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The mission of the Bridge Youth Center is to be a place where all kids are kept Safe, Loved and Valued, surrounded by caring community members who share Christ's love in all that they do.

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Building Connections

It's hard to believe that the 2023-2024 school year is now in its 3rd month! Back in August, we worried about how the kids would get down to the Bridge with all the construction in front of our building. Even more concerning was whether parents would battle the road closures to come pick their kids up after pro-



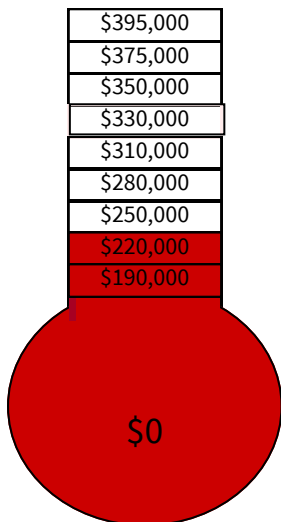
gramming. God must be laughing a bit at our lack of faith as He has found a way to bring more students our way than ever! I guess that is His way of taking care of things we can not control. Special thanks to the folks at Site Works Solutions for all the extra they do to keep those of

us on the construction block as happy as possible, while continuing to do a great job everyday! Back in June, we began to see many new students getting involved through our expanded summer programming. Our staff welcomed the new faces and devoted much of the summer to getting to know each kid and develop deeper relationships. Day trips to Saugatuck, John Ball Zoo, State Park, Kayaking, Fredrick Meijer Gardens and Michigan Adventure highlighted our Wednesday trips, while drop-in, car washes, hikes and movie days helped provide kids a safe place to spend their summer. The overwhelming favorite event of the summer was our trip to Cran-Hill Ranch. From bus breakdowns, to camp food, to sleeping in cabins, 35 kids and leaders had an unbelievable opportunity for new experiences

and deeper connections. Activities included tubing down the Muskegon river, hiking, horseback riding, swimming, capture the flag, kayaking, trips to the barn store, bon-fires, smores, star-gazing and so much more.



Our time at camp was also built around the study of Jonah, the reluctant servant. We learned about getting out of our comfort zone, recognizing God's leadership in our lives and the plan he has set out for each of us. By the end of the summer, our staff was wiped out having invested in a record number of kids. Relationships can be draining, but the reward for caring so deeply provides overflowing results.



The 17th Annual Bridge Campaign

OPERATING BUDGET FUNDRAISING DRIVE
As with any non-profit, our annual fundraising drive is essential to our operational support. This year has been a bit more challenging financially, so we are asking you to help us meet our needs. As of the first of November, we are \$172,000 short of our 2023 annual budget. Please help us meet our operating expenses so that we can, with God's help, continue to meet the needs of our community kids.

Programs - From then 'til Now

It's hard to believe that September 11, 2022 marked the 22nd anniversary for The Bridge Youth Center. As a response to overwhelming community support, the center opened in 2001 as a weekly Drop-In Center for area youth. The Bridge Youth Center was established as a non-profit 501(c)3 with its own governing board.

Since the fall of 2006, the Bridge has expanded into a 5 days a week youth center. Programming is provided for kids every school day and throughout the summer months. In addition, food and mentoring are provided for all programming as well.

Programs include:

- Drop-In – started in 2001 – several churches help to provide food & volunteers



- Bridge to Excellence – started in 2006 – Partnering with Zeeland Public Schools & First Tee
- Suspending Bridges – started in 2006 – Partnering with ZPS, Ace Hardware, Mainstreet Bicycle Shop
- I am Third – started in 2006 – Partnering with the Police Department, Faith Reformed Church, Teachers and Innotec
- Bridging Out – started in 2009 – Partnering with Zeeland City, Harvest Stand, Royal Park, Zeeland Museum and numerous others



- It's Amazing – started in 2013 – Partnering with Young Life and Bethel CRC



- In-School Mentoring – started in 2014 – Partnering with ZPS
- Skills for Life – started in 2015 – Partnering with ZPS and local businesses—to introduce local careers and opportunities



- Expression – started in 2019 – Partnering with Holland Area Arts Council, teaching kids to express themselves through art.
- Food for Thought – started in 2019 – Partnering with Second Reformed Church teaching kids how to cook
- 6th Grade Friday's – started in 2019- Partnering with ZPS
- Grab N' Go/Mini Pantry – started in 2020 – Partnering with ZPS, Ottawa County Food – Meet Up and Eat Up and Harvest Stand
- Building Bridges—started in 2022—partnering with Empowering Youth Global Connections to introduce kids to cultures around the world

Since the Bridge Youth Center opened its doors, we have worked with over 9000 kids and over 1,100 volunteers. Our students have provided over 13,000 hours of community service. Since the COVID pandemic hit in the spring of 2020, we helped to provide just under 250,000 meals to over 26,000 kids and families. Extra needed supplies were also provided as the community of Zeeland donated so generously to families in need.

Back to the Future?

The Bridge Youth Center Board of Directors

Charles Werling
Co-President
Corium Inc.

Kurt Van Koevering
Co-President
Zeeland Record & Graphics

Sarah Huizenga
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Cityside Middle School

Dewey Thompson
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Jed Mulder
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Leah Locker
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Gowan Seed Co.

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Bentley Kollen
Zeeland Farm Service

Rick Van Dorp
West Michigan Nursery

Rachel McDuffie
Gentex Corporation

Since the start of the school year, we have welcomed record numbers of middle and high school students to our growing programs. Our Tuesday and Thursday after school program, called Drop-In, is averaging over 75 kids per day. Every Monday and Wednesday,



we see over 30 students and an additional 15 mentors to our Bridge to Excellence mentoring program. It's Amazing, on Wednesday evenings sees another 15 kids. While our Food for Thought, Expression, Building Bridges programs see another 45 or so participants. Some walk over from Cityside Middle school, while our busses pick up both Creekside and High School students at the end of their school days. We are thrilled at the sheer numbers, but we are also challenged with the need for more volunteers to provide positive relationships for these kids. We also feed them everyday, so food is a big component in every program.



We are also excited to re-launch our Skills for Life program with Zeeland High Schools. This program takes kids on career trips to local businesses so they

can learn and experience first-hand what careers are available in the area and what is necessary to attain those jobs. Our first trip of the year was with potential Engineering students from Zeeland East. These students and their teacher were brought to Plascore and Gentex Corporations for a full morning of donuts, tours, interviews, questions, answers and experiencing the work environment. We are excited to partner with both the school and area businesses who want to share what they do with the future of their work-force.



Volunteer Needs

- Helping kids with homework by mentoring on Monday and/or Wednesday's from 3-5pm
- Helping provide or serve food for students after school
- Volunteers to help vacuum, clean and supply bathrooms, wash windows, dust or even take out the trash. We could use someone once a week anytime during the day
- Substitute volunteer bus drivers—need a CDL and/or chauffeurs license
- Volunteers to help with mailings, light office work during the day.
- Don't like homework but like hanging out with kids? We need adult volunteers to hang out with kids on a Tuesday or Thursday from 2:30 to 5,
- Help stock our mini food pantry to folks in need 24/7

Build Relationships

Gain Trust

Make Differences



The Bridge Youth Center Staff

Jed Mulder

Executive Director

Scott Baumgartner

Youth Development

Coordinator

Nycole Kragt

Mentoring Support

Fred Louis

In-School Mentoring

Jill Mulder

Volunteer Services Coordinator

Hannah Vander Geld

Engagement Coordinator

The Bridge Youth Center Community Advisory Board

Rick Zuverink

15 year Bridge Board Member

Jackie Curtiss

10 year Bridge Board Member

Larry Lampen

15 year Bridge Board Member

Making Differences

Building relationships and gaining trust is the basis of what we do everyday. We do not promise to resolve the challenges each student faces, but we do seek to understand them. We walk in compassion with students and do our best to model Christ's walk with



us each day. We accept everyone from the moment they walk through our doors and they are immediately enrolled in our membership. We learn everyone's name along with a little bit about each, making them feel loved and valued. We give them an environment where they can be who they are and express themselves without fear of intimidation. All the while we are demonstrating Christ's love for



all. We never forget our mission and do our best to show kids about Christ. As students attend multiple programs per week, we get to know them deeper and gain trust. It is by earning trust that real personal and spiritual differences can be made.

The Bridge provides a place where kids can be safe, loved and are valued. They are surrounded by caring community members who introduce them to Christ's love in all that they do.

At The Bridge Youth Center, we hold kids accountable for their actions and expect they treat others with respect. We are not trained counselors or thera-

pists, just people who care, who truly listen, seek to understand, and walk alongside kids as they traverse the challenges of life.

In a world where disagreements often create chasms and opinions are rarely compromised, we are introducing peace, love and mercy. Grace is given in abundance.

The Bridge is here for kids and parents. We understand how busy and competitive this world has become. We simply provide that respite for kids to come and be who they are. We will continue to plant seeds and work diligently with each child and model what God does for us each and everyday.



Summer Fun



