

Annual Report 2014



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; support groups for children who are struggling in school; mentoring for boys who need extra support from positive adult role models; supervised after-school alternatives for teens; prevention programs; 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 approximately 7,100 young people and families.
- The Bridge's annual budget is \$8.2 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; and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- The Bridge is governed by a Board of Directors composed of 15 individuals from West Hartford and the Greater Hartford community.
- 193 staff members (83 full-time and 110 part-time) carry out the programs and services of the Bridge. Of our employees, 58% are people of color, and 81% are female. More than 150 volunteers assist staff.

Letter from the Executive Director



Margaret A. Hann Executive Director

The Bridge offers a wide array of services to the children and families who come to us in need. Sometimes we are just a listening ear, or an understanding voice. Other times we provide shelter, food, clothing, and guidance. Whatever the need, the Bridge stands strong amidst the rough seas—we are the unwavering beacon of light in the darkness. We do not give up easily—we work hard to make things happen.

I would like to share this excerpt from a poem entitled "Alone" by Mayo Angelou:

Lying, thinking
Last night
How to find my soul a home
Where water is not thirsty
And bread loaf is not alone
I came up with one thing
And I don't believe I'm wrong
That nobody
But nobody
Can make it here alone.

Neither the Bridge nor the children and families we serve can make it alone. We count on the generosity of our many donors to carry out our mission. As you read this year's Annual Report, please know you played a key role in making sure nobody is left alone. Thank you so much for your continued support of the Bridge.

Very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Margaret Hann", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Margaret A. Hann
Executive Director

Shamar: A Story of Achievement and Happiness

When he was 13 years old, Shamar became involved with the Bridge. There were unresolved issues in his foster home in West Hartford, so he was temporarily placed in a shelter in Shelton, CT. After a short stay there, he was sent to the Bridge Youth Shelter (now Freymann House) in West Hartford. "Shamar had an interesting set of circumstances," said Mike Rulnick, Director of Residential Services. "Our goal was to keep him in West Hartford so he could continue to attend King Philip Middle School and keep his same group of friends. He was with us for more than two years which is highly unusual as most kids are here for two or three months."

Initially, Shamar was unhappy about being at the Bridge—he made that clear to the staff and other residents. But, through group meals, housework, routines, and kindness, the residential staff created a family dynamic within the home. Each resident in our shelters is recognized as a unique person and treated with respect. Eventually, Shamar adjusted and even became a role model for his housemates. "As time went on, I connected with the people at the Bridge and they became a part of my life," said Shamar. "They would show up at my games. We would eat dinner together, do chores together, learn and fight together. All the inner workings of a family."

When Shamar was old enough, he entered our Moving On Project, a program to help boys in the state system of care to become independent as they approach adulthood. He attended Manchester High School.

When Shamar turned 18 he reconnected with his foster parents in West Hartford. After several meetings with Shamar, his family, the Bridge staff, and the Department of Children and Families, it was decided that his home was with his foster family. He graduated from Hall High School in West Hartford in 2009.

Now, at age 24, Shamar attends Quinnipiac University. Prior to that he served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps in both the United States and Japan. He hopes to graduate from college in a year and then follow in his mother's footsteps by attending law school. Shamar recently applied for and is awaiting an answer regarding an internship in Washington, DC for the 2016 spring semester.

Shamar is proud and happy to say that he was recently "officially" adopted by his foster family.

"To see the kind of man that Shamar has become, and to know that we had some role in that, makes me feel like this is all worthwhile," said Mike Rulnick. "It's never for a good reason that young people come to us, but good things can happen while they're here. Good things have happened for Shamar, and as time goes on, good things will continue to happen for him."



A Life-Changing Experience – For DeLisa

A self-assured and poised young woman walked into the Bridge main office last fall with a resume in her hand. "I'd like to speak with the director of human resources, please," she said.

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No, but I sent her a resume and have not heard back, and I really want to work at the Bridge. When I was in sixth grade I participated in your A Bridge Across Ages program and it changed my life," said DeLisa Dixon.

As she waited in the lobby for Amy Raider, Director of Human Resources, DeLisa shared some of the life experiences that brought her back to the Bridge. She spoke with confidence and enthusiasm about the program and her Bridge mentor, Rhoda Steinberg, and of her family and educational path. She made an impression on all of us.

Life Comes Full Circle

DeLisa's parents emigrated from Jamaica to Hartford in search of a better life for their family. They lived in a rough area of Hartford until elementary school when her mother moved the children to West Hartford to take advantage of the public school system. DeLisa attended Smith School and King Philip Middle School.

In 2002, DeLisa's guidance counselor at King Philip recommended her for participation in A Bridge Across Ages, a program run by the Bridge that paired a middle school child with an adult mentor. The young people and their mentors met together once a week for a year. The program focused on homework, good study habits, basic life skills, leadership training, and exposure to other cultures and ways of life through trips to a convalescent home, a soup kitchen, an African dance and drum performance, and more.

DeLisa and Rhoda, a retired West Hartford guidance counselor, connected immediately. DeLisa's mother had younger children to tend to, so Rhoda's attention and advice were an added pleasure. At the end of the program, Rhoda and DeLisa continued to meet about every two weeks. Rhoda saw something special in DeLisa, "a spark," she said. "I saw a well-mannered, sweet girl who clearly had potential. I wanted to encourage her to go as far as she could, personally and academically. I just knew she had it in her."

Years went by and the two continued to meet; their mentorship grew into a friendship. Rhoda would take DeLisa to dinner and they would catch up. "DeLisa never asked for help, but she never refused it either," said Rhoda. "I never pressed her for information about her private or family life. I would listen if she wanted to share something, but I didn't want her to feel pressured or judged." Rhoda was there for DeLisa's milestone accomplishments, including her high school graduation from Conard.

"When I was a senior, Rhoda took me to Capital Preparatory Magnet School to do career research and development," said DeLisa. "I enrolled in Capital Community College before transferring to Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). I recently graduated from CCSU with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in psychology. I'm considering going for a masters in social work."

While at CCSU, DeLisa became engrossed in college life and her studies, and the two friends briefly lost touch. But, during her senior year, Rhoda walked into Trader Joe's in West Hartford to find DeLisa working her way through college. They reconnected instantly and picked up where they had left off. "Rhoda changed my life direction and I am blessed that we have never completely lost touch," said DeLisa. "I wanted to work at the Bridge to give back to the same community that believed in me."

DeLisa's zeal, experience, and personal connection to the Bridge made her a perfect fit to assist the teenaged residents in our shelters. She currently works with the residents at Freymann House, one of our STAR (Short-Term Assessment and Respite) homes. DeLisa Dixon is confirmation that our work matters—we help to make lives better.



Life Lessons for Our Children

Recent unprecedented tragedies have elevated the importance of charity and the spirit of giving on a global level. Images and stories of pain and loss are easily accessible to children on both the news and social media and may lead to anxiety. Parents and teachers are using these difficult events to teach about coping and the importance of charity. Philanthropy is not only reserved for grand-scale disasters and emergencies—there is an ongoing need in our communities for assistance. Many are turning to the Bridge for local opportunities to teach children about the importance of reaching out to those who are struggling or less fortunate.

On a snowy Wednesday before Thanksgiving, these children and their teachers at Bugbee Elementary School took the time to make bookmarks for over 100 children's books that they had brought in for families at our Family Resource Center. Many of these families do not have books in their homes. The students were very excited to be giving something special to other children. We are incredibly thankful for the kindness



and empathy that is being taught in the West Hartford Public Schools.



recipient of the gift—it also spurs a ripple effect of generosity through the community. These teens organized a book drive for the children and families in our Family Resource Center at Charter Oak Academy. Judy Bierly, our Director of Community Services, went to the school to pick up several boxes of books. "The kids were just great—all smiles, proud, polite, and energetic," Judy commented. "They worked together and filled the back



of my car with the books. They made me happy and hopeful for the next generation." Hats off to the Community Service Club and to the educators and administrators who are teaching these children the benefits of caring for individuals in their community.



In April, co-directors of the Hall High Jazz Band, Haig Shahverdian and John Mastroianni, led the students in a "Trip Down Memory Lane" for our senior

citizens. The event is sponsored annually by the Bridge as part of our Tune-In to Life week. Seniors gathered to dance and listen to music from their generation performed beautifully by the talented young musicians. The senior citizens clearly love the music and the high school students who gave up their spring afternoon were clearly entertained by the reception they received.



Empowering our young people to help those in need creates a future generation who will give back to the world. The Bridge and the community in which we live thrives because of generous and charitable people like these.

Our 16th Annual Children's Charity Ball



Diamonds shimmered, lanterns glowed, and the energy was palpable at the Hartford Golf Club as 370 guests gathered for the Children's Charity Ball on January 17, 2015. The theme for the gala was "Light Up a Life," echoing the mission of the Bridge, "to foster the courage and strength in children and families to meet life's challenges and build fulfilling lives."

Once again, our community was incredibly generous. The entire event with ticket sales, silent and live auctions, Restaurant Row, Grab and Go, a raffle of seven beautiful light-themed baskets, and the Changing Lives Challenge netted more than \$240,000 for Bridge services for children, youth, and families in West Hartford, the Greater Hartford area, and beyond. The Bridge is grateful to an incredible group of women who spent months planning 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; to our team of gala volunteers; and to our guests for the evening.

Thank you, thank you.

Put next year's date on your calendar:
Saturday, January 23, 2016.



Let the bidding begin. Peter Macdonald raises his paddle to bid.



Andrea and Michael Saunders look over the silent auction.



2015 Children's Charity Ball Committee poses for a photo before guests arrive.

Front row (l-r): Nancy Hunt, Nancy Kennedy, Laura Giannone, Judy Bierly, Martha Rennie, Lynn Jimenez, Mary Butler, Heather Clifford, Kara Langan.

Back row (l-r): Megan Baumgartner, Paula Stabnick, Carol Lorenzo, Laury Currier, Cyndi Brown, Shelley Mendoza, Ellen Sayers, Dee Newton, Beth Ryan, Cheri Stabnick, Mary Ellen Flege, Sue Healey, Kara Flanagan. Missing from the photo: Amanda Aronson, Suzanne Bell, Cathy Brewer-Mancini, Rebecca Holmes, Margaret Johnson, Penny Lightner, Kristin Magendantz, Lori Pennito.



Friends Dick Cartland and Barbara Foley enjoy a fun moment.



Lynn and Doug Knight, Reid and Riege, a Sapphire Sponsor of the gala.



Frank Appicelli, Sean Flanagan, Andreas Kapetanopoulos, and Kurt Ahlstrand.



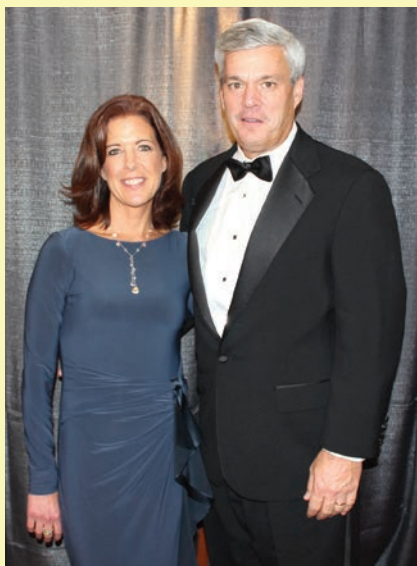
Honorary Chairs Jane Lehman and Matt Winter (in the center of the second row) of Allstate Insurance Company pose with the Allstate team that attended the gala. Matt is the president of The Allstate Corporation and chief executive officer of the Allstate Life Insurance Company. Jane is an attorney, community volunteer, and serves on the Bridge Board of Directors.



The jacket is off. Cathy and Martin Woods are ready to dance.



Bridge Executive Director Margaret Hann and emcee of the gala Scot Haney.



Mary and Paul Butler, Platinum Sponsors of the gala, pose for a photo. Mary is on the ball committee and vice president of the Bridge Board of Directors.



Laura Giannone is very excited about the bidding in the Live Auction.

35 Donors Join New Leadership Circle

Thirty-five generous donors were honored at the Bridge's 2014 annual meeting for stepping up to become charter members of the brand new **Bridge Leadership Circle**. These caring supporters have pledged \$1,000 or more annually for three years to build a solid foundation the Bridge can count on for its critical work. Their outstanding commitment will help ensure a bright future for the children and families we serve.

Leadership Circle members receive invitations to special events, program tours with executive director Margaret Hann, insider information updates, and recognition in our annual report. Laura Giannone, who went on the first tour last May, said, "It was very impactful and I hope others who contribute to all the good things you all do take the time to go and visit these great places in West Hartford - it really makes a difference."

Charter members of the Leadership Circle are:

Amanda and Scott Aronson
Verónica and Carlos Badiola
John and Judy Bierly
Patricia Bowen and Stan Guzek
Cynthia and Scott Brown
Lori M. Budnick
Robert and Barbara Burke
Paul and Mary Butler
Jeffrey and Jessica Capone
Anne and Jim Carroll
Judy and Olaf Casperson
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Robert and Deborah Katz
Robert and Dawn Koff
Kara and Kevin Langan
Robert and Tamara Laurie
Jane Lehman and Matthew Winter
Carol and Tom Lorenzo
Kristin and Christopher Magendantz
Ki and Tuck Miller
Eric and Martha Rennie
Beth and Mark Ryan
Ellen and Clem Sayers
Brian Smith and Kim McClain
Dick and Cheri Stabnick

To learn about the Leadership Circle and how **you** can make a difference for children and families, please contact Martha Rennie, Director of Development, at 860.521.8035 ext. 325 or martha@bridgefamilycenter.org.



Sharing a Passion for Children and Community

From the beginning, caring community members have given of themselves to fulfill the Bridge's mission of helping children and families overcome life's challenges and build fulfilling lives. Jane Lehman and Matthew Winter share our passion for building a stronger, healthier community and have contributed their "time, talent, and treasure" to help realize our vision of serving *Every family, every child, every time.*

Although Jane knew about the Bridge when they previously lived in West Hartford, she first became involved when they moved back after five years in Houston. Their friends Mark and Eileen Seiger recommended the Bridge as an agency similar to one Jane had been involved with in Houston that worked to improve children's lives. Through her work with the West Hartford Early Childhood Partnership, Jane met Deborah Zipkin, director of the Bridge's Family Resource Center (FRC), and learned about our new Parent Leadership Training Institute. Jane joined the inaugural class in 2011 and, as her community service project, worked to expand the FRC to Webster Hill Elementary School. Jane's interest, experience, and deep passion for children made her a great fit for the Bridge board.

As Matt put it, "Jane liked all the component pieces of the Bridge, and we became quick fans of the FRC, which helps younger children at the most vulnerable ages." Jane and Matt generously support our *1,2,3 Read With Me* summer program for children entering kindergarten, many of whom come from non-English speaking families and have never attended preschool. They have visited and volunteered in the program and are pleased with its demonstrated improvements in children's vocabularies and overall school readiness.



Acting Locally for Shared Values

As president of The Allstate Corporation and CEO of the Allstate Life Insurance Company, Matt serves on several national nonprofit boards, but notes that he likes the local, tangible involvement he and Jane have with the Bridge. They have been involved in multiple ways: hosting a *Bridge Evening* for donors to hear children's personal stories about how the Bridge has made a difference in their lives; serving as Honorary Chairs of this year's Children's Charity Ball, which raised more than \$240,000 for Bridge services; and holding the first Bridge Leadership Circle event in their home for our most committed donors. Jane also serves on the Bridge's development committee and is a thoughtful voice in planning and discussions.

"Margaret Hann is a great leader, and the longevity and devotion of staff speak volumes," Jane says. "The Bridge is effectively and efficiently run and makes good use of its resources, making it a great investment in the community," says Matt. "It's rare when you find an organization which shares your core values. The Bridge overlaps hugely with what we believe in - providing grassroots help for the most vulnerable, and at a time when the government continues to cut back." As Jane puts it, "The Bridge performs a vital function in the community and enriches all our lives—not just the clients' lives."

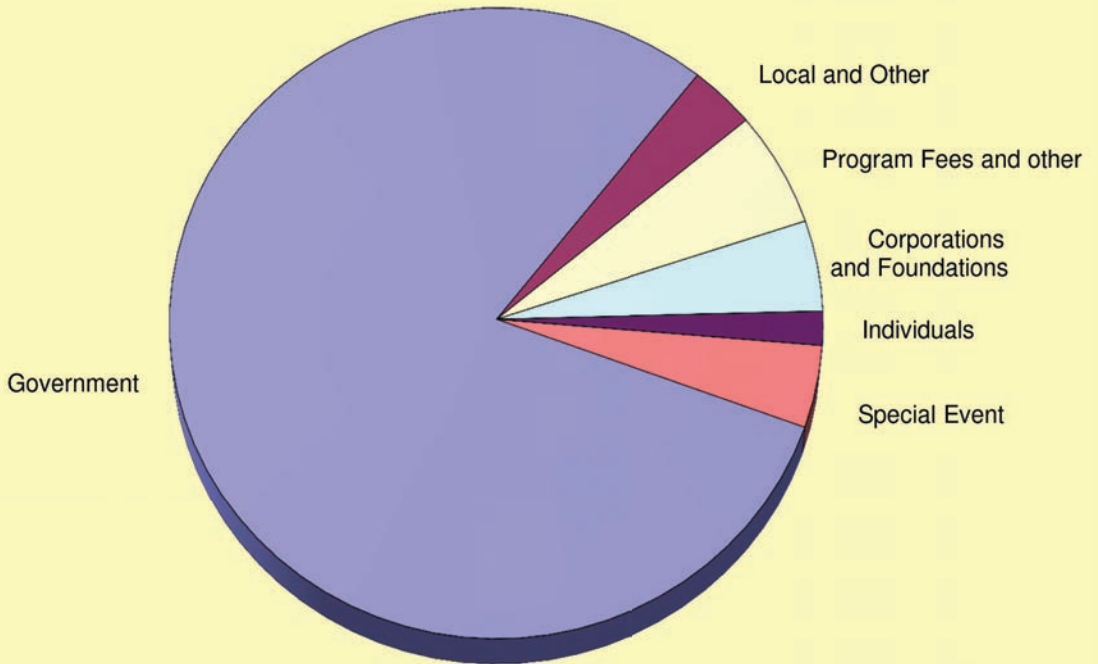
Jane and Matt agree that what they contribute to the Bridge, both as donors and volunteers, brings great personal rewards. "I feel like I'm getting back multi-fold because of the passion we put into it," says Jane. "People don't always realize how fortunate they are," adds Matt. "When you give back, you gain by knowing you have made a difference for others." Please join Jane and Matt in supporting the Bridge to build a brighter future for our families and community.

Income and Expenses - Year Ending June 30, 2014

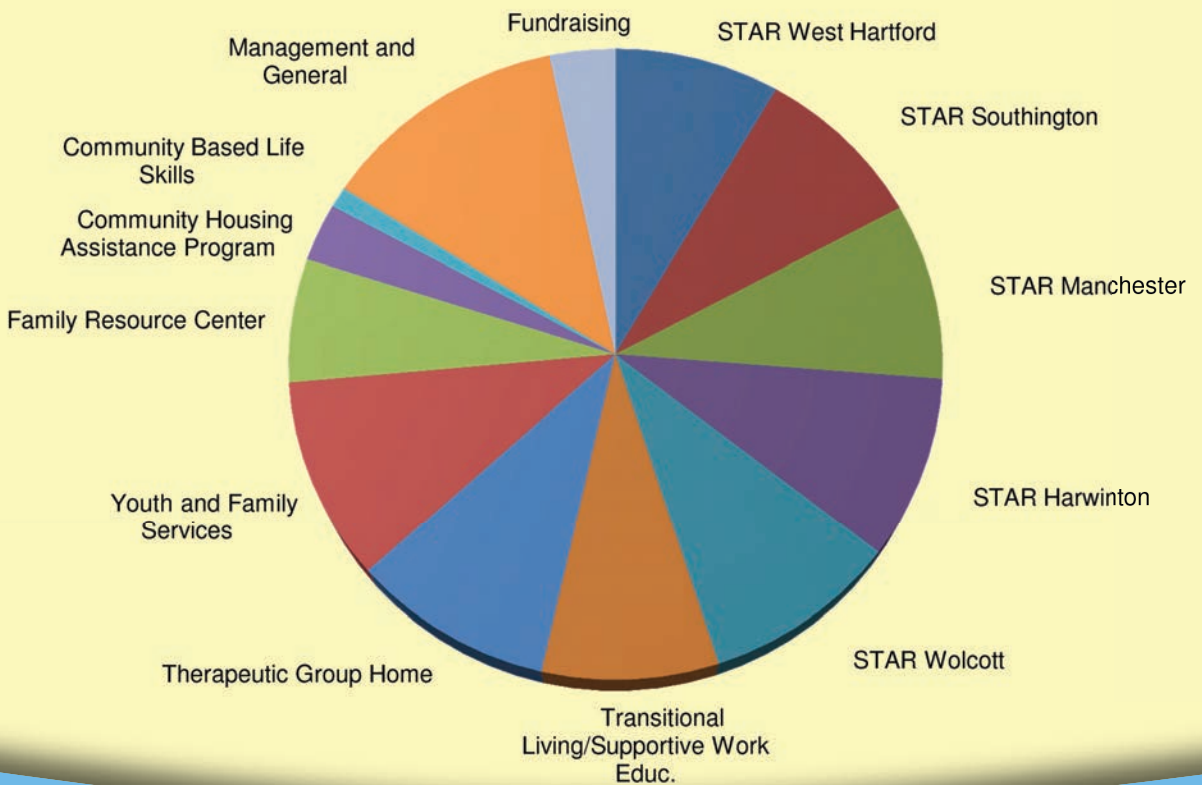
The Bridge Family Center, Inc.

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
INCOME			
Revenue			
Government	6,468,629		6,468,629
Local and Other	267,695		267,695
Program Fees and other	477,939		477,939
Net assets released from restriction-satisfaction of program purposes	232,754	(232,754)	0
Charitable Contributions:			
Corporations and Foundations	104,608	270,084	374,692
Individuals	140,101		140,101
Special Event	340,799		340,799
Total Income	8,032,525	37,330	8,069,855
EXPENSES			
Program Services			
STAR West Hartford	652,238		652,238
STAR Southington	676,500		676,500
STAR Manchester	698,516		698,516
STAR Harwinton	719,254		719,254
STAR Wolcott	733,958		733,958
Transitional Living/Supportive Work Educ.	652,451		652,451
Therapeutic Group Home	752,376		752,376
Youth and Family Services	797,236		797,236
Family Resource Center	489,360		489,360
Community Housing Assistance Program	230,035		230,035
Community Based Life Skills	82,687		82,687
Total Program Services	6,484,611		6,484,611
Supporting Services			
Management and General	981,595		981,595
Fundraising	257,924		257,924
Total Supporting Services	1,239,519		1,239,519
Total Expenses	7,724,130		7,724,130
Change in Net Assets	308,395	37,330	345,725
NET ASSETS, beginning of the year	1,949,083	112,380	2,061,463
NET ASSETS, end of the year	2,257,478	149,710	2,407,188

Income



Expenses



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.

Our newest member is Greg Hammond, president of Hammond Iles Wealth Advisors and a strong proponent of planned giving as a way to leave a legacy that reflects one's values. He and his wife, Karen, are West Hartford residents and long-time Bridge supporters. Greg named the Bridge as a beneficiary of his IRA along with three other charities, stating, "I am thrilled to include The Bridge Family Center in my planning to show my support for its mission and the great work your organization performs in our community. I hope my gift will serve as an example that it is never too early to think, dream, and plan for the impact and legacy you want to make with your life. I encourage everyone who supports The Bridge and its mission to consider joining me in becoming a *Builder for the Future*."

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
David L. Clay
Greg Hammond
Margaret A. Hann

George C. Hastings
Nancy Clinton Parker
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 this year are:

John and Judy Bierly
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Martha and David Sanborn
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George and Mary Wiseman

* New contributor

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 2014!**

Heroes (\$10,000+)

Robert and Francine Goldfarb
Jane Lehman and
Matthew Winter

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*Donor to endowment fund

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Pat and Michael Tyler
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Brian and Diane Vitale
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Corey Walker and Audrey Sorgen
Phil and Linda Ward
Bill and Liz Wilcox
Terri Winger

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Jeanne Auerbach
Chris and Stephanie Barnes
Ariane and Jerome Barrillon
Paul Bobruff and Family
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Sally Catena and Family
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Dr. and Mrs. William Conrad
Jill Coscarelli

*Donor to endowment fund

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