time," said Deborah Zipkin, director of the FRC. "I was sitting at their table, and the kids were very excited about sharing how they spent their time during the winter break. Lilly announced that she hated the holidays. There was actually a shocked silence at the snack table. Then six little voices said 'Why?' and Lilly said, 'Because I couldn't go to school or to *SAIL*.'"

Barbara said, "She loves school, and her teachers say she is a fantastic little girl. She's happy."

"And so," said Kim Townsend, "here in March, more than three years after our first meeting, Lilly eagerly arrives at school each day, happy to learn and greet her friends with hugs. Barbara's perseverance has paid off, and Lilly is thriving at school. She often peeks in the FRC window at dismissal and shouts 'I love you' and runs off. This beautiful little girl has a devoted grandmother who has done everything in her power to give her a bright and healthy future."

The Family Resource Center began operations in 1991 at the Charter Oak International Academy. It later expanded to Smith School and offers programs at several other West Hartford elementary schools. The FRC offers early learning playgroups for preschool children and their parents or caregivers, home visits to monitor child development, adult ESL classes, parent education classes, a parenting library, a toy lending library, parent leadership training, after-school enrichment classes, and many other special activities. Under the direction of Deborah Zipkin, the FRC was designated as a national model by the Edward Zigler Center for Child Development and Social Policy and gained recognition as one of the best ten schools for families in *Working Mother* magazine. Deborah is frequently asked to serve as a consultant to other towns with fledgling FRCs and has given presentations about school-based family support programs at several national conferences.

Community Based Life Skills Program

Preparing Youth in DCF Custody for Future Independence

Since 1988, the Bridge Family Center has offered Community Based Life Skills (CBLS) to teens 15 to 19 years old who live in foster homes and are in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). CBLS helps them to prepare for independent living as they age out of the DCF system.

Each year, the Bridge offers two CBLS sessions with 10 students each. Each session consists of 25 classes and 80 hours of classroom instruction. Each participant is assigned to a life skills instructor and receives 10-30 hours of individual instruction as well, depending on need.

The CBLS program has many components—a core curriculum, a community awareness segment, group work, and individualized instruction. The core curriculum, taught by life skills instructor Nicole Rafala, focuses on both tangible and intangible life skills. Topics covered include social relationships, goal-setting, career planning, smart shopping, transportation, nutrition, and much more. Students are given a community resource guide, and guest speakers from community agencies such as Planned Parenthood provide useful information and serve as contacts for youth.

Field trips are an important part of CBLS. Young people in the fall session went grocery shopping on a budget to Stop & Shop and prepared a group meal. They visited Manchester Community College, Manchester Police Department, and other community sites. Recreation is also integral to the program. The teens go on three one-day activities in each session—hiking on Talcott Mountain, canoeing at the DCF Wilderness School, and bowling.

The emphasis on both self-reliance and community resources encourages the participants to begin assuming responsibility for managing their own lives and helps reduce the isolation they may feel. Group discussions provide the opportunity to discuss their expectations and fears about going out on their own. Peer support helps relieve anxiety as the young people prepare for independence.



Two CBLS participants enjoy socializing at a bowling outing.

Comments on CBLS Evaluation Forms

Selena P.: “I like the big group and knowing everyone around you has something in common.”

Evelyn P.: “I liked meeting new friends. We learned how to manage our own apartment and about saving money.”

Santhalee D.: “This program was very helpful especially college wise. It was helpful to me in deciding what school I wanted to attend.”

Sazshae M.: “I learned so much to get me prepared for my future.”

The CBLS participants are offered incentives to continue the program—\$12.37 for each class attended (60% of the 2011 minimum wage) and a \$125 stipend paid when they successfully complete the program and graduate.

After graduation from CBLS, the young people follow different paths. Many pursue post-secondary education—vocational school, community college, or a university. Some stay successfully in foster homes, some move on to independent living, and those in failed foster homes may go to a group home.

Some CBLS graduates transition into the Bridge's Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP). Begun in 1996, this supervised scattered-site apartment program for DCF youths 17 years and older provides support and guidance on the final step to independent, responsible adulthood. Bryan Block, the director of the Bridge's Independent Living Program (includes CBLS and CHAP), talks to the young people who are graduating from the life skills program about CHAP apartments. Skill development begun in CBLS is put into practice, and the young people begin to put down roots in a community. Full-time education, part-time work, and regular savings are integral to the program. There are currently 37 young people in our CHAP apartments.



A recent CBLS group hiked on Talcott Mountain on a beautiful day.



(l. to r.): Kadisha Zanders, CHAP case manager; Bryan Block, the director of CBLS and CHAP; Marryem Vahidy, CHAP case manager; and Nicole Rafala, the CBLS life skills educator.

Thank you, Generous Donors

Another New Record at Our 14th Annual Children's Charity Ball

Butterflies filled the air at the Hartford Golf Club as 380 guests gathered for the *Children's Charity Ball* on January 19, 2013. The theme for the gala was "Let the Sunshine In"—what we try to do in the lives of the children and families we serve. The golf club was decorated in shades of yellow, gold, and coral.

In spite of challenging economic times, the community was incredibly generous. The entire event with ticket sales, silent and live auctions, the Changing Lives Challenge, a raffle, and a pick-a-flower/win-a-prize table netted more than \$227,000 for Bridge services for children, youth, and families in West Hartford, the Greater Hartford area, and beyond. The Bridge is grateful to a committed and creative group of women who planned the gala; to hundreds of businesses and individuals who sponsored the event or donated items to the silent and live auctions; to many individuals who made monetary donations to support the ball; and to our guests for the evening.

Thank you, thank you.



The Children's Charity Ball Committee (row 1, l. to r.) Carol Lorenzo, Megan Baumgartner, Jane Mielcarek, Lynn Jimenez, Martha Rennie, Judy Bierly, Nancy Kennedy, Margie MacDonnell, and Ellen Sayers. (row 2, l. to r.) Joan Karas, Cheri Stabnick, Beth Ryan, Mary Ellen Flege, Penny Lightner, Dee Newton, Rebecca Holmes, Kara Langan, Mary Butler, Shelley Mendoza, Laury Currier, Gail Lowe, and Cynthia Gutermann. (missing from the photo) Cyndi Brown, Mary Carangelo, Heather Clifford, Lisa Hall, Peggy Johnson, Kristin Magendantz, Debbie McInerney, Ki Miller, Paula Stabnick.

Put next year's date on your calendar: Saturday, January 18, 2014.



Jessica Capone is excited about the bidding in the Live Auction.



The bidding gets lively in the Changing Lives Challenge. Guests were given the opportunity to raise their paddles to support Bridge programs for children and families in amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$100.



Drs. Wendy and Tom Miller



Pascale and Michael Lean enjoy dancing to Shaded Soul.



Dick Fair, Vice President of Customer Service at Pratt & Whitney, the Presenting Sponsor of the Children's Charity Ball, and his wife, Wendy Fair.



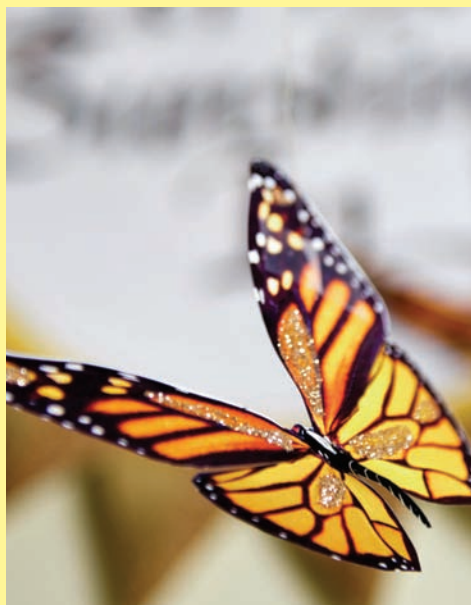
(l. to r.) Dr. Richard and Mary Froeb, and Clem Sayers, long-time supporters of the Children's Charity Ball



Cynthia and Peter Gutermann, Honorary Chairs of the Children's Charity Ball. Peter is Vice President & General Counsel at UTC Propulsion & Aerospace Systems.



Kerry Warren (r.), President of the West Hartford Firefighters Association, Local 1241, offered guests the chance to bid on a child's ride to school in a fire truck, as well as a basket of household fire safety items. Scot Haney, Channel 3 Meteorologist and Co-Host of Better Connecticut, and emcee of the gala for the 12th year, urged guests to bid lively.



One of more than 150 butterflies suspended from the ceiling



Bridge executive director Margaret Hann and her husband, Bill.

Ball Photos by PowerStation Events

Donor Profile: Robert and Francine Goldfarb

Making a Difference for Our Children and Community

Over the years, generous community members have provided steadfast support for the Bridge's mission of helping children and families to overcome life's challenges and build fulfilling lives. Bob and Frankie Goldfarb exemplify the caring and generosity that help us to realize our vision of serving "Every family, every child, every time."

"As West Hartford residents and parents involved in our children's education and activities, we were aware of the Bridge for many years," relates Frankie. "But we got to know the Bridge in much more depth after our friend Ki Miller, a longtime board member, became a trustee of the charitable fund we created in memory of our daughter Ellen Jeanne," who died suddenly during a European performance tour with the Hall High School jazz band in 1992. Through the Trust, Bob and Frankie have provided core support for the Bridge's work with young people, especially at-risk middle- and high-school students.

"We have been impressed by the Bridge's close work with the schools to develop programs and support groups that meet the needs of vulnerable students, keeping programs relevant, timely, and effective," says Bob. From its inception, they have supported the West Hartford Teen Center operated by the Bridge to provide a safe, substance-free place for teens to call their own and receive guidance and mentoring.

Leadership Giving for Kids and Families

In addition to their grants through the Trust, Bob and Frankie provide leadership giving to the Bridge's annual Friendship Campaign and are major sponsors of the Children's Charity Ball. To encourage donations from others, they have twice made challenge grants to match new or increased gifts to the Bridge.

A successful businessman, Bob notes that "the Bridge is a fiscally sound, well-managed organization with strong leadership and dedicated staff and volunteers. It is committed to the well-being and healthy growth of young people in the community and works collaboratively to achieve those goals."

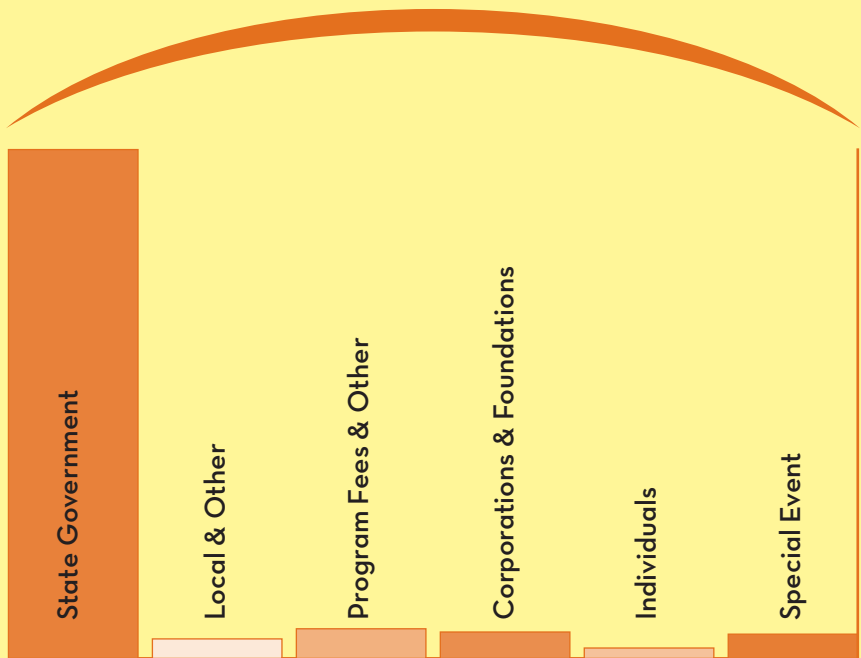
Bob and Frankie know their gifts to the Bridge make a real difference in helping kids and families overcome challenges and turn their lives around. Please join them in supporting the Bridge to build a brighter future for our families and community.



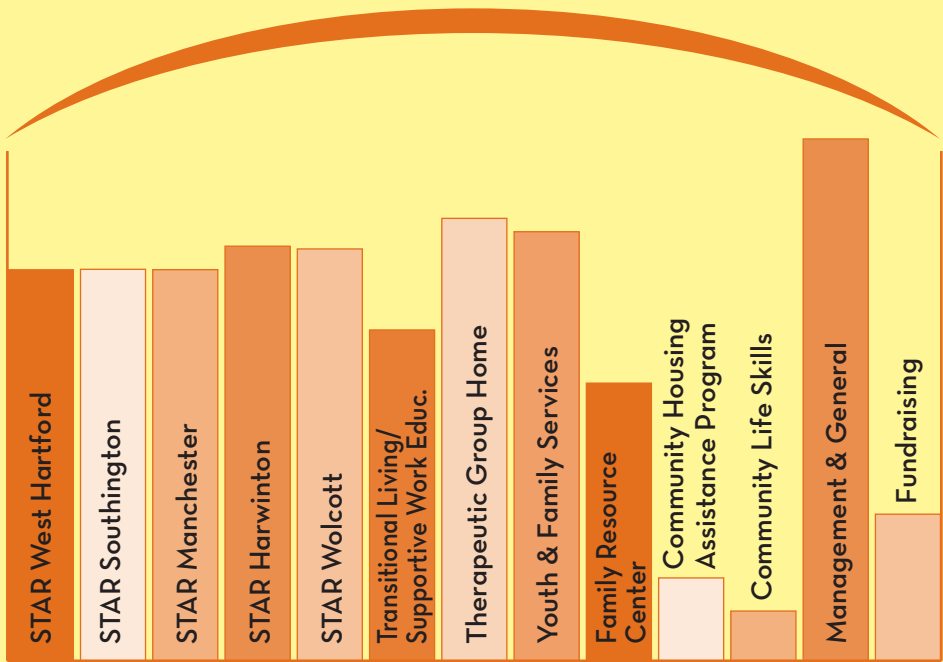
Income and Expenses – Year Ending June 30, 2012

	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
INCOME			
Revenue			
State Govt.	6,203,609		6,203,609
Local and Other	237,651		237,651
Program Fees and other	361,084		361,084
Net assets released from restriction-satisfaction of program purposes	151,310	(151,310)	0
Charitable Contributions:			
Corporations and Foundations	124,245	197,427	321,672
Individuals	126,589		126,589
Special Event	295,359		295,359
Total Income	7,499,847	46,117	7,545,964
EXPENSES			
Program Services			
STAR West Hartford	677,339		677,339
STAR Southington	678,125		678,125
STAR Manchester	677,509		677,509
STAR Harwinton	718,068		718,068
STAR Wolcott	713,350		713,350
Transitional Living/Supportive Work Educ.	573,351		573,351
Therapeutic Group Home	766,185		766,185
Youth and Family Services	743,102		743,102
Family Resource Center	481,379		481,379
Community Housing Assistance Program	144,796		144,796
Community Life Skills	87,518		87,518
Total Program Services	6,260,722		6,260,722
Supporting Services			
Management and General	903,408		903,408
Fundraising	254,952		254,952
Total Supporting Services	1,158,360		1,158,360
Total Expenses	7,419,082		7,419,082
Change in Net Assets	80,765	46,117	126,882
NET ASSETS, beginning of the year	1,469,232	38,570	1,507,802
NET ASSETS, end of the year	1,549,997	84,687	1,634,684

Income



Expenses



Making a Lasting Difference

Thanks to our Special Donors Who Are Supporting the Bridge's Future

Builders for the Future

The Bridge's Planned Giving Society, **Builders for the Future**, honors donors who have made a bequest or other planned gift to support our future and leave a legacy for many generations to come. Joining is simple: just include us in your will and let us know you have done so. Any size gift qualifies you for permanent membership.

We are grateful for this most profound level of support for the Bridge and are proud to recognize the members of *Builders for the Future*:

Lori M. Budnick
Margaret A. Hann
George C. Hastings
Emily W. Rankin
Sali G. Riege



The Bridge Family Center Fund

The Bridge is also pleased to recognize the generous donors to **The Bridge Family Center Fund**, our endowment fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Along with members of *Builders for the Future*, these donors are committed to ensuring our ability to meet the needs of children and families far into the future. Contributors to date are:

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Allan Polack and Deborah Zipkin

You can make a lasting difference for the children and families of our community by making an outright or planned gift, such as a bequest, to The Bridge Family Center Fund. The Hartford Foundation provides management expertise, is a resource for advice on planned giving to the Bridge, and can work directly with you and your advisors on structuring a gift to the Fund.

To learn more about giving to **The Bridge Family Center Fund** or joining **Builders for the Future**, please contact Martha Rennie, Director of Development, at (860) 521-8035 ext. 325 or martha@bridgefamilycenter.org. More information is available on our website, www.bridgefamilycenter.org.

The Bridge Family Center is very grateful to all of YOU— our supporters in fiscal year 2012!

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