

Partners in Hope

Supportive friendship for lasting impact

Trusting God to Help Us Change Lives

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

As I write this message for the July Newsletter, it is the 4th of July weekend. Most of us are thinking of cookouts, time with family and friends, upcoming vacations, relaxing by the pool, or maybe a round of golf.

Now imagine you are a single mother with three children under the age of 10 who finds herself and her children without a place to live because she made the difficult decision to leave her husband, who was physically and mentally abusive to herself and the children. (Our article on page 2 discusses some of the trauma experienced from mental abuse.)

She has a 12-year-old car, some clothing for everyone, a full-time job paying \$19/hour, and a little bit of cash, but not enough for a security deposit on an apartment plus the first month's rent.

One shelter has space for her and the children but no daycare. It's far from her employment, meaning gas will be expensive.

Like most of us, she faces other life challenges, such as her son's autism diagnosis and the need for therapeutic intervention to help him cope, and her daughter's medical conditions, including asthma.

But right now, she can't begin to focus on those issues. Her priorities are keeping her family safe and secure, maintaining her job, and figuring out the SNAP program (food stamps).

A hand-up is desperately needed to help her get the money for an apartment so she and her children can have a place to call home and connect with some friends and neighbors.

At this point, Bridge of Hope Harrisburg Area comes into her story. We provide the additional money she needs for the security deposit and rent. We connect her to a group from a local church that provides support, mentorship, a helping hand for moving into the new apartment, and a listening ear.

We call these people **Neighboring Volunteers**, and with our professional Case Management staff, we work to help this family move forward.

We can help because God has blessed us with generous supporters, businesses, and churches who walk through life with our moms.

With effort, perseverance, hope, Christian love, and a team of folks behind her, this mom and her family can reach a place where they can think about picnics, spending time with friends, and just having fun.

We at Bridge of Hope Harrisburg Area are privileged to be part of making this happen.

It's amazing how God uses our unique skills, strengths, and talents to help change these families lives!

We give thanks to all of you for your love and support!

Kevin Lutz
Executive Director

Surviving Trauma

UNDERSTANDING THE TRAUMA OF EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Homelessness is a traumatic experience, and for most moms in our program, it's compounded by the trauma they've experienced as a child or an adult through abusive relationships. Studies have shown that more than 90% of mothers experiencing homelessness have experienced some sort of interpersonal violence. (Bassuk, et al., 2014).

Trauma is an event or series of events that cause extreme fear or terror. It is a sensory experience stored deeply in the brain's recesses and impacts brain development, functioning, and relational and emotional health. Unaddressed, the experience of trauma can lead to depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD), and academic and physical health concerns.

The trauma of physical abuse is often accompanied by verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, which can leave wounds as deep as physical abuse. The damage to a woman's soul, mind, and spirit from this abuse is profound.

Verbal abuse refers to regular and consistent belittling, name-calling, labeling, or ridicule of a person; but it may also include spoken threats. It is one of the most difficult forms of abuse to prove because it does not leave physical scars or other evidence, but it is nonetheless hurtful.



Verbal abuse may occur in schools or workplaces as well as in families. <https://psychcentral.com/health/what-is-verbal-abuse#definition>.

Emotional or psychological abuse covers a variety of behaviors that hurt or injure others, even though no physical contact may be involved. In fact, emotional abuse is a stronger predictor than physical abuse of the likelihood of suicide attempts in later life. One form of emotional abuse involves the destruction of someone's pet or valued possession in order to cause pain. Another abusive behavior is emotional blackmail, such as threat-

ening to commit suicide unless the other person does what is wanted. Other behaviors in this category include the silent treatment, shaming or humiliating someone in front of others, or punishing them for receiving an award or honor. <https://psychcentral.com/lib/types-of-abuse#2>.

Verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse attacks one's sense of identity and destroys a person's belief in their ability to change their life pattern. Daily, victims hear they are no good, stupid, incompetent, the cause of the abuser's behavior, or deserving of the abuse. Repeated insults and humiliation over time can destroy a person's self-esteem - victims feel hopeless and may start believing they are worthless or that the abuse is their fault.

While the effects of trauma on a family can be devastating, research indicates that relationships can move individuals and families beyond their traumatic experiences and encourage healing.

hood provide love and care sensitive to this trauma, working to assure physical, psychological, and emotional safety for all members of the Neighborhood. ■

Relationships within a Bridge of Hope Neighbor-

47 percent of homeless school-aged children and 29 percent of homeless children under age five have witnessed domestic violence in their families (American Civil Liberties Union, 2008)

Loving God and Our Neighbor

As part of a trauma-informed approach to serving our moms, families receive a comprehensive assessment, including physical, spiritual, emotional, and behavioral health, education, child development, and parenting; and they are offered the opportunity to participate in standardized screenings. They also are given the opportunity to build strong relationships that have been missing in their lives.

In Mark 12:29-31, Jesus names the two greatest commandments: to love God and neighbor. Neighboring Volunteers demonstrate the love of Jesus through open



hearts and hands as they create intentional relationships that evolve from strangers to acquaintances to friendships that often last long after the mom has exited the program.

With the help of therapy and her Neighboring Volunteer group, one of our moms was able to start healing from years of mental and physical abuse from her parents.

Her living conditions were so unbearable that she left her home as a teenager when she found out she was pregnant. She is raising her child alone, and the support of her Neighboring Volunteers is vital to her success in life and this program. They have given her the family support that she does not have from her biological parents.

Through her Neighborhood of Support, our mom has moved into her own apartment, found childcare, and trained for and obtained a new job. In addition, her Neighboring Volunteers helped furnish her apartment and secure a car for transportation to work.

Families served by Bridge of Hope Harrisburg Area deal with more than just a lack of housing. Our Neighborhood model recognizes this vital fact and focuses on all the needs of the mom and her children to build strong and resilient families that live in safe and stable housing. ■

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.'
Mark 12:30-31

Reaching Goals

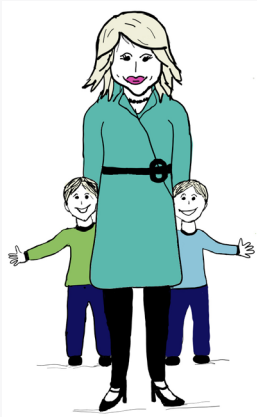
*determination.
hope.
dreams.*

Our families are best supported when empowered to develop their own goals and dreams. We're pleased to share some goals of our moms:

- Faith is working toward increasing her income and improving age-appropriate parenting skills.
- An anonymous mom enrolled in a certification program and received a grant partially covering the cost.
- Carla loves her new position, and with Fridays off, she can schedule medical appointments for her daughter.
- Margaret is exploring a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) curriculum.
- Ali is now working from home, addressing her health issues, and working toward increasing her savings.
- Cathryn is a part-time nurse's assistant and began training for a medical assistant certification.
- Despite her children's health issues, Bryana is taking classes to start her own health aid company.
- Mia loves her new job and is continuing her training as a medical assistant.

Congratulations Amy!

We're pleased to announce that Amy has graduated from our program! We're so proud of her and thankful for her Neighboring Volunteers who supported her along her journey.



Before Bridge of Hope Harrisburg Area, Amy had a job far from her children and lived with other people without room for her children. She would go several agonizing weeks without seeing them.

"Emotionally we all were hurting and longing for stability and consistent time together," Amy shared. "Financially, I was struggling to provide for them and myself."

Her children were looking for answers she didn't have about where they would live.

"I told them what faith really meant and how even though we couldn't see how it was going to work out, we had to believe that God would take care of us," said Amy.

Some of Amy's goals were to grow in her career, finish her degree in business management, continue to grow in her relationship with her Neighboring Volunteers, and save to own her own home. She has made much progress toward those goals.

Today, Amy has secured a full-time job she loves; her children are thriving in school and are involved in summer activities. She developed strong bonds of friendship with her Neighboring Volunteers, and Amy looks forward to joining a Neighboring Volunteer group so she can be a neighbor to a new mom.

Congratulations to Amy, and thank you to our donors who help change lives! We are ending homelessness one family at a time in Dauphin, Cumberland, and York counties. ■

The mission of Bridge of Hope Harrisburg Area is to engage Christian Faith Communities in ending family homelessness through neighboring relationships that demonstrate Christ's love.