

## Welcome to 2024

New year, same great services!



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website

### Bridgeway Receives 3 Year CARF Accreditation

This past August, Bridgeway Inc. was surveyed by CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities). Achieving CARF accreditation involves demonstrating conformance to applicable CARF standards, evidenced through observable practices, verifiable results, and comprehensive supporting documentation.

**Bridgeway is proud to announce they have earned a 3-year accreditation from CARF! CARF surveyors found a few of Bridgeway's strengths included:**

- An energetic, skilled, and ambitious leadership team
- Sound, responsible financial planning and management practices
- Dedicated, long-term employees that instill a culture of growth and clinical development
- Efficiency in the use and implementation of technology to enhance business functions
- Providing safe, secure, and private spaces for consumers in the community housing program
- Person-centered treatment plans
- Strong working relationships with employers and organizations in the community
- Providing services across a wide and diverse geographic region
- Stakeholders describe Bridgeway staff and services as "committed, responsive, and reliable."

Plus many more! We are so proud of our entire staff for their dedication to our mission of "Creating Solutions for Everyone" and for continuing to provide excellent services to the communities we serve.



# What's Happening at Bridgeway



## Sandy Wood Retires

Bridgeway's former Senior Vice President of Disability Services, Sandy Wood, retired at the end of 2023. Sandy made an incredible difference at Bridgeway and in the human service field.

When Sandy began her career in the early 1970's, people with mental illness and developmental disabilities often spent many decades in state institutions as there were no community human service centers with housing options, day programs, employment services. For her it was life changing as she could see that the people being served in this institution, some for 20-30 years, were much more like her than different. Sandy could see the possibilities for their lives and she knew then that eventually her career would lead her to a role in a community based service center. Now, 50 years later, Sandy sees the transformation and growth of a community based system of care to enhance the lives of people with disabilities. It was the vision she had so many years ago and it happened because of the incredible people of Bridgeway. Dedicated, caring and creative people made it happen and these people of action will continue to grow our services and support Bridgeway's mission into the future.

"Life is beautiful when you love what you do and I feel forever grateful that I found a career that has brought meaning and happiness to my life. My favorite poem, *Desiderata*, ends with *Strive to be Happy, my wish for all of you.*" - Sandy Wood

Congratulations on a wonderful career, Sandy and best wishes to you in retirement!



## Two Bridgeway Directors Graduate



## **Alyssa Hart Named New Vice President of Disability Services**

We are so excited to announce Bridgeway's new Vice President of Disability Services, Alyssa Hart. Alyssa started her role on Monday, January 8th.

Alyssa Hart has over six years of leadership experience. She has worked as a social worker in child welfare and the school setting for over nineteen years. Alyssa was a Director of Student Services for Dunlap School District for six years. While in this role she oversaw special education, health and wellness, discipline, residency, counseling services, evaluations, medicaid, 504's, transition program, STEP/DHS program, hiring staff and evaluating staff, return to school planning throughout the pandemic, and many other areas that were assigned.

Alyssa maintains a commitment to lifelong learning. Alyssa began her educational career by earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from Southern Illinois State University-Carbondale. She attended St. Ambrose University where she received a Masters Degree in Social Work. Alyssa obtained a Director of Special Education endorsement in 2016 from Illinois State University. In 2018 Alyssa received an endorsement in Education Administration from Bradley University. In May of 2022 Alyssa completed the Superintendent endorsement from Western Illinois University. Alyssa is currently working on

from IARF

## **Leadership Course**

Two Bridgeway Directors completed the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (IARF) Future Leaders training. Lauralee Hatleli, Director of Staff Development and Safety, and Keri Dodson, Community Engagement Director, celebrated the completion of this training at the IARF Future graduation ceremony in Springfield, where they were accompanied by their supervisors, Dan Lawrence (Vice President of Human Resources) and Bill Nelson (President and CEO).

The IARFuture Leadership Initiative is a one-of-a kind program designed to develop, train, and strengthen future generations of leaders working in not-for-profit social service agencies. The eight, day-long sessions offer the chance to learn from leaders in organizations that are changing the face of service delivery and re-tooling their agencies to meet the opportunities of the future. It also offers the chance to create an amazing support network among fellow participants from organizations similar to Bridgeway.

Lauralee and Keri thoroughly enjoyed their experience and came out of the program with a

completing her Dissertation to obtain her Doctorate in Education Leadership from Western Illinois University.

Alyssa was born and raised in Galesburg, IL. She has three sons; Jakob, William, and Benjamin. As a family they enjoy spending time with friends and traveling the world.

Alyssa first started her career at Bridgeway as a family support specialist in 1999 and is thrilled to be back in this leadership role. Alyssa is very excited to begin this role helping others and focusing on the mission of "Creating Solutions for Everyone."



### **Bridgeway Receives Grant to Expand Substance Use Services**

Funding in the amount of \$400,000 is being awarded from the Department of Health and Human Services to Bridgeway, Inc. to allow the organization to participate in the SAMHSA Treatment Drug Court initiative, which expands substance use disorder treatment and recovery support services in existing drug courts around the country.

More specifically, the funding will allow Bridgeway to strengthen staffing capabilities to better assist those in recovery and allow Bridgeway to work with housing organizations to provide stipends for sober housing and rental assistance for drug court funded apartments in the region. The funding will also support transportation services for those in recovery.

"Bridgeway is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to participate in the SAMHSA Treatment Drug Court initiative. This additional funding opportunity will allow us to build upon the foundation that we, as the treatment provider for both Knox and Warren County Drug Courts have already

stronger knowledge of the nonprofit world, a stronger sense of leadership, and developed relationships with their classmates.



### **Bridgeway Honored with City Proclamation For National Disability Employment Month**

At the Galesburg City Hall meeting on October 2nd, Bridgeway had the privilege to be recognized with a proclamation from the City of Galesburg commemorating October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Eric Hoffman, Director of Community Employment Services, was then able to inform those in attendance about our international award-winning Community Employment Services program!

built, through continuing education of existing staff and filling counseling and peer support vacancies," said Vicki Rose, Director of Outpatient and Support Services at Bridgeway.

"In addition, the funds will provide an opportunity to address two of the largest barriers to treatment engagement in our rural area, transportation and housing. We are partnering with Oxford House to provide stipends for sober housing and rental assistance for drug court funded apartments in each of the target areas, as well a transportation assistance."

Accepting the proclamation on Bridgeway's behalf was Eric Hoffman, and Director of Production and Business Development, Tammy Diefendorf.



## Holiday Cheer at Bridgeway



Bridgeway Consumer, Justin, receives his Christmas gift from Santa



Photo Booth Fun for Loves Park Friends of Growth Christmas Party



Bridgeway sponsors 'Festival of Lights' display in Rockford's Sinnissippi Park



Bridgeway staff help Monmouth's Jamieson Center pack Christmas meals for families in need



Consumers and staff visiting Santa at the mall



Data Entry Operators- Christmas Hat Day

## Bridgeway in the Community



## Niabi Zoo Named Employer of the Year by Bridgeway (Kewanee) Community Employment Services

Community Employment Services staff, Tracy Blanks (Employment Specialist in Kewanee) and Eric Hoffman (Director of Community Employment Services) presented their 'Employer of the Year' award to Niabi Zoo in Coal City. Johnny, a Bridgeway consumer, has been employed at Niabi Zoo seasonally for 5 years now!

Tammy Schmidt, Assistant Director of Niabi Zoo, sat down to talk about the experience of working with Bridgeway and how successful Johnny has been:

"Tracy Blanks [Kewanee Employment Specialist] approached me in 2018 asking if we had a space available for employment. We were so excited to bring Johnny in and he started out handing out maps as a greeter. He is not shy and him working up front there actually changed how people felt when they first came into the zoo. Waiting in lines, having to pay to come in, it actually mellowed people out seeing someone as friendly as Johnny greeting them as soon as they walked in. After COVID, we ended up moving Johnny into a new area to add some new tasks to his job list



## Engagement Recap for 2023

Community Partners: 98

Bridgeway-Sponsored

Events/Initiatives: 12

Bridgeway Features in the News: 11

Community events where

Bridgeway was represented: 92

Number of People Trained in Mental Health First Aid: 491

Facebook Metrics:

- Page likes: 1,140 (123 new in 2023 and 368 (+1700%) new followers since 2021)
- Reach: 61,834 unique accounts
- Content interactions- 2,200

Discover Wellnes Summit:

- Attendance: 218
- Organizations in wellness fair: 14
- Sponsors: 29



## Freezing for Food

Last month, Bridgeway employees and board member volunteered at Monmouth's 23rd Annual Freezing for Food event, where brave local volunteers stand outside of the Save A Lot grocery store in Monmouth and gather food and cash donations that benefit the Jameison Community Center and Roseville Food Bank.

Volunteers usually brave the freezing temperatures, but got a little lucky this year with 40 degree

and to keep him safe, where he helped us with revenue generation by filling bags for koi/domestic animals feedings. Johnny does what everyone else does and he has become engrained in our zoo family, so much so that team members ask if Johnny is there everyday. At some point, you don't recognize that he is part of a special business agency, he is just part of our team. When we need to rehire seasonal staff every year, Johnny is the first name off of our lips and we work with Tracy every step of the way to make sure he is on track to start again. I would never not want to have Tracy in the loop, we couldn't do without her.

The culture has absolutely changed since Johnny has started. My boss and I are very about inclusion and Johnny was really the start of that, so it was like divine providence when Tracy called. It came right at the time we were hoping to expand and working with Bridgeway has been a godsend."

weather.

Of those that volunteered were Abby Colvin (Bridgeway Inc. Board member), Stacy Brown (Vice President of Behavioral Health Services), Vicki Rose (Director of Outpatient and Support Services).



### The Season for Giving- Donation Drives

'Tis the season of giving and our employees LOVE to give back to their community. Loves Park staff held a Pet Wellness Drive, and received and donated 271 pounds of items to Kibble Korner in Rockford.

Galesburg Data Entry employees received \$280 in donations from the National Cancer Awareness Drive. Robert Johnson, Vice President of Affirmative, challenged the staff and said he would match any donations received. A total of \$560 was donated to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. We are so thankful to have such thoughtful staff who band together for a good cause!

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# Discover Wellness Summit 2023



## Celebrating 30 years of Bridgeway!

October 1st of 2023 marked 30 years of Bridgeway providing excellent services to the community. We celebrated our staff with anniversary parties at all of our locations and gifted staff with a Bridgeway quarter zip shirt. Without our dedicated staff, there would be no Bridgeway.

We are thankful for all that they do!

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