



the Bridge

SUMMER 2026



## A Growing Team for a Growing Impact: The Bridge Creates New Staff Positions to Expand Services

In recent months, The Bridge has celebrated extraordinary accomplishments while investing in new opportunities that strengthen support for survivors and expand prevention efforts throughout our five-county service area. As the need for survivor support services and prevention education continues to grow, we created two new roles, Bilingual Office Manager and Grant Manager, to help enhance our programs and ability to meet the growing needs of our community.

**CASEY VAUGHAN** joined The Bridge in March 2026 as our Grant Manager. She brings experience across the nonprofit sector, public housing, and child welfare. Casey recently earned her MBA from Midland University, where she also completed certificates in Business Intelligence & Data Analysis and Program Management. Alongside her role at The Bridge, she serves as an adjunct professor teaching Nonprofit Leadership at Midland University. As Grant Manager, Casey develops grant proposals and program budgets, ensures compliance with funding requirements, completes monthly and quarterly reporting, and leads efforts to strengthen and streamline our grant management system. Her work is vital to sustaining and expanding services for survivors across our community.



**LAURA HARDWICK** joined The Bridge in April 2026 as our Bilingual Office Manager. She brings deep compassion and empathy to her work, along with an understanding of the courage it takes to reach out for help. As a bilingual speaker, Laura provides valuable support and connection to Spanish-speaking individuals and families throughout our service area. In addition to her professional experience, Laura brings seven years of experience as a foster parent. Alongside her family, she cared for babies, children, and teens in need of safety, stability, and care. Laura is passionate about helping survivors find their voices and supporting their journey toward healing. In her role, Laura manages daily office operations and clerical services, provides bilingual communication support, and promotes efficient and culturally responsive services.

Together, Laura and Casey, along with our six other team members, strengthen our ability to effectively meet the growing and diverse needs of our community. Their expertise, compassion, and commitment help our organization move closer to a future free from domestic violence and sexual assault.

# New Community Partnerships at The Bridge

## Rebuilding Together's She-Build Event

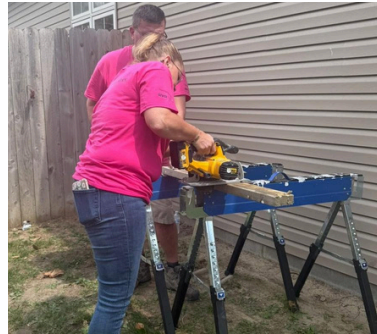
On April 23rd, The Bridge welcomed more than 60 volunteers for the first-ever She-Build event hosted by Rebuilding Together Platte Valley East. Sponsored by RVR Bank, the She-Build event was built with the mission to empower women to lead an event that will make a meaningful impact for the women in their communities.

Together, morning and afternoon volunteer groups dedicated their time and energy to improving our office space through painting, basic repairs, door improvements, organizing, and more. Volunteers also went the extra mile by providing a storage shed built by Arlington and Wahoo high school students. These contributions enhance our workspace and ensure our staff can focus on providing support services and prevention education to those in need.

Rebuilding Together's She Build event was about more than office renovations...

*"Through this event, we've been able to connect with new people who have never been here before or may not know about our services. They can help us spread the word."*

— Cathi Sampson



## Fremont Church of the Nazarene Transforms Intake Room

As long-time supporters of The Bridge, the Fremont Church of the Nazarene (FCN) has made a meaningful impact on the lives of survivors and their children. On June 13, their congregation expanded that impact by taking on a special project to refresh our client intake room.

When survivors take the courageous first step of reaching out for help, our Advocates meet with them in our intake room to listen and provide the support they need. Creating a welcoming and peaceful environment is essential to helping survivors feel supported during this process. Recognizing that healing begins with feeling safe and cared for, members of FCN collected items to transform the room into a space where survivors are greeted with dignity, compassion, and comfort as soon as they walk in the door.

Thanks to their generous investment of time and resources, our intake room now offers survivors and their children a more comforting and inviting space. The room is stocked with snacks, drinks, and engaging activities for children, allowing parents to focus on finding safety. By transforming this space, FCN shows survivors that they are not alone and are supported by their community.



# Celebrating Prevention Education Milestones & Expanding Programs

The Bridge's 2025-26 prevention education program marked a milestone with the Bergen Catholic School graduating Class of 2026 completing a full K-12 series of monthly lessons. This past May also wrapped up a successful year of youth prevention education and fueled the expansion of future programming across our service area.

At Bergen Catholic Schools, our Community Education Coordinator, Stacey, and students from the class of 2026 celebrated their years of learning by revisiting activities like Hot Seat and Peek-A-Who, reinforcing communication, impulse control, sportsmanship, and perseverance. This milestone highlights our long-term collaboration with Bergen Catholic Schools focused on helping students build healthy relationships and make safe, respectful choices.



During the 2025-2026 school year, Stacey delivered 430 presentations across 83 classrooms with a combined attendance of 8,729 students. Stacey prepared each lesson with an emphasis on vital life skills in emotional regulation, communication, personal safety, and healthy relationships.



Prevention education does not stop when the school year ends. Our work continues year-round with Stacey beginning her summer sessions in late May. Our initiatives include youth classes at YMCA summer youth groups, local hospitals, and juvenile probation groups in Fremont and Blair. Additional training opportunities for local first responders are also included in our summer schedule.

Looking ahead, our team is preparing to expand our youth programs for the 2026-2027 school year. New community groups and schools, including Linden Elementary School, are being added and existing collaborations are also continuing, strengthening consistent prevention education across the community. With our programs continuing to expand in reach, our prevention programs are positioned for their largest year yet.

## Mental Health Awareness & Survivor Healing

Domestic violence and sexual assault can leave lasting emotional wounds that are not always visible. For many survivors, healing involves navigating the mental and emotional effects of trauma long after the abuse has ended.

Healing looks different for everyone, and progress is not always linear.

At The Bridge, we are committed to supporting survivors beyond immediate safety. Our advocates can connect survivors with mental health resources and services specifically designed for individuals impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault. No one should have to carry the weight of trauma alone, and healing is possible with the right support.



*Sometimes, a good day for me is as simple as making it through each moment, good or bad, as they come*

# Thank You

We extend our deepest gratitude to the remarkable individuals and organizations who have generously contributed to our mission this past *January - May*.

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# From The Executive Director's Desk

As I settle into my role as Executive Director of The Bridge, I am reminded each day how fortunate I am to be surrounded by such a dedicated and experienced team. Our Advocates bring years of knowledge, compassion, and commitment to their work, and I continue to learn from them as I transition into this position. Their expertise and unwavering support for survivors are at the heart of everything we do.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this role is witnessing firsthand the impact of our services. Whether through a crisis line call answered in the middle of the night, case management support, or criminal justice advocacy, our team is helping individuals and families find safety, hope, and a path forward. Seeing a young mother and her children escape an abusive situation, secure safety, and begin building a new life of independence is a powerful reminder of why our work matters.

I am also deeply grateful for the incredible support we receive from our community. From the success of this year's Big Give to our first Rock the Block fundraising partnership, I have been humbled by the generosity of those who believe in our mission.

One partnership that has been especially meaningful is our growing relationship with the Church of the Nazarene. After touring our facility and learning more about our work, they immediately committed to supporting our clients for the long term. Their congregation transformed our intake room into a warm, welcoming space designed to make adults and children alike feel comfortable and cared for. They also created an Amazon Wish List to help keep the room stocked with needed items throughout the year. Their commitment reflects the kind of community partnership that makes a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

The Bridge is fortunate to be supported by donors, volunteers, businesses, faith communities, and countless individuals who consistently go the extra mile for survivors and their families. Together, we are creating a stronger, safer community, and I am honored to be part of that work.

Thank you for your continued support of The Bridge and the people we serve.



**Cathi Sampson**  
*Executive Director*

## Our Mission

The mission of The Bridge is the prevention and elimination of domestic violence and sexual assault. We work to enhance safety and to promote equality in relationships. We are opposed of the use of violence to control the lives of others. The Bridge is committed to eliminating violence in the lives of women, children and men through empowerment, education and social change.

## Our Staff

Cathi Sampson  
Executive Director

Laura Hardwick  
Bilingual Office Manager

Madison Laake  
Marketing Coordinator

Casey Vaughan  
Grant Manager

Stacey Lichtenberg  
Community Education  
Coordinator

Jody Bykerk  
Shelter Program Manager

Jennifer Thomason  
Advocacy Program Manager

Kylie Kampschneider  
Criminal Justice Advocacy  
Coordinator

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