



# 2018 Annual Report

**TOOLS**

- Capabilities
- Self-Awareness
- Resiliency

**SUPPORT**

- Trust
- Manage Stress
- Relationships

**EDUCATION**

- SMART Goals
- Personal Growth
- Perspective

**CONNECTIONS**

- Community
- Giving Back
- Opportunities

You have probably heard our mission statement at Bridges of Hope, Allegran County:

*“to foster relationships with individuals desiring to move out of poverty by providing tools, support, education, and connections to community resources”.*

But what are these tools? Can support be more than just financial? What do we mean by education? And how do connections help people to walk out of poverty?

Both personal experience and data-based research show us that poverty is complex - it is not just about managing finances. And it’s certainly not solved just by wealthy people giving money to people they view as inferior.

Rather, Poverty is a lack of resources. Resources that can be mental, physical, emotional, social, cultural, or spiritual. They include things like trust, motivation, persistence, relationships, perspective, and resiliency. Access to these resources leads to walking away from poverty.

# 2018 IN REVIEW

What a year it has been! We have been busy in many ways:

## PROGRAMS

Our programs are the heart of our mission. We offered two **Building the Bridge** workshops at Plainwell Renaissance Adult Education, one **R Rules** workshop at Star Family Literacy in Plainwell, five

**Crossing the Bridge** events, and one **Discovering the Bridge** one-day workshop. *But these are just statistics – to know whether we are making an impact, we are constantly reflecting, learning, and improving.*

Central to our growth this year is the changes to the curriculum of two of our programs. Because we are based in Allegan County, with small towns and rural areas, we found that our previous curriculum (Bridges out of Poverty by Aha Process) focused too much on urban poverty and its stereotypes.

For example, even though the poverty rate in Allegan County is 11%, which is lower than the State of Michigan's poverty rate, we have a higher percentage of **ALICE** households (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed). These are the people who earn above the federal poverty level, but not enough to afford basic housing, childcare, food, transportation, and health care. For Allegan County, the percentage of ALICE households is 26% of its residents. This population of people especially needs resources – the tools, support, education, and connections needed to become and remain self-sufficient.



Original map copyright 2005 digital-topo-maps.com

We owe a debt of gratitude to Pastor Bert Nelson at First Presbyterian Church of Plainwell, to Charlie Wynne, Adult Education Director at Renaissance Adult Education, and to Nicole Vyverman, Outreach Coordinator at Renaissance Adult Education, for developing our revised curriculum. They have combined materials from leading sources on poverty, as well as from educational theory, to provide thoughtful and engaging lessons, where participants reflect upon and assess both themselves and their circumstances, learn new ways of thinking about their challenges, and set goals. This takes place in a safe and supportive group setting, where they are treated as experts on their own lives, fully participating in each step of walking out of poverty.

## Events

In order to achieve our mission, we participated in several local events, to raise awareness of poverty in Allegan County, to promote our programs to participants and potential funders and volunteers, and to engage with other nonprofit organizations and social service agencies in our community.

- Plainwell Art Hop 2018
- Fundraiser at Four Roses Cafe
- Allegan Area Chamber of Commerce EXPO 2018
- Plainwell Days Festival
- Otsego Creative Arts Festival
- Allegan County United Way's Show Me the Money Day
- Monthly Allegan County Continuum of Care (COC) meetings
- Monthly Multi Area Agency Council (MAAC) meetings



## Administration

With change comes both loss as well as renewal, and we have certainly experienced a year of change in 2018. Three board members needed to resign due to various personal reasons, but one new board member has joined us, and another application is in process. Our executive director also needed to leave but was replaced by a new administrative coordinator.



We even added “Lady”, our administrative coordinator’s Paws with a Cause foster puppy!

We have become a Better Business Bureau accredited charity,

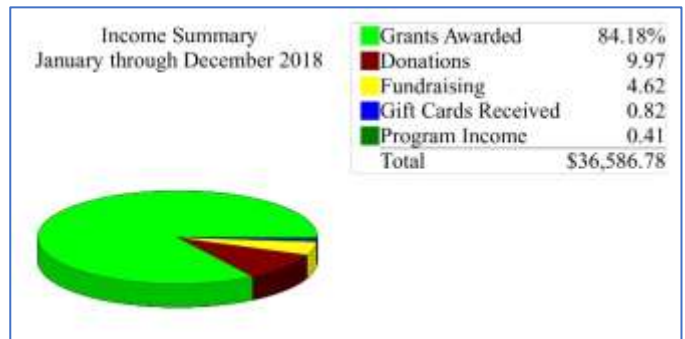
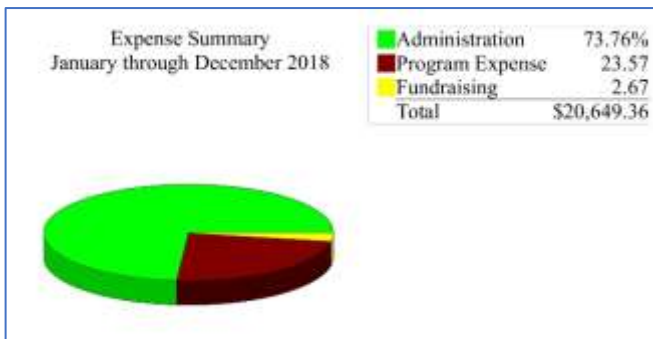


Also, after months of hard work, we have a solid foundation of nonprofit policies and procedures, necessary for our organization to grow and achieve greater impact.

# Financials

At Bridges of Hope, Allegan County, we are working not only towards growth and expansion of our programs, but also towards sustainability, because we believe that fostering and maintaining relationships is key to the resiliency needed by our workshop participants to walk away from poverty.

Our 2018 financial statement includes operating expenses of \$15,697, fundraising expenses of \$375, and program expenses of \$4,577. Because our programs rely heavily on volunteer hours (over 900 hours in 2018!) they rely less on actual dollars than on volunteer recruitment; however, operating expenses still need to be paid. They include things like utilities, office equipment, telephone/internet, insurance, marketing, and payroll. We are grateful to Debbie Clark at Clearwater Financial for her generous donation of office space, so that our operating expenses do not have to be even higher!



We are grateful for the trust and generous support given to us by the following foundations and donors and hope to further develop our individual and corporate donations, to diversify our funding and to increase our sustainability.



**Anna R. Pipp  
Endowment  
Fund**



A special thank you to “Women Who Care”, a local giving circle committed to the needs of Allegan County.





# Looking Forward

*From our Board President*

Dear Friends:

Our mission and lots of other facts have been presented throughout this Annual Report. Let me also tell you a couple of stories about participants in our workshops.

I recently sat down with four young people at STAR Family Literacy, one of whom had completed our R Rules program. I learned that all four of them had experienced homelessness either with their families or on their own. All are now housed in one manner or another. All these teens are parents or expecting a child. They are working on their High School Diploma at STAR Family Literacy.

The teenage father who completed our workshop gets up each morning at 4:00 AM and goes to work at a pig farm in the area. Then he goes home to take a shower and heads out to school at STAR. After school he is busy doing homework and helping his family. His journey to stability is just beginning, but with support from a caring community, he has a better chance of succeeding.

Another young woman, a recent Building the Bridge participant, fled domestic violence with her children and went to a local domestic violence shelter. After 57 days there, she and her children moved into their own apartment. She says that the Building the Bridge workshop “made me more aware of some unhealthy patterns & relationships and how to create healthier choices.” Her goals are to get her diploma, pass the MCOLES Pre-Employment Test, and submit an application to the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety.

To help these folks reach their goals, we cannot do this work alone. We need YOUR help to make a better community where everyone can do well.

Our call to action is **“Be the Bridge.”** **Be the Bridge** for someone like this young man or mother. Bridge the gap between their former circumstances and a new stable life for themselves and their families.



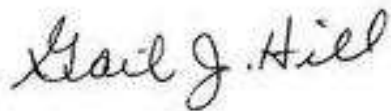
You can **Be the Bridge** by:

- becoming an Encourager (Mentor) for participants.
- providing a simple meal to workshop participants.
- providing transportation to workshop participants.
- serving on a committee or Board of Directors.
- attending a Discovering the Bridge Workshop to learn about poverty in Allegan County.
- becoming a Facilitator for our Building the Bridge workshop.

Or, Donate to Bridges of Hope, Allegan County.

**Being the Bridge** tells those less fortunate in our community that we value them and know that they can succeed and become contributing members of the community.

Visit our Webpage [www.bridgesofhopeallegancounty.org](http://www.bridgesofhopeallegancounty.org) and Like us Facebook. Contact us at [info@bridgesofhopeallegancounty.org](mailto:info@bridgesofhopeallegancounty.org). We are waiting to hear from you!



From Gail Hill, Board President

Board of Directors

Gail Hill - President	Donna Gorton - Vice-president
Heather Swanson - Secretary	---open--- Treasurer
Bob Benson	Karen Koehn
Bruce Ruhl	Carla Springer

Bridge of Hope, Allegan County  
108 E. Grant Street  
Plainwell, MI 49080  
269-204-6041

[www.bridgesofhopeallegancounty.org](http://www.bridgesofhopeallegancounty.org)

A 501(c)3 Non-Profit Corporation EIN: 46-4629016