



COMMUNITY BRIDGES EMPOWERS LATINA AND IMMIGRANT GIRLS TO BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS

COMMUNITY BRIDGES, INC.

Since 1997, Community Bridges has empowered hundreds of young Latinas and other immigrants in East Silver Spring and Takoma Park, Maryland, to bridge two cultures and find their place in the world by pursuing positive, life-affirming roles: *Successful student. College graduate. Community leader.* Community Bridges taps into the potential of girls who are in danger of falling into very different roles, such as gang member — there are now more than 200 gangs in Montgomery County. Or high school dropout — nationwide, Latinas have the lowest high school graduation rates and chances of earning a bachelor's degree. Or teenage mother — more than half of Latina girls in the U.S. will be pregnant by age 20.

Last year, Community Bridges worked with 120 girls, and this year it hopes to serve 150. Two-thirds of the girls are in middle school, and the majority come from low-income and immigrant families. Programs help girls ages 8 to 15 build confidence, become role models and community leaders, improve their academic success and expand their horizons. Executive Director Ana Lopez, a native of the community, has spent her career working with Latino immigrant families, and her perspective informs the organization's approach to the many challenges faced by young Latinas.

Jump Start Girls! Adelante Niñas!, Community Bridges' signature initiative, uses team-building, the arts, outdoor adventures and community involvement to help build critical thinking, self-esteem, self-expression and healthy lifestyles. Another program, LUNA (Luchando Unidas con Nuestras Amigas), encourages recent immigrant girls to develop leadership skills as they transition into their new communities by celebrating their cultural identity and bilingualism. A third project, the Dream Catchers Mentoring Program was created by Community Bridges participants who asked the organization for a program pairing them with adult women from the community. The results are impressive: last year, 76 percent of girls in the mentoring program improved their grades and critical thinking skills. To complement all these initiatives, Community Bridges sponsors a summer camp and a family program that helps parents support their daughters' development.

GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDS: Provide services to more girls by hiring additional staff, increasing salary and benefits to retain staff, and expanding office space.

TIME: Mentor girls in the Dream Catchers program; serve as a program intern; coach a sports team.

GOODS: Desks and kitchen equipment to furnish new office space; dinner donations for Dream Catchers mentoring program. Drop-offs preferred, but pick-up can be arranged.

CONTACT

Sherry Marshall
620 Pershing Drive
2nd Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-585-7155
smarshall@communitybridges-md.org
www.communitybridges-md.org.

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\$394,989



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