
2023/2024
Annual Report

OURBRIDGE FOR KIDS

our
BRIDGE
for KIDS





EDUCATION



LOVE



RESPECT



DIVERSITY



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03 Our Mission & Theory of Change**
- 04 Our History**
- 06 ourBRIDGE Traditions Through the Years**
- 07 Our Team**
- 08 Why We're Here**
- 10 Our Impact**
- 13 Our Community**
- 17 Annual Budget**
- 18 Contact Info**
- 19 Acknowledgements & Thanks**



Sil Ganzó

Founder & Executive
Director

Dear Neighbors & Friends,

“How to start a not-for-profit in North Carolina”

That's what I googled in late 2013. It was the first step, the beginning of an idea, and it went further and grew more than I ever could have imagined at the time.

I call it an idea, but that's not the right term. It wasn't a project, a dream, or even a goal driven by passion. It was a call to action—a direct response to the countless moments of disregard and invisibility faced by immigrants and refugees in Charlotte. That search came from an urgency to make Charlotte a better place for us—immigrants, refugees, first-gen, multicultural and multilingual neighbors—to call home.

I have no doubt that ourBRIDGE is contributing to our city and our systems, not only to become more inclusive of all newcomers but to take pride in its diversity in an authentic, genuine way that recognizes our challenges, values our life experiences, and uplifts our dreams.

Through our work, we aim to center the experiences, needs, and dreams of immigrants and refugees. We all want to lead fulfilling lives, and to feel safe, respected, and valued for who we are. Charlotte has the potential to be the perfect place for that—but it will take all of us to make it happen.

On behalf of our team and board members, thank you for the last ten years. We are proud of the beautiful, kind, loving, and diverse community that has grown from and around ourBRIDGE. Whether you have been part of our journey since the beginning or are just learning about our work, we're excited to partner with you as we look ahead to the next ten years and beyond.

Sincerely,

Sil Ganzó

OUR MISSION

ourBRIDGE fosters the education, acculturation, and well-being of refugee and immigrant families through out-of-school programs and comprehensive, culturally-responsive wraparound support.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Our approach is grounded in these core beliefs:



English Language Acquisition supports positive adjustment in the U.S.



Cultural Pride helps build confidence and is connected to positive outcomes.



Social-Emotional Wellbeing is critical for children and families to thrive.

Additionally, we believe that the best way to help refugee and immigrant families adapt and thrive is to connect them with **culturally responsive and trauma-informed wraparound care** and **out-of-school programming**, all delivered in the context of **a loving and diverse community**.

But we're more than just an after-school program! We prioritize the well-being of the whole family. We believe this approach gives immigrant and refugee children and families the best chance to adjust to life in the United States and ultimately fulfill their dreams of a better life.

OUR HISTORY

Initially based in Plaza Midwood, gentrification required ourBRIDGE, and many of the families they welcomed, to relocate. In 2017, Aldersgate offered a building on their campus for just \$1 annually and our programming began to expand.

Founded in 2014 by Sil Ganzó, ourBRIDGE addressed the absence of tailored out-of-school programs for immigrant and refugee children, emphasizing cultural pride and socio-emotional well-being, alongside the typical language acquisition.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, ourBRIDGE adapted, establishing a Family Wraparound support team to better support both children and families. This team provided assistance with school-family communication, and food insecurity—distributing 140,000 meals in 2020-2021—while also making sure families received vital health guidelines in their first languages.

2014

2017

2020



In 2022, ourBRIDGE launched a program at CMS Pinewood Elementary, enhancing accessibility for southwest Charlotte families. Working inside the school and closely partnering with CMS, we currently welcome over 80 English Learner students daily at this south site.

2022

In 2021, Aldersgate Senior Living Community generously offered ourBRIDGE a 5838 sqft facility on Shamrock Drive for a nominal lease fee of \$1 per year. Met with this resource and the ever-expanding need we were seeing on a daily basis, we reached out to the Charlotte Community Health Clinic (CCHC) and Carolina Migrant Network (CMN) to establish a comprehensive service hub, addressing essential service barriers for the foreign-born population in Charlotte.

The Charlotte is Home Center offers refugee and immigrant neighbors secular, equitable, and culturally responsive services through educational support, pro-bono immigration legal representation, and comprehensive healthcare in their first language, under one roof. Learn more at www.charlotteishome.org

2024



ourBRIDGE Traditions Through the Years

"I was one of the OG bridge kids. We were the first group of kids. I absolutely love the place. It is filled with warmth from so many different cultures and people from all over the world. It is a wonderful place for kids to learn and interact."

Rashika Chamlagai

2014



2020

2023



PUMPKIN MATH DAY

An ourBRIDGE tradition where kids dive into hands-on learning—carving pumpkins, exploring measurements, making estimations and more!

"As a former 'ourBRIDGE Kid' I can proudly say this incredible nonprofit organization fosters an environment where students can truly be themselves. My personal experience was nothing short of amazing, as the organization's commitment to diversity creates a supportive space for kids to express their individuality freely. It's more than just assistance; it's a community that celebrates and values each student's unique identity."

Dikchhaya Phuyal

SMOOTHIE DAY

ourBRIDGE Kids take the lead—making smoothies, handling payments, giving change, managing lines, calculating tip and enjoying smoothies!

2015



2022



2024



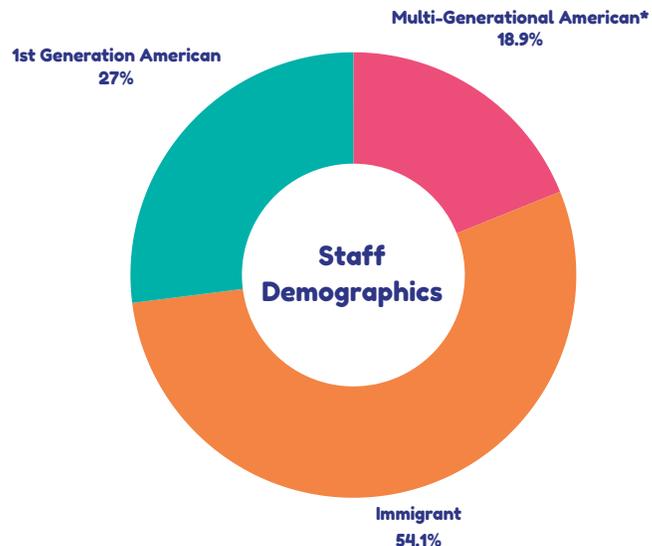
"ourBRIDGE was life changing for me... It guided me through life and created beautiful memories and I am who I am today because of this program. It is such a diverse platform for young kids and a great opportunity for volunteers and staff working there too. Such a friendly and safe environment for kids and adults both. ourBRIDGE is the best thing that has ever happened to me and it remains as one of my favorite childhood memories. I loved it there and I will continue to engage within it."

Bandana Gurung

OUR TEAM

At ourBRIDGE, diversity is our strength. BRIDGE Kids represent 24 countries and cultures and speak 12 languages! It only makes sense that our team would reflect that.

This diversity is what makes ourBRIDGE magical—and so effective. Having a supportive community of people who speak your home language and understand your family's culture while you adapt to a new one is invaluable.



Our 40+ member team represents **23 countries and cultures from around the world.**

Thailand, Honduras, China, Russia, Mexico, Afghanistan, Burma, Syria, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, India, Colombia, Nicaragua, The Dem. Rep. of Congo, Rwanda, Peru, Dominican Republic, Philippines, Argentina, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and El Salvador

Our team **speaks 19 languages**, allowing us to connect with our BRIDGE Kids and their families in meaningful ways.

English, Spanish, Russian, Farsi, Dari, Pashto, Burmese, Arabic, Swahili, Urdu, Hindko, Punjabi, Hindi, German, Karenni, French, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Chinese

WHY ARE WE HERE?

Many families get their start in the US in Charlotte, NC. Like many gateway cities, public-facing institutions face notable challenges in making sure their services and resources are accessible to the ever-growing immigrant and refugee population.



1 in 3 Charlotte-Mecklenburg School students speak another language other than English at home.

Additionally, for the 2023-2024 school year, there were 30,151 English Learners and Multilingual Learners enrolled in CMS.

Despite this being the largest EL enrollment in the history of CMS, the number of programs specifically designed to support newcomer childrens' English acquisition, along with overall wellbeing, continues to remain the same.

OUR AFTERSCHOOL APPROACH

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools students represent 175 countries and speak more than 200 languages.

Learning English is essential for academic success, but the socioemotional well-being of newcomer students is just as important. Research shows that stability and belonging enhance both emotional health and academic outcomes for immigrant and refugee children.* At ourBRIDGE, we create a safe space where kids feel accepted and valued for their cultural identities. Our culturally-relevant and inquiry-based curriculum builds confidence by celebrating their unique backgrounds.

We believe that by honoring our students' diversity we create a multicultural, and inclusive community, shaping a strong, empathetic, and responsive generation, a generation that will make our community stronger.

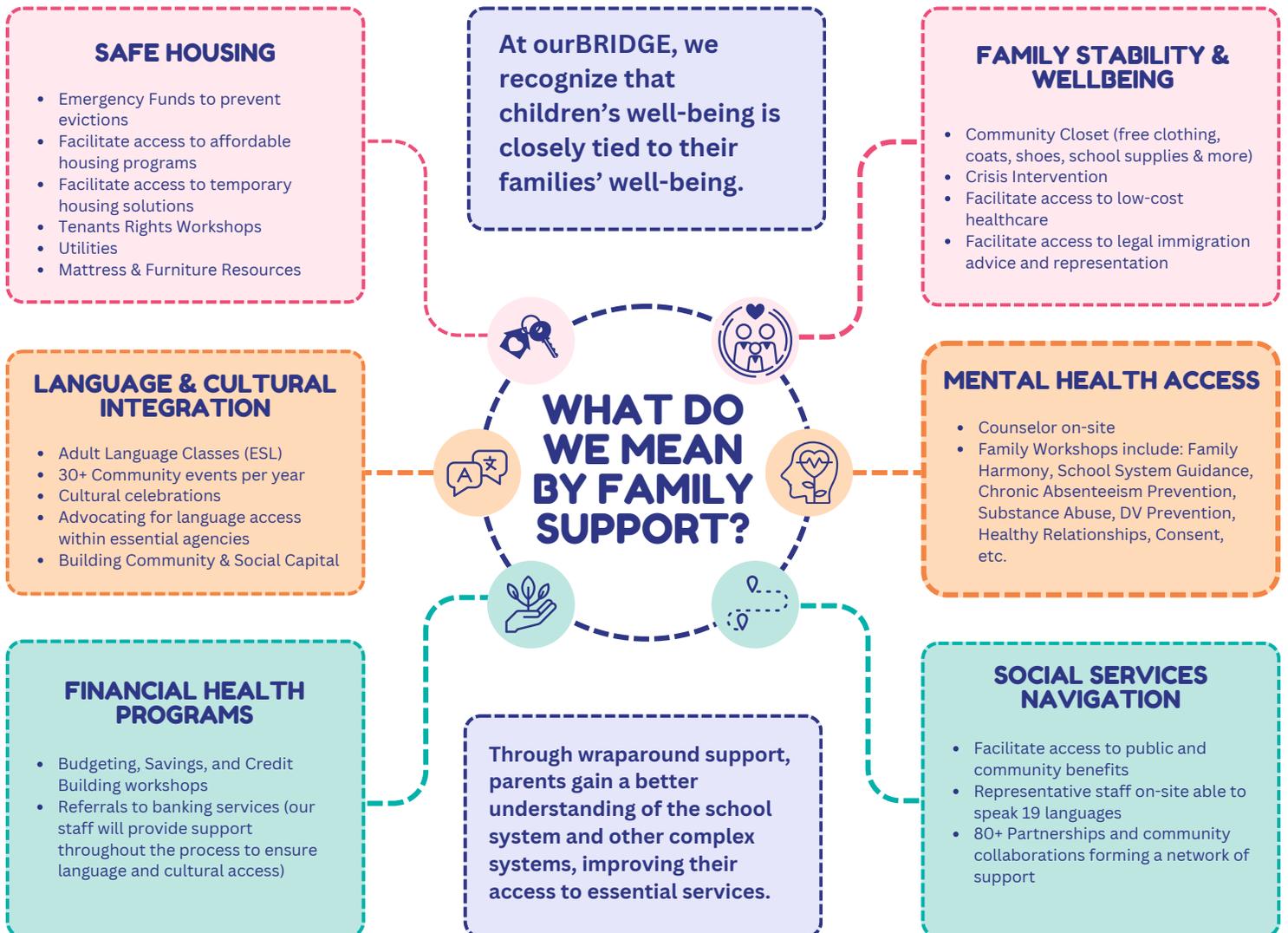


*U.S. Department of Education-How Do We Support Newcomers' Social Emotional Needs?

OUR FAMILY SUPPORT APPROACH

According to a recent study by the Urban Institute, immigrant and refugee families encounter significant structural barriers and unique challenges when navigating program enrollment. These challenges include limited **language access, complex documentation requirements, discriminatory treatment in accessing essential services, and pervasive fears or hesitancy related to immigration.***

Implemented in 2020 as a COVID-19 response, our Family Support Program now provides culturally competent guidance from staff who speak families' languages and understand cultural nuances to directly address these structural barriers.



OUR IMPACT

Teacher Quotes 2023-2024

"Students really love the program. They talk so much about all of the activities they do. ourBRIDGE definitely has a great impact on their learning."

"ourBRIDGE has greatly impacted every student I have seen that has attended. The program is very beneficial."



ourBRIDGE East Program

150 K8 Students

Attendance Rate: 79%

Countries represented: 24

Spanish-speaking students: 40%

Grade Promotion: 100%

93% showed willingness to ask for help when needed

90% improved in getting along with other students

86% showed academic progress



ourBRIDGE South Program

in CMS Pinewood Elementary

80 K5 Students

Attendance Rate: 89%

Countries represented: 12

Spanish-speaking students: 78%

Grade Promotion: 100%

98% improved class behavior

87% improved homework completion

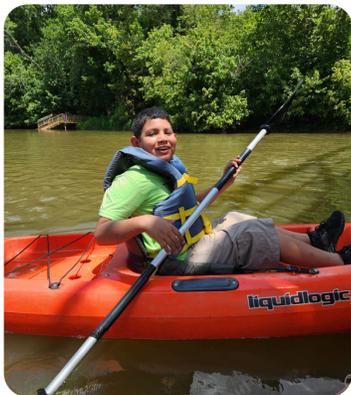
94% improved class participation



CMS Teachers about ourBRIDGE Participants

“He no longer approaches writing with fear. He can write a paragraph and excels in math. I believe that his attendance in the ourBRIDGE Program has greatly contributed to his academic success and for that I am thankful for this program.”

“This program has been a great support to help him improve school attendance.”



Summer 2024

During the summer months, we take learning beyond the classroom, developing new skills and exploring exciting environments. These experiences do more than create lasting memories –they also boost self-esteem and independence.

8 weeks of summer programming for 192 rising K8 students, breakfast, lunch and snacks provided

Summer Field Trips and Outings: Museum of Natural History/Planetarium, NC Zoo*, SEA LIFE Aquarium, Lazy 5 Ranch*, Reed Goldmine, Big Air Trampoline Parkop Tiger Team Boxing, Museum of Illusions, 704 Horseman, Kayaking, Mountain Biking, and more!

**Families are invited to join!*

Family Support Team 2023-2024

\$50,000+ provided to prevent eviction, keeping them in their homes (thanks to Emergency Funds from United Way)

900+ crises addressed (time-sensitive addressing housing, food and healthcare)

322 families supported

96% of parents said that ourBRIDGE helps them feel more in control of important aspects of their lives, including their child's education.

"I am very happy about ourBRIDGE. I enjoy the community and the environment, the system, the planning. I enjoy the respect and how you treat the kids. I enjoy the mix of cultures. [My child] is very happy to go." - ourBRIDGE Parent



OUR



COMMUNITY



Community and cultural celebration is at the heart of everything we do.

A few of our yearly celebrations: Día de los Muertos, World Refugee Day, Eid el-Fitr, Karenni Celebration, International Fall Fest, Día del Niño, Burmese New Year, Africa Day & more.



We believe every kid deserves to see their culture celebrated, respected and valued.



Community Collaboration & Partnerships

We are proud to have 80+ organization partnerships across Charlotte. This allows us to make sure the BRIDGE kids and families are connected to the resources and community they need.

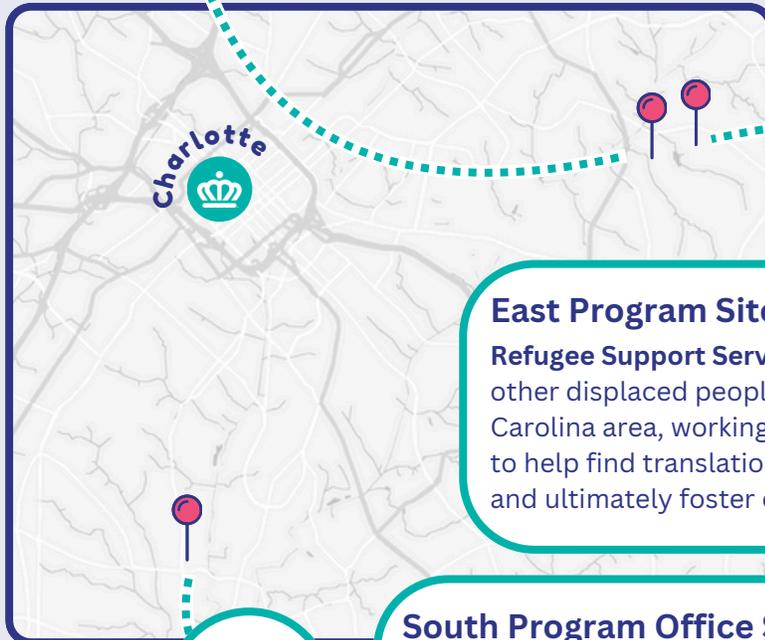
We intentionally share our physical spaces with 4 other non-profit organizations to facilitate access and maximize resources.



Charlotte is Home Center

Charlotte Community Health Clinic provides high quality, patient-centered healthcare services for low-income and other underserved individuals.

Carolina Migrant Network provides compassionate and competent pro-bono legal immigration representation and organizes with communities to disrupt the deportation pipeline/system.



East Program Site

Refugee Support Services supports refugees, asylees, and other displaced people resettle the Charlotte, North Carolina area, working closely with individuals and families to help find translation services, healthcare, citizenship, and ultimately foster connection within the community.



South Program Office Site

Despierta transforms the lives of Latina women through educational and mental health programs, empowering them to develop their talents and become leaders within their communities.

Additionally, we offer:

16+ weekly ESL classes offered at our East and South Sites.

30+ community events, celebrations, and workshops, including Financial Health workshops, Health Fairs, Substance Abuse support groups, Legal Clinics, Academic Success programs, Asylum Clinics, Resource Fairs, and multiple Community Cultural Celebrations.

Volunteering



A.T. Castillo

“How has my time with ourBRIDGE impacted me? One word - Joy. The joy that Rider (my service dog) and I see every Wednesday as we stand to greet the children stepping off the bus and making their way to the open door at ourBRIDGE. Some of the children run from the moment their feet hit the pavement. Others begin with a more gradual pace that quickens along with a growing smile as they approach the door. The joy of listening to a child's voice reading to Rider - some even sit on the floor at his level to ensure he sees every picture. The joy of filling in to drive the OB4K van to pick up the students at school and giving them kazoo's to "play" on the ride home. That was a barrel of fun. And finally, the joy of being a part of this loving community.”

Zoe Ziegler



“My favorite part about volunteering at ourBRIDGE is being surrounded by so many kind and fun people, both the students and staff members!

There is such an amazing environment of compassion, respect, and love at ourBRIDGE that makes it a fun place for the students and volunteers to be. I also love how at ourBRIDGE I always learn something new from the students, like a word in a different language or how to make a paper airplane that will fly super fast!”



Yaritzi

“I used to attend ourBRIDGE when I was in middle school and learned that I could come back and volunteer in highschool. So of course I came back to volunteer because ourBRIDGE makes me happy.

I volunteer through my high school program called IB. My favorite thing about volunteering at ourBRIDGE is how joyful and happy everyone is there! I love being in positive places and ourBRIDGE for sure is my favorite place!”

Jeremy Needham



“As a recent retiree who was searching for ways to fill my newly found free time, I found myself incredibly fortunate to have found ourBRIDGE. The timing could not have been better. Whether my time is spent helping elementary students with homework, playing with kids outside at the of the day or stepping in to drive a van when a teacher or driver is out, I end each afternoon reflecting on the joy and happiness all the students have each day just by being with others like themselves.

Although they come from many cultural and religious backgrounds, their common experience of being immigrant/refugee in a new place is shared and their happiness is shared freely with those of us who volunteer regularly. My life is forever changed for the better ... just like the lives of the students.”



Our afterschool volunteers have volunteered a combined total of 1,400+ hours in 23/24!

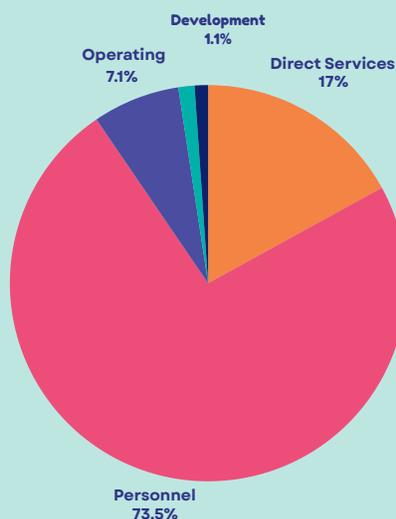


***Interested in joining ourBRIDGE as a volunteer? Email us at**

volunteering@joinourbridge.org

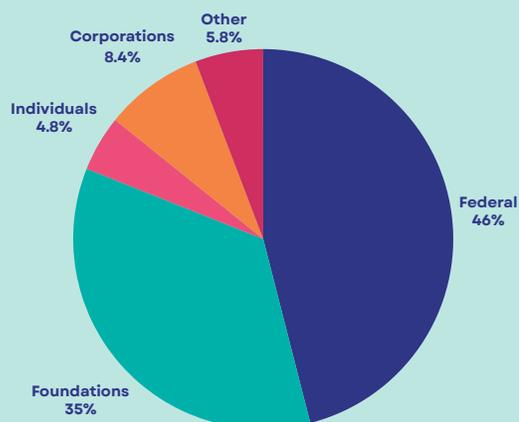
ANNUAL BUDGET

BUDGETED EXPENSES



2024-2025 BUDGET:
\$2,280,000

FUNDING SOURCES



DONATE HERE!



ourBRIDGE: Vision for the Future

As Charlotte become the home of more English and Multilingual Learners, we hope to expand with them—adding school sites and centers to ensure easy access to our programs. Each site or center will keep our community-led, inclusive spirit, creating spaces of belonging for immigrant, refugee, first-generation, multilingual, and multicultural families in Charlotte.

The past ten years have been full of growth for ourBRIDGE. We've invested in our team, so that we can offer quality care and support while simultaneously expanding our programs.

This important community work does not come without cost. We would love to talk about how you can support our work in Charlotte!

 development@joinourbridge.org

THANK YOU

for your support and belief in our mission



3925 Willard Farrow Dr
Charlotte, NC 28215



info@joinourbridge.org



[\(980\) 272-6022](tel:(980)272-6022)



[@ourbridgeforkids](https://www.instagram.com/ourbridgeforkids)

Thank you to the incredible individuals and organizations who have generously given their time, resources, and expertise to our BRIDGE for KIDS. Your support makes our work possible!

Board of Directors 2024

Lisa Luth
Chair
Senior Vice President, Luth Research

Nancy Yang
Treasurer
Senior Manager at RSM US LLP

Satoshi Watanabe
Head of Operations Location Strategy,
Wells Fargo

Rosalba Esparragoza
Hispanic Studies Lecturer, Davidson
College

Cathy Kocourek
Retired

A.T. Castillo
Retired

Kim Barnes
Housing & Neighborhood Services, City
of Charlotte

Matt Roden
Director of Community Engagement for
Mecklenburg

Hiba Salih, BMBS, MPH
Program , LISC

Sasha Fain, aPHR
Senior Technical Recruiter, Wells Fargo

Pacino Mancillas
Partner & Senior Vice President of
Strategic Partnerships AC&M Group

Community Partnerships

AC&M Group
Accenture
ACE Academy
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
Alpha Lambda Omega Chapter
Amity Medical Group
Atrium Health
Aussome Aussies
Beds for Kids
Bhutanese Community Association of
Charlotte
Blumenthal Performing Arts
Boom Charlotte
BraveStep
Bridge Builders Charlotte
Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency
Central Piedmont Community College
Charlotte Bilingual Preschool
Charlotte Catholic Young Activists Club
Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy
Charlotte Community Health Clinic
Charlotte Community Tool Bank
Charlotte Country Day
Charlotte East
Charlotte Friends Meeting
Charlotte LAB School
Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
Charlotte Mecklenburg Police
Department
Charlotte Speech and Hearing Center
Charlotte Symphony
City of Charlotte
Common Market
Compassion Closet
Communities In Schools
Comunidad Colectiva
Crisis Assistance Ministries
Davidson College
Davidson Community High School
Despierta Charlotte
DPR Construction
Eagle Scout of America

Ernst & Young Latino Professional Network
Ethiopian Youth Group
First Tee Greater Charlotte
Gen One
Halal International Market
HealthyBlue
InkaPrint
Junior League of Charlotte
Just Serve
Kidz That Care
Kona Ice
La Casa del Guatemalteco
Latino Credit Union
Latinx Student Union at Charlotte
Levine Museum of the New South
Lowe's
Manolo's Bakery
Mecklenburg County Health Department
Mecklenburg's Metropolitan Interfaith
Network
Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy
Mis Amigos Project
Myers Youth Employment
NC Brazilian Arts Project
NC Department of Health and Human
Services
NC Med Assist
Nile Grocery
Nourish Up
P3 Soccer Lab
Providence Spring Elementary School
Rho Psi Omega
Rohan Grocery
SchermCo
SHARE Charlotte
Social Venture Partners-Charlotte
Southeast Asian Coalition
Tesfa Ethiopia
The Bulb
The Karenni Community in East Charlotte
Three Amigos
Trips For Kids
Undercurrent Coffee
Union Church
Universal Institute of Successful Aging of
Carolinas

Urban League of Central Carolinas
Vision to Learn
Welcoming America
WOW Supermarket
Young Men's Service League

Programmatic Partnerships

704 Horseman
Arts+
Baran Dance
Breath INK
Carolina Dance Committee
Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation
Central Piedmont Community College
Charlotte Eagles
Charlotte United FC
Classroom Central
ClayWorks
Communities In Schools
Digi-Bridge
Discovery Place
Domino's
Feliciano Luna
Gifted Youth South Carolina
Halal Street Food
Hickory Grove Library
LandDesign, Inc
Panda Express
Pat's Place - Child Advocacy Center
Queens University of Charlotte
Tacos El Nevado
Tosco Music
Twirl to the World
Undercurrent Coffee

Strategic Partnerships

Aldersgate Retirement Community
Afterschool Alliance
Carolina Migrant Network
Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte
Charlotte Community Health Clinic
Charlotte Mecklenburg School
Despierta Charlotte
Gardner Communications
Hood Hargett
Iglesia Del Nazareno

Inner Workshop Counseling
JE Dunn Construction
LSP3 Architects
McGuireWoods, LLP
Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation
MPI-UNICEF Virtual Convening Series Team
My Brothers' Keepers Charlotte Mecklenburg
National Afterschool Association
Pat's Place
Refugee Support Services
The Lee Institute
UNCC-Department of Education
UNCC-Levine Scholars Program
UNCC-School of Social Work
World Central Kitchen

Growth Partnerships

21st Century Community Learning Centers
Alpha & Omega Foundation
Bank of America
Belk Foundation
Charlotte Merchants
Charlotte Rotary Club South
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
Child Nutrition Grant
Christ Episcopal Church
Dollar General Literacy Foundation
First Presbyterian Church
Foundation for the Carolinas
Ginter Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Holy Covenant United Church of Christ
Interfaith Youth Core
Interior Elements
James Family Foundation
Leon Levine Foundation
Leon Levine Jewish Community Center
Levine Scholars Program
LongLeaf Foundation
Mecklenburg County
Merancas Foundation
Myers Park Presbyterian Church
Myers Park United Methodist Church
North Carolina State Refugee Program

Pike Properties
Providence United Methodist Church
Queens University
Ross Stores Foundation
Sisters of Mercy of North Carolina
Springsteen Family Foundation
St. John's Baptist Church
Truist Bank
United Way of Greater Charlotte
Wells Fargo Foundation
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

BRIDGEbuilders (Individual Donations \$1,000+)

Katherine James
Jessica and Mr. Allen Saxe
Joel Adelman
Gary Andrew
Carl & Nina Phillips
Cathleen S & Robert J Kocourek
Martha M Eubank
Mike and Emily Gaffney
Gillian Small & Avery McGaha
Robert Glenn
Robert Horner
John Hunter
Deborah Majewski
Kim Rudolph
Sarah & Rost Fedyna
Elizabeth Ward
Elsie Waybright

ourBRIDGE Partners - Monthly Donors

Paige Polk Ahmed
Donna Charneskie
John Cox
Lorraine Elliot
David Flores
Nancy Garrett
Andrew Henderson
Janine Lafferty
Thomas Mitchell
Liana Rebollo
Jeff Weatherhead
Steven Yaffe





our COMMUNITY



our FUTURE

