

**Formerly United Methodist Human Services**

## Multiplied JOY!

By: Cheryl Bedick Keafer, MSW  
Executive Director

If you ask any of us who work at Bridges Cooperative Ministry and the wonderful volunteers who take the time to serve with us, we believe we have something pretty special! The work we do and the people we get to relate to on a daily basis is truly a joy! And the Lord has just multiplied our joy time and time again this past year.

Our joy was multiplied this year in our Bridges to Success program with more Getting Ahead cohorts, more Ongoing Enrichment Courses, our first ever Job Readiness Workshop, two wonderful Networking Events, and being able to help members with Supportive Assistance to address barriers to stability. This program is growing stronger and helping to empower people to create a path forward!

Our joy was multiplied as we saw so many more people blessed with food help, new volunteers in the food pantry, more people getting baby care and personal care items, a record number of students who received shoes this year through Project Shoes, and so much more!

Our joy was multiplied this summer when we got to move into a new office space in Franklin Street Church. We wanted to make sure it's clear that we are committed to staying in the heart of the city we love and working together with the many ministries in the area. So we invested in the church by developing our office space on the second floor instead of moving to any other location. It has been a joy to settle into our new space!

Our joy was also multiplied when we made the transition to our new name, Bridges Cooperative Ministry. It was not an easy task and full of bumps along the way, but we believe it is the message we need to send about how we want to do ministry. True to our name, creating bridges and cooperating to share the love of Jesus helps to bring about transformation in our community!

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## ALICIA DELOZIER

### FEATURED GETTING AHEAD GRADUATE

**Alicia Delozier** is our featured Getting Ahead Graduate this month. Her story highlights the importance of building various personal resources in order to make effective changes in one's life.

Alicia has come quite a long way since attending her first GA cohort in 2017. Over the years, she has thoroughly engaged herself with Bridges to Success, having completed four Ongoing Enrichment classes. Despite some severe setbacks in her life, she has persevered and continued working on her goals to improve herself.



*From left: Alicia, Gregory, Journey, Faith, Dallas*

Alicia was born and raised in Johnstown with her mother and father; two sisters and two brothers. They were members of St. Theresa Catholic Church. At age 17, Alicia became pregnant and moved out of her family's home. She worked and finished high school but turned down the opportunity to attend Mount Aloysius College because she wanted to raise her daughter.

During a rough time in her life, Alicia was in a serious car accident and had surgery on both of her hips. Unfortunately, she became addicted to her prescribed pain medication and was in and out of jail from May 2011 until December 2015. At that time, she began attending Oakland United Methodist Church (now Oakland Church) and became a member. A few ladies invited her to sign up for the Getting Ahead cohort that the church was hosting. In the class, Alicia learned a lot of resources within the community that

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# BRIDGES TO SUCCESS NEWS

## UPCOMING SPRING CLASSES

### BRIDGES FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (Financial Resources)

Thursdays, Feb. 29—May 2  
(Time to be determined)

Learn from financial leaders in our community about credit repair, fraud/scams, budgeting, paying off debt and more!

This class is open to GA graduates and the public!

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### EMOTIONALLY DESTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (Relationship Resources)

Wednesdays, Feb. 21—May 1  
10 am—11:30 am

In this 10-week book study by Leslie Vernick, you will learn how to recognize destructive relationships in your life and what to do about them.

If you like to spend time reading on your own, this is the class for you!

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### EXPLORING YOUR FAITH (Spiritual Resources)

Mondays  
(Time to be determined based on interest)

Whether you're just curious about God or have a long history with God, we can all benefit from a fresh conversation about faith. We will use a video series by Andy Stanley called "Starting Point: A Conversation About Faith."

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### Spring Getting Ahead Cohort

The cohort starts the fourth week of January.

If you know of someone who is ready for a change and could benefit from the class, please call Carolyn at 814-418-4336.

## JOB READINESS

Monday, February 12  
Wednesday, February 14  
Monday, February 19

12 pm—6 pm

- Are you struggling to get or keep a job?
- Do you wonder how to answer tough questions in an interview?
- Do you want more than just a getting-by job?

If so, this is the workshop for you!

This 3-day intensive training will help you to prepare for the job search, application and interview process. You will create a plan for a career rather than a "just getting by" job and connect with core employers.

**Job Readiness is open to GA graduates and the public!**

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*Graduates—watch your mail for postcards with more information, or check out the BCM Getting Ahead Graduates Facebook page.*

## ANNUAL WINTER GATHERING for GA Graduates

Friday, January 19, 2024  
6pm—8pm  
Franklin Street Church

*Catered by Flair of Country!*

*GA Graduates—don't miss this fun night out!  
Call Carolyn at 814-418-4336 to reserve your spot.*

# BRIDGES TO SUCCESS NEWS

## ALICIA DELOZIER *(Continued from page 1)*

would be of help to her and set some goals. Her immediate goal was to find her own place for herself and her kids and obtain a reliable vehicle. Her five-year plan was to save sufficient money to buy a house with some land and more than one vehicle.

Since graduating from Getting Ahead, Alicia has worked on building her Financial Resources by working some odd jobs and improving her credit score. She has discovered unique ways that have improved her and her son's Emotional Resources, such as yoga and positive music. She endured another hip surgery and a long and painful recovery. Remarkably, she accomplished this without using any prescribed pain medication. She has worked hard on Time Management and has created calendar charts for the whole family.

There are two other resources that were integral pieces to her journey forward. One was her Relational Resources. In other words, gaining the ability to discard relationships that were detrimental to her well-being. To do so takes great emotional strength and courage. Through this, she gained supportive relationships. The other was her Spiritual Resources – involving herself in a supportive church community.

Currently, Alicia has three children; one with special needs. She is homeschooling her two youngest, ages 5 and 7. She has nearly reached her goal of a down payment on a house that she is looking to buy. She has three working vehicles – one for her oldest daughter to use for school. She has no negative marks on her credit, which she has built to a score of nearly 800 from absolutely nothing.

Alicia is continually working to improve herself, having recently become a student of "Give Her Wings Academy." This one-year, online academy educates and prepares students to become effective people-helpers of women who are in domestic violent relationships. After she finishes, she plans to go back to school to become a certified counselor for women and children that have been abused or have been in a family that were addicted to drugs.

Congratulations, Alicia, on all that you have accomplished! We wish you blessings as you pursue an amazing future.

## GA GRADUATE SUCCESS STORIES

*By: Carolyn Varchol, MA  
BTS Program Director*

**These are just some of the accomplishments that our graduates have made this past year!**

**Betty Black** (Spring 2021 cohort) has worked on improving her financial resources. This past summer she bought a house and moved back to her hometown in Arkansas.

**Ginger McCoy** (Spring 2019) has been working on growing her Spiritual resources. She works with children at her church and strives to pray before making decisions. She has also been working on her financial resources. Between budgeting and eliminating "spree" spending on junk food, she saved enough money for a downpayment and purchased a new car this past year!



*Ginger McCoy*

**Tracey Fowler** (Fall 2017) will be hosting a Tea Parlor Ministry at the Franklin Street Church. It will be held every other Thursday.

**Rebecca Graham** (Spring 2020) started school at Altimate Medical Academy in 2016. She graduated this past fall with an associate's degree in medical coding and billing.

**Mary Cook** (Spring 2021) chose the goal of buying a house in two years. After working on building her financial resources, she and her husband met that goal this past year and now live in a quieter neighborhood.

Many of our referrals for Getting Ahead come from our graduates. We appreciate the referrals we've received from graduates **Mary Cook** and **Robbin High** (Fall 2020).

**CONGRATULATIONS** to  
**Jennifer Ferpas**  
for earning her  
certificate as  
Certified Getting Ahead Class  
Facilitator!



# BRIDGES MINISTRY UPDATES

## THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO BRIDGES TO SUCCESS!

- Thank you to **Oakland Church** for providing space for our Fall 2023 Getting Ahead cohort.
- Thank you to **Bridge to Life Church** members and families, plus **Tammy Long** and **Kim Baker** of Oakland Church for providing meals or donations for our Fall 2023 GA cohort. Because of your generosity, the cohort enjoyed home-cooked meals for 13 out of 16 classes!
- Thank you to **1st Summit Bank** for sponsoring our Fall 2023 Bridges Financial Management class and providing speakers. 1st Summit also offered a savings account incentive to those who completed the course!
- Thank you to **Ryan Young of Farmer's Insurance** who spoke to our Bridges Financial Management class on the benefits of home, rental and car insurance.



*Bridges Financial Class: (from left) Henry Caba, facilitator; Ken Szczur, 1st Summit Bank; Pamela Stetor, Matthew Perez, Naomi Paluch, and Deborah Gorden.*

## Volunteers are an integral part of making our Bridges to Success Program happen!

If you are interested in supporting our Spring 2024 classes, whether it is providing a meal, childcare, or even writing encouraging cards, please call Carolyn Varchol, BTS Program Director, at 814-539-2633.

## *Multiplied JOY!* (continued from page 1)

Our joy was multiplied again at our Annual Fundraising Banquet in November. What a great night of celebration and sharing the impact of the work that BCM is called to do. With generous sponsors and the hard work of our Board of Directors, we raised more money than at any other banquet, with donations still coming in. We have seen the Lord bring funds from new places: a variety of churches, new grant opportunities, businesses, and individuals who have never supported this work before. We can see it becoming the cooperative ministry that our name implies! Not just financially, but through volunteers and finding ways to work together to support one another's calling in the Kingdom.

In this time of celebrating God coming to earth as the Christ child and the dawn of a New Year ahead, we pray that each of you would experience multiplied joy! May we each live out what it means to be a neighbor and multiply joy for others!

## THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

- The Independent Order of Odd Fellows
- St. John Gaulbert Cathedral for their Food Drive in November
- Saturday's Kitchen

## GRANTS

Many thanks to the following for their generous grants!

- The Brooks Foundation through PNC Charitable Trust
- Pitcairn-Crabbe Foundation
- The Robert Water Economic Development Fund of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies

# BRIDGES MINISTRY UPDATES

## A great night at our Annual Fundraising Banquet!



*Amy Bradley, President/CEO  
Cambria Regional Chamber*



*Bob Semelsberger, Martin-Baker America*



*Pastor Terry Knipple,  
Franklin Street Church*

### OUR BANQUET SPONSORS

Martin-Baker America  
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Our Mother of Sorrows  
Rod and Sonya Horner  
Terry and Connie Knipple

Thanks to Rod Horner, BCM Board Chair, for providing beautiful music!



Thanks to Melanie and Jennifer for sharing their stories!



*GA Graduates, Melanie Sanford,  
Tracy Fowler, Jennifer Ferpas and  
Rebecca Freeman*



“If you have come to help me, you can go home again. But if you see my struggles as a part of your own survival, then perhaps we can work together.”

—Lilla Watson, Murri artist, activist, and academic

## 2023 BCM Board of Directors

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## TO UNSUBSCRIBE

We would love to continue to keep you informed of BCM news, but if you would like to be removed from our newsletter mailing list you may call the office at 814-539-2633 or send an e-mail to [carolyn@bridgescm.org](mailto:carolyn@bridgescm.org). Thank you!

## CONTACT US

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## BRIDGES COOPERATIVE MINISTRY

*SERVING AS A CATALYST FOR INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR COMMUNITY*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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