Thank You to Our Fundraising Partners!

Late summer and fall have been a time for several fundraising initiatives by community partners in support of Bridges. These donations are invaluable to Bridges to help us provide vital services to our most vulnerable citizens. Please visit bridgesct.org for a more complete list of sponsors and organizational supporters.

Rambling Inn at the MAC

On August 29, Bridges was the Milford non-profit to benefit from the Next Stop Thursdays Rambling Inn social hour at the Milford Arts Center. Hosted by Discover Milford and The MAC, nearly 100 supporters gathered on a beautiful summer evening.

Folks on Spokes Ride/Step Forward Walk

Next up was Bridges’ 29th Annual Folks on Spokes and Step Forward Memorial Walk on September 21. With the support of dozens of sponsors, including major sponsors The Milford Bank, Subway, Barrett Outdoor, Tony’s Bikes and Sports, Rose & Kiernan and The Schuster Group, and many other sponsors, plus 400 riders, walkers and volunteers, Bridges realized $26,000 in net proceeds.
Slackers .5K - The Easiest Race Ever!

On October 27, dozens of hearty folks, many in costume braved torrential downpours and wind to take part in the 2nd Annual Arciuolo’s Shoes & Eli’s Tavern Slacker .5K and after party, raising $1,500 for Bridges. Thank you to all who supported this fun and silly event, especially Matt Arciuolo, his family and team, and the great crew at Eli’s Tavern!

We’d also like to thank Stevens Ford who donated $900 to Bridges from their Charity of the Month program last summer.

An successful event hosted by Tribus Brewery was held on Nov. 20. Tribus will donate a portion of the evening’s proceed, as will Liberty Rock Tavern, for Bridges to provide Mental Health First Aid Training to First Responders and Nurses who are dealing with an increasing rate of suicides and drug overdoses.

Please Remember Bridges this Giving Season

As we begin a new season of giving, Bridges is grateful for the support of so many in the communities we serve – individuals, families, businesses, civic and faith-based organizations who contribute financially and with in-kind and volunteer donations each year.

Recovery Support

This giving season, we hope you will remember our clients, who turn to Bridges in their most desperate times. With your help, they can change the trajectory of mental health and substance use disorders that have affected them, and recover to live full and rewarding lives.

Hugs abound at a holiday party for parenting teens and young adults hosted by Bridges B-SAFE Project and supported by area churches.
often their only lifeline, with services such as mobile crisis response, intensive in-home psychiatric services for children at risk of separation from their family, outpatient therapy and medication management for adults and children, primary healthcare for individuals with chronic mental and physical health conditions, outreach and support for young adults experiencing challenges, and more programming which promotes a better quality of life in our communities.

**Your Donation Makes a Difference**

If you want to help improve the lives of thousands of individuals, from young children to seniors through quality mental healthcare, please give today, securely online at BridgesCT.org. Or mail your gift to Bridges Healthcare Development Office, 949 Bridgeport Ave. Milford, CT 06460.

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**Bridges Elects New Board Chair, Board Members**

The Board of Directors of Bridges Healthcare elected Michelle LeMere as the new Board Chair to serve a term of 2 years. Ms. LeMere has been involved with Bridges as a board member, past chair and volunteer for more than two decades.

“I am excited to continue to support and serve as an ambassador for the Bridges’ team as we enter 2020, a decade that will surely bring growth, change and challenge to the agency, and to the mental health and addiction recovery provider system,” said Ms. LeMere.

New board members elected to two year terms are Kathleen Hendricks of West Haven, Jessica Simone of Orange and Justin Rosen of Milford. For a full list of Bridges Board of Directors please visit bridgesct.org.

Those completing their board terms are former chair Shaun Mee and Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas. We thank them for their many years of service to Bridges. CEO John Dixon commented, “Bridges has been fortunate to gain from the knowledge and experience of so many dedicated board members over the years. Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas has been an exceptional member and a strong advocate for Bridges and our clients. Shaun Mee took on many roles including Board Chair throughout his tenure and brought a steady hand to guide the board through a number of changes. We thank them both for their service and wish them well for the future.”

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**MATT’s Van is Saving Lives**
Since Bridges launched the State’s first Mobil Addiction Treatment Team van (MATT’s Van) in April, 2019, nearly 40 adults have entered treatment for opiate use disorder, giving them a chance to live a healthy, productive life. “While 40 may not seem like a large number, it represents 40 lives saved from potential death,” said Dr. Tara Kerner, Bridges’ Medical Director. “Taking the first step to begin treatment is very hard – finding a provider, making an appointment, waiting to be seen by a clinician all take time, something that is crucial when you are using a lethal substance or in withdrawal. For some people, that time makes the difference between taking a step towards recovery or continuing to use substances.”

**Reaching Those with Opioid Use Disorder Where They Are Makes the Difference in Recovery**

By providing street-side services, MATT’s Van removes those barriers by getting people into treatment at a critical point in their lives. The van is staffed by doctor or nurse and a Recovery Coach. Prescriptions are given on site and rapid referrals to follow-up treatment services are provided, along with ongoing support and communication with the MATT’s van team. Feedback from clients has been overwhelmingly positive, including comments like: “I have reached 3 months of sobriety and am still going strong. I can’t thank you enough.” “You guys being there very possibly saved my life.”

**Pet Partners Animal Therapy**

Recently, Chris, the MATT’s Van Recovery Support Specialist has started to accompany clients of the van to 12-step meetings. “Walking into a mutual help group can be daunting. Having someone with their own lived experience by your side makes it a little less intimidating,” said Chris. Another new program on the van is the presence of a therapy dog. MATT’s van partnered with Pet Partners Animal Therapy and every Tuesday ‘Biscuit’ and his owner join the van staff to help newcomers ease into treatment. The success of these two initiatives has led us to adding these services to Bridges’ main location in Milford as well.

Biscuit has joined the clients at Bridges’ Open Door Wellness Center, (ODWC) and will soon be joining our Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), which focuses on treating people living with both mental illness and addiction. The IOP is just one of the many groups we offer that focus on achieving recovery from addiction. Whether it is through medication, group therapy, individual therapy, pet therapy or 12-step meetings, our clinicians, prescribers and recovery support specialists are there to help you through it. The option of
joining our recovery coach at an AA meeting is now open to all clients at Bridges. “Whether a client starts their treatment on the van or in a clinical setting, the evidenced-based, best practice is a combination of medication, therapy and mutual support groups which offer the best chance for recovery,” noted Dr. Kerner.

**MATT’s Van** parks at the Beth El Center, 90 New Haven Ave., Milford on Mondays from 11-1 and by the West Haven Green, across from West Haven City Hall, 355 Main St. on Tuesday and Wednesday from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. No appointment or insurance is needed, or those interested in services can call or text 203-494-5811. Services are funded through a grant from the CT Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

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**The Caring Network**  
**A Partnership That Helps Those in Grief**

Cody-White Funeral Home and Bridges Healthcare are co-sponsors of the Caring Network, a partnership that started more than a decade ago to meet the needs of those grieving the loss of a loved one. The Caring Network is a program that offers support from others who share an experience of loss. Members of The Caring Network benefit from spending time with others who will listen, share coping strategies, and offer encouragement during this grief journey, in a very safe and caring environment.

“Grief is a long term process and very individual. Mourning is the path we follow towards healing and involves a gradual shift from looking backwards to how things were to looking forward,” said Caring Network Facilitator, Brooke Torres, M. Ed. “Members have also benefited by finding comfort in knowing they are not alone as they process their grief and adjust to being without their loved one. Some members have formed friendships outside of the meeting time as they walk their grief journey and bring peace and support to each other.”

The group meets the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Bridges Healthcare main offices. Adults do not need to register. For more information please call Cody-White Funeral Home at 203.693.9062 or Brooke Torres at 203.878.6365, ext. 480.

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**United Way of Milford and Bridges Healthcare - Partners in the Community Since 1957**

Bridges Healthcare is a proud partner agency of the United Way of Milford (UWM). We are especially grateful for their continued and generous support of our Outpatient Mental Health and Addictions programs and our B-SAFE Project, which promotes healthy choices and responsible decision-making, with information and education on sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy prevention, cyber-bullying, body image, healthy relationships and referrals to relevant community resources. Each year Bridges employees pledge several thousand dollars to the UWM through Bridges’ Employee Giving
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