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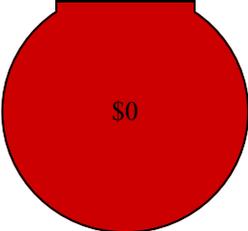
www.bymczeeland.org



Nov-Dec 2017

Finding the Kid in the Corner

\$280,000
\$265,000
\$250,000
\$240,000
\$230,000
\$210,000
\$190,000
\$170,000
\$150,000
\$130,000



As the new school year enters its third month, the Bridge continues to serve our community by keeping kids safe, loved and valued and surrounding them with caring community members who introduce them to Christ's love in all that they do. Since September 11, 2001, the Bridge Youth Center has been committed to these basic principles in working with middle and high school students. Our basic programming runs five days per week and involves over 150 students and 80 mentors and volunteers. A basic overview of these programs outlines the constant need for mentors and volunteers for each:

Drop-In: A place for students to eat, hang out with friends, play games and build relationships. This program has been running for 16 years and meets every Tuesday and Thursday throughout the year.

Bridge to Excellence: An academic based program that places a mentor with a student to help get their homework done, learn about giving back to the community, explore some career interests, and just build some great positive relationships. This program meets every Monday, Wednesday and Friday and provides for approx. 35 middle and high school students

Additional programs such as **Bridging Out, I am Third** or **Suspending Bridges** help teach students necessary life skills that are basic of every good citizen. Whether we are teaching kids to serve others, giving kids a chance to be part of a team or simply working with kids who have made mistakes in school and need an alternative to out of school suspension, the Bridge continues to meet the needs of our community kids.

It's Amazing is our Wednesday evening venture designed for middle and high school students who are seeking a deeper connection to their community and a deeper connection spiritually. Beginning at 5pm, students divide into small groups and with a leader make visits to area seniors. The purpose is to generate intergenerational groups where young people can learn directly from those who may have slowed down a bit physically, but have much left to give. A piece of pie may be consumed, perhaps a cinnamon roll or bowl of ice cream is eaten as these new groups build relationships. Following our weekly visit, the small groups have a meal with a church family before returning to the Bridge for a follow up lesson and prayer. Last year this program started with 6 kids who were not affiliated with any church or youth group. By May, this program involved over 25 students of similar backgrounds and an additional 6 leaders.

In it's third year is our **Skills for Life** program. Designed for the ever increasing number of students that do not thrive in the classroom setting and struggle finding their place in this community after high school. (Continued on page 2)



11th Annual Bridge Campaign

Fundraising Drive

While we have increased our participants in all levels of giving, we are still \$112,000 short of our 2017 annual budget. Please help us meet our operating expenses so that we can, with God's help, continue to meet the needs of area kids.

Finding the Kid in the Corner

(Continued from page 1)

All too often, these students find it very difficult to be motivated at school as they see little purpose in what it may offer. We soon found out that the escalating cost of college and significant debt that comes as a result is causing the traditional “college bound” student to seek alternatives as well. Common in both cases is that few have any idea what types of skills, jobs or careers may be available in our community. After our second year of running the program, Skills for Life provided over 110 interested high school students a chance to explore career opportunities with local businesses. These monthly local trips take 10-15 interested students from our local high schools to three to four local businesses that share a common theme. Each business provides a tour and introduces students to the skills, jobs and careers that exists within. The business make students aware of the skills required, training necessary and the pay expected for each job that is employed. They also make students aware of employment needs they have currently and what they expect in the future.

The **benefits** for our community are **multiple**. By the end of the day-long trip, **students** have toured three or more “like” businesses/trades/agencies, gained direct knowledge from inside the actual employer, and



have physically seen people doing the work they hope to do someday. They also have learned about specific needs for skill training, education, career opportunities and compensation from local employers arranged through the Bridge Youth Center. **Employers** are blessed to have 10-13 students who have expressed interest in what they do at their location. Employers use their time to expand that interest and potentially offer part-time after school jobs as they are able. Ultimately, the employer may find after-school, summer and even post high school employees they can train who can become productive employees in the future. The **Bridge Youth Center** is able to expand its programming by working with a greater number of HS students by continuing to stay true to our mission of providing a place where kids are Safe, Loved and Valued, surrounded by caring community members. Special thanks to Ed Bosch and Chuck Lucas

for organizing our Skills for Life trips.

Recently, I spoke with a Denise, a 2017 graduate of Hope College who attended the Bridge throughout her middle and high school years. She said she was a Business/Political Science major with intent to someday work in government. In the meantime, she works as a buyer for a local clothing store. I have to admit, I was a bit taken a back as I remembered her as being a very smart, very shy and very cautious young lady. I am not sure I ever would have anticipated her having such lofty goals and adventurous aspirations. As we each got our cup of coffee, she went on to say that she was so thankful to the Bridge for “making it all possible for her.” When I asked her why she felt that way, she responded by saying “when I was at my most impressionable age, my most lonely time and I felt like no one else cared, I knew I could always come to the Bridge and I felt like I mattered. The Bridge gave me a chance to make friends and never had to be somebody I wasn’t. Thank you for finding the girl in the corner who didn’t make a sound.” By surrounding our students with caring community members who introduce them to Christ’s love in all that they do, the Bridge is helping plant seeds in our area young people that will grow and produce abundantly. Please consider supporting us through our 11th Annual Bridge Campaign.

Check us out!

To know what is going on at The Bridge Youth Center, check us out online at:

www.bymczeeland.org

Here you can find information about our organization and our programs along with ways that you can partner with us to help meet the needs of area kids.



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