

Our Bridges Out of Poverty initiative addresses the need for a comprehensive, community-wide approach to reducing poverty by implementing a program that will help our residents in poverty move to self-sufficiency. Poverty is a common denominator for many sectors and local service providers; absorbing essential community resources. Its impact is felt by and impeding outcomes across a wide range of entities, including schools, healthcare, social services, faith communities, workforce development, employers and government. Poverty is a complex problem that demands a comprehensive approach. Poverty is not resolved by a single sector or with a single program or even set of programs, because there so many variables. Bridges Out of Poverty is an evidence-based approach to reducing poverty, it not a program rather a set of constructs that adaptively applied positively improves outcomes.

### Poverty Data

#### **Rockford MSA Poverty Data**

13.7% Overall Poverty Rate; Ranking 44 out of 100 Comparable Communities.

23% Residents Under the Age of 18 in Poverty; Ranking 69 out of 100 Comparable Communities

3.7% Of Our Full-time Workers Living in Poverty; Ranking 77 out of 101 Comparable Communities

United Way of Illinois reports that 23% of households in Winnebago County are considered ALICE households. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed. These are households that earn above the poverty level, but not enough to afford bare-bones household budgets.

### Poverty Reduction Community of Practice

#### **Participation by 210 Individuals Representing 98 Community Organizations in our Quarterly Meetings Discussing our Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Poverty**

We launched our Bridges Out of Poverty Community of Practice in January 2021 and continue to host quarterly sessions which are focused on how to implement the Bridges Constructs and Strategies within each organization while also discussing the barriers or policies that could be changed at the organizational and community level to better serve those in poverty.

### Community Trainings

#### **300+ Individuals at 150 Unique Organizations Have Participated in our Free Community Trainings**

Community trainings provide community leaders and interested community members with the understanding of the *Complexities of Poverty*, as well as how they can play a key role in the project by learning how to implement the Bridges constructs within their organizations, and how we are implementing bridges as a community collaborative. Trainings have been provided to our Faith Community, Nonprofit Groups and local Agencies. These trainings are free and available to be scheduled at any time.

## Getting Ahead

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### **Graduates Report the Following: 34% Had an Increase in Income, 32% Reported a Decrease in Debt, 43% Increased their Education, and 13% Report a Decrease on the need for State or Federal Benefits**

We launched the Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World curriculum in the Fall of 2020. One Body Collaboratives supports these programs financially through the funding we have received. Our community partners include: Life Church, NiReach, Rockford Housing Authority and Saint John's United Church of Christ, and YSN/Rockford MELD. We continue to seek additional partner organizations to implement the Getting Ahead curriculum, and ongoing funding to support the program. In conjunction with our partners, we have graduated a total of 96 participants.

## Getting Ahead in the Workplace

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### **Graduates Reported the Following: 100% Reported an Increase in Integrity and Motivation, 100% indicated Progress on the Goal Areas Set at the Beginning of the Classes**

In 2021 we also launched the Getting Ahead in the Workplace classes. These classes are facilitated at a workplace location or as part of a workforce training program. The curriculum helps under resourced workers to build their resources and life stability, this in turn helps the employer by having more stable employees which equates to higher productivity and a decrease in employee turnover. Our community partners in this area include Bergstrom. Comprehensive Community Solutions, and Rockford Career College. We continue to seek employers to offer this program to their employees who could benefit from the program.

## Staying Ahead Network

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### **Research Shows it Takes 2-5 Years for an Individual to Transition from Poverty to Self-Sufficiency Our Community Must Provide Ongoing Support Throughout this Journey**

We created our Staying Ahead Network to provide ongoing support to our Getting Ahead graduates. Our Staying Ahead Facebook page updates Getting Ahead graduates with ongoing programs and assistance provided throughout our community.

## National Recognition

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### **Recognized as a National Best Practice**

Our project was named a National Best Practice and we were invited to provide a breakout session at the Bridges Out of Poverty National conference that was hosted in 2021. This provided us with an opportunity to share data on our project with our peers in other communities.

### **National Consultant**

Additionally, our Program Manager, Mary Cacioppi was named as a National Consultant. In this role Mary provides consulting to communities across the nation on poverty reduction strategies.

## For More Information

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Visit our website at: [BridgesRockford.com](https://BridgesRockford.com); or Contact: Mary Cacioppi, Executive Director, One Body Collaboratives by email at [Mary.Cacioppi@OneBodyCollaboratives.org](mailto:Mary.Cacioppi@OneBodyCollaboratives.org)