Progress Report

TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF YOUNG ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES THROUGH THE POWER OF A JOB
For more than 25 years, Bridges from School to Work has met a critical need for youth who receive special education services in major school districts around the country. By teaching important life skills, including how to find, secure, and retain competitive, integrated employment, Bridges transforms the lives of young adults with disabilities through the power of a job. Our work is as relevant today as it was in 1989, consistently producing impressive job placement and retention outcomes for young adults, providing valuable entry-level employees for businesses, generating a return on investment for funders, and enhancing the economic vitality of communities.

To mark our 25th anniversary in July 2015, we recommitted ourselves to our mission and set a course for the future that includes imparting core values to guide us in executing a strategic plan aimed at growth and expansion. The transformational power of a job through Bridges’ services is simply too valuable to limit it to the nine major cities where we operate. It is time to grow in our current markets and to expand into more cities and states.

The centerpiece of our strategic plan includes 1) increasing investments in our people through additional training opportunities, 2) diversifying revenue streams to improve financial capacity, 3) thoughtfully and powerfully conveying our story to inspire others, 4) expanding our student base, and 5) building new employer models to enhance partnerships.

In 2015, we introduced a comprehensive e-learning curriculum for current and new staff that covers all aspects of the Bridges lifecycle. From recruiting and assessing program participants to helping them grow vocationally, this training comprises unparalleled just-in-time instruction, tools, and resources that equip staff to provide quality service and to produce measurable outcomes. Bridges continues to enjoy a best-in-class reputation among school-to-work transition programs, as evidenced by professional journals that continue to publish articles about our work, and by the 2016 Business Award received from the Council on Exceptional Children.

Join us in building upon our accomplishments, and in growing and expanding the reach of Bridges to transform even more lives of youth with disabilities.

Richard E. Marriott (LEFT)  
Chairman, Marriott Foundation  
for People with Disabilities

Thomas (Tad) Asbury (RIGHT)  
Executive Director
J.W. Marriott, the founder of Marriott International, was a firm believer in “abilities.” This meant hiring people for the things they can do, regardless of perceived disabilities. With this strong belief in abilities and giving back to communities, the Marriott family established an independent foundation—The Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities (MFPD), a not-for-profit organization—the centerpiece of which became the Bridges from School to Work program. Established in 1989, the year before the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, MFPD’s Bridges program has set the standard for school-to-work transition services for youth with disabilities. Bridges collaborates with school systems, vocational rehabilitation programs, and workforce development agencies to identify young people with disabilities for program participation and to leverage resources for program sustainability. Using a proven, employer-driven model with empirical data demonstrating its effectiveness, Bridges creates opportunities for youth while creating bottom-line results for business.

2016 CEC BUSINESS AWARD

Council for Exceptional Children

Since 1990, Bridges has worked with

>21,000 Youth

4,200 Employers

Bridges Demographics

Youth by Disability Type

62% Specific learning disabilities
12% Intellectual disabilities
9% Emotional/behavioral disorders
4% Speech/language disorders
13% Other: including autism spectrum, hearing, visual, orthopedic, and chronic health

Youth by Gender

57% Male
43% Female

Youth by Race/Ethnicity

60% African American
25% Hispanic
8% White
3% Asian
4% Other (including Native American)
Why Bridges? Why Now?

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, each year nearly 400,000 young people with disabilities leave the public school system, but most are left without any concrete plans or supports to help them bridge the gap between high school, employment, or post-secondary education or training. Many of these young people live in socioeconomically disadvantaged households and communities that lack the wherewithal to help them make the transition from public school entitlement programs to highly bureaucratic adult workforce development systems.

In recent years researchers and policy makers have sparked a national dialog about disconnected or “Opportunity Youth,” young people aged 16-24 who are neither in school nor working. Young people with disabilities comprise a disproportionate segment of the Opportunity Youth demographic, and they often face significant employment barriers that relegate them to the margins of society. Far more youth need help than there is available funding to support them. Only with sufficient financial resources can Bridges stem the tide of Opportunity Youth with disabilities whose potential and contributions to society go untapped and unrealized.

Since its beginnings in Montgomery County, Maryland in 1990, the Marriott Foundation for People with Disabilities has expanded its Bridges program to nine major U.S. cities, transforming the lives of more than 21,000 young adults with disabilities through the power of a job.

Research has validated the efficacy of the Bridges programmatic model, demonstrating that it meets not only the employment needs of culturally and linguistically diverse youth, but also the entry-level staffing needs of employers.

Societal Costs vs. Societal Benefits

Five published papers in the last four years report that:

- Bridges produces consistently high job placement rates across socioeconomic and disability characteristics regardless of economic peaks and valleys.

Employers recognize the value of Bridges services and perceive both Bridges personnel and youth favorably.

Please contact us if you would like one or more of the published papers.
Bridges Helps Stakeholders Meet Policy Mandates

Pinpointing precise and reliable unemployment rates for youth with disabilities aged 16–24 is difficult. We do know, however, that

- business and industry report difficulty finding skilled workers to fill job openings;
- the unemployment rate for youth 16–24 is 2–3 times higher than the national average, with even greater disparities for minority youth; and
- the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is at least double that of people without disabilities.

Such challenges cannot be solved by any one organization alone. Bridges, however, has emerged as an important part of the solution, especially in the area of school-to-work transition, demonstrating proven expertise while matching employers with job-ready youth as they exit U.S. special education programs.

Extensive federal legislation, including the ADA, Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act are all designed with provisions to improve employment and education opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities.

Bridges is ideally suited to help stakeholders affected by these laws and regulations—including employers, workforce development programs, vocational rehabilitation agencies, and school districts—comply with their requirements and deliver competitive, integrated, and verifiable employment outcomes.
Bridges Participant Stories

**Tim Acton**  
Bethesda, Maryland

Tim Acton is the first-ever Bridges participant to win the prestigious J. Willard Marriott Award of Excellence, an award given in recognition of exemplary service to the “best of the best” at Marriott International—representing the company’s highest honor. Wanting to work in the hospitality industry, Tim attended every training opportunity that Bridges offered. When an opportunity presented itself for a position at the Bethesda North Marriott and Conference Center, Tim made the most of it. And his perseverance paid off. Within a month, Tim received a pay raise and shortly thereafter moved to full-time with benefits. Tim’s exceptional performance led to promotions and a much-deserved youth achievement award. Today, now a Bridges graduate, Tim is a lead banquet server and gives back to the Bridges program through monthly payroll deductions.

**Xander Lim**  
Atlanta, Georgia

When Xander Lim’s family moved from Denver to Atlanta, they worried how well he would adapt to the change. However, shortly after the move, Xander connected with Bridges where he received job training and landed a position at a local Landmark Theater—a perfect fit for someone who loves films. As his employer describes, “He’s got a great personality and that’s what we look for when we hire people. Xander has a lot to offer an employer and I’m glad we snagged him.” The work has given Xander confidence, so much so that he’s learned to use the local bus system, is taking martial arts classes, and is now completing two college courses with the hopes of pursuing his dream of becoming a video game designer.

**Corina Rodriguez**  
Los Angeles, California

Before Corina Rodriguez participated in Bridges, she was reserved, gave only one- or two-word answers to questions, and avoided eye contact. Shortly after joining Bridges, Corina gained confidence and polished her social skills. With encouragement and support from her Bridges employer representative, Corina accepted a job at Universal Studios Hollywood where she works as a patio host and matron. Corina has received outstanding reviews. As one Universal Studios representative says, “Corina does a thorough job with a can-do and respectful attitude.” Corina had been with Universal Studios Hollywood for two years now and hopes to advance with the company.
Steven Chew
San Francisco, California

Bridges usually finds participants for the program through concerted outreach efforts; however, in Steven Chew’s case, he searched for and found Bridges on his own. Highly motivated to get a job, Steven spent one year completing Bridges training sessions and overcoming language, cultural, and social challenges. Steven’s hard work paid off: In a competitive selection process, Steven was offered a job as a food service attendant at the San Francisco Zoo. Over the past year he has had perfect attendance, received a pay raise, and increased his work schedule from 3 to 5 days a week. The recipient of the Stephen G. Marriott Leadership Award at the 2016 Bridges gala, Steven is saving and preparing for the day he can move into his own place. Steven’s employer appreciates the contributions that young people with disabilities can make to the business: “Steven is a huge part of our success; it’s a pleasure to work with him and to call him our friend.”

Aaron Reed
Dallas, Texas

Aaron Reed felt employers weren’t giving him a fair opportunity because of his lack of experience. While some kids might be defeated by such an outlook, it only served to motivate Aaron all the more. When he arrived at Bridges, he was dressed in a suit and tie, determined to land the kind of “professional” job he dreamed of. At the time, Bridges was starting a partnership with Bank of America, where Aaron landed an interview and was hired. After just three months on the job, Aaron moved from a temp worker to a full-time employee, a progression that came with both a raise and a full-benefits package. Today, Aaron has been working at Bank of America for more than three years and has received two employee achievement awards. “Aaron is one of my ‘go-to’ people in the office,” says his supervisor. “He’s on a management track here which may come sooner than later.”

Omar Evans
Dallas, Texas

Following his high school graduation, Omar Evans was eager to find a job and help support his family as his mother battled cancer. Omar exuded warmth, sincerity, and goodwill—all ideal attributes for customer service and hospitality. With the help of Bridges, Omar secured a job at the Renaissance Dallas Hotel. A year later, Omar joined the W Hotel where he’s been for the last six years—four of which he juggled his full-time position alongside a part-time position at UT Southwestern Hospital. Omar has won two W Hotel “talent of the month” awards and went on to receive the Bridges’ 2011 Dallas Youth Achievement Award. With passion and excitement, Omar reached higher still, becoming the W Hotel’s new risk officer. As his manager explains, “When searching for talent that models a brand, W Dallas hit the jackpot. From stewarding to style attendant to now a risk officer, Omar has left a positive impression on each department he has worked.”
Financial Highlights

A variety of funding sources support the mission of Bridges, including an annual grant from The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation (a foundation separate from MFPD); as well as grants and contracts from the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor; and from state departments of children, youth, and families. The program is also the recipient of grants and contributions from private foundations, corporations, and individuals.

While Bridges is funded in part by an annual grant from The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, MFPD and its Bridges program is a separate legal entity from Marriott International. Ongoing fundraising remains a priority for program growth and expansion.
Since 1990, Bridges has been committed to meeting the needs of young adults and businesses.

**IN TOTAL SINCE 1990**

- **21,000** Total Youth Served
- **4,200** Total Businesses Who Employed Bridges Youth

**Bridges by the Numbers**

**IN 2015**

- **1,081** Youth Served
- **860** Youth Placed in Employment
- **654** Youth Retained in Employment for at Least 90 Days
- **536** Youth Retained in Employment for at Least 180 Days
- **367** Youth Retained in Employment for at Least 270 Days
- **289** Youth Retained in Employment for at Least 365 Days
- **$9.11** Average Hourly Wage (at hire)
- **24.5** Average Weekly Hours (at hire)
- **$5,356,000** Economic Impact in Aggregate Wages of Youth Served in 2015
- **554** Number of Businesses Employing Bridges Youth
- **232** Number of High Schools Served

**OUR LOCATIONS**

Map of Bridges locations in major cities across the United States.
Richard E. Marriott is both chairman of the Bridges program and of the board of directors of Host Hotels and Resorts. Since the program’s creation, Mr. Marriott remains closely involved. He visits each of the local offices annually, hosts events in each Bridges’ city as well as the program’s annual gala. Mr. Marriott is a graduate of the University of Utah and holds an MBA from Harvard Business School.

Mark R. Donovan was instrumental in the creation of the Bridges program, and served as the organization’s executive director from its launch in 1989 through 2000. As vice-chairman, he continues to serve in an advisory role, participates in a number of related boards around the country, and is a recognized advocate for issues and opportunities surrounding the employment of people with disabilities. Mr. Donovan is a graduate of Earlham College.

Debbie Marriott Harrison joined the Board of Trustees in October 2013. Debbie is Marriott International’s Global Officer of Culture and Business Councils. Debbie works to optimize employee engagement, foster corporate stewardship, and drive profitability. Debbie also collaborates with the key leadership representing Marriott’s Business Councils in more than 70 markets, including over 25 international locations in Europe, Middle East/Africa, Asia Pacific, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

King Jordan made history in 1988 when he became the first deaf president of Gallaudet University, the world’s only university with all programs and services designed specifically for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. An inaugural member of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Jordan serves as an international spokesperson as well as an advocate for all persons with disabilities. Dr. Jordan continues to challenge the American public to examine their attitudes toward people with disabilities. Dr. Jordan earned his doctorate from the University of Tennessee and is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Presidential Citizen’s Medal.

Ellen Ryan Mardiks is the mother of a former Bridges participant and she is vice chair of Golin, an integrated agency providing PR and full-service digital, mobile, and social media marketing services. Ellen leads Golin’s global consumer marketing practice. She has created and led communications campaigns for iconic yet game-changing brands. Ellen graduated from Georgetown University and also studied at the University of London.

Jimmie Walton Paschall is responsible for developing strategies, initiating action, and driving organizational change in support of the company’s diversity and inclusion priorities. This includes providing transformational thought leadership and guidance to help the company develop and maintain a diverse and inclusive culture, leading the company’s Enterprise Diversity Council and Team Member Network program, and advising executive management on direction and progress. Jimmie is a graduate of Howard University.
Appreciation and Invitation

The Bridges program serves a dual purpose: to meet the needs of youth with disabilities and the employers who hire them. This **proven approach produces measurable, verifiable job placement and retention outcomes that generate a solid return on investment** for funders, communities, and school districts.

Bridges is an important safety net for young adults with disabilities—providing qualified, committed adult mentors who intervene with them at the critical juncture between high school and young adulthood. This is a time that can often set in motion behaviors, either positive or negative, that will influence much of their adult lives. Bridges provides young adults the support, guidance, information, and encouragement that helps them steer clear of destructive influences and, instead, leads them on a constructive path: competitive employment.

Bridges’ focus is on long-term employment success, not simply job placement. As such, the program provides the support necessary to stabilize the employment relationship between youth with disabilities and employers. Investing in Bridges means investing in a proven, evidence-based, innovative practice that embodies important business precepts while breaking down bureaucratic divisions.

For those who have invested either time or resources, we would like to offer our sincere thanks for making this program possible. Your investments have created a real and lasting impact, helping to build brighter futures for Bridges youth.

Need, however, outweighs resources and there remain many more youth and many more cities that we have yet to engage. **So if you’re looking for a return on your philanthropic investment, look no further than Bridges.** Make a contribution, start a program, hire a youth, change a life. **Donate Today!**

La’Niece Timmons, Oakland
In Memoriam

Floretta Dukes McKenzie
1935-2015

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Floretta D. McKenzie, a former MFPD board member, who died March 23, 2015 at the age of 79. Ms. McKenzie, whose teaching career began in 1957, was a deputy superintendent of Montgomery County schools and a deputy assistant secretary in the federal education department before she was named D.C. schools superintendent in 1981. When she resigned in 1988, she started an education-consulting business that focused on urban schools. We greatly appreciate her many years of valued service as a trustee and will miss her expertise and passion.