

The Bridge 2022 Recap

by Neomi Nicoline * Program Director * March 2023



We have a lot to be thankful for this year. We are thankful for all of you and the support everyone has given us. The Bridge is operating because of how our community near and far have been with us every step of the way. Every month we have people donating to us, and we are touched you chose us to give too. On a regular basis, we have



people asking, “How can we pray? What can I bring? What meal do you want me to make?” Without the outpouring of love and support everyone has shown us we The Bridge wouldn’t be able to serve the kids at the quality we are able to. Now as I look at this year, my mind goes to our first Bridge kids. They are now in their twenties, in college, EMTs, Marines and working full time jobs. We are extremely proud of them all. The Bridge was created to serve the youth of Round Lake and encourage them to pursue more in life. I can truly say that those now adults are doing great things!



Tent Mission

This year we made the Tent Mission a big focus. In the past years, we felt like we did not have enough volunteers to have a Tent Mission and run The Bridge Wi-Fi Cafe. This year we decided that one of our goals was to focus on meeting new faces. We changed methods a little bit and now we have only Tent Mission on Mondays and a shortened Tent Mission on Thursdays and The Bridge Wi-Fi cafe. You may be thinking what is the Tent Mission? The Tent Mission is a group of volunteers handing out treats and drinks for the kids walking home from school.

The Bridge is located on a street that a lot of middle school and high school students walk on to get home after school. We meet new kids on their terms.

We wanted to focus on the Tent Mission for two reasons. The first reason being that it is one of my favorite parts of The Bridge. Our interactions tend to be short at first and grow longer as we get to know the kids, and we get to give free stuff to the students. We are known as those people handing out free stuff! That is pretty great. The second reason we wanted to focus on the Tent Mission has to do with our number of students the last few years. The relationships that we have with our regular students are excellent. We see them two to three times a week, they come to Carried Away Youth Group, and we truly have a special bond with those students. However, our connection to the school needs to grow. Because of our efforts, we have made more connections. There are a few more students at The Bridge Wi-Fi Cafe hanging out on Thursdays. We implemented Jenga with questions this year. As the kids get snacks, we have Jenga set up, and they can choose to play and answer the question on the block. We also started playing guessing games. We have a jar full of treats and whoever gets the closest answer gets the jar and candy! By doing this, we encourage them to come back because we do not reveal the answer for a week or so. The goal is to see them more than once and to remember their names. It has been a lot of fun changing things up and learning new ways to get to know the students of Round Lake.



Community Dinners

Another focus this last year was making The Bridge a community and a family. In the late spring, we began having Community Dinners. Anyone and everyone is invited to participate in these dinners. There is one rule though... NO CELL PHONES. It has been nice learning what it means to eat together. We have silly conversations about whether or not you put Valentina hot sauce in the refrigerator or more serious conversations about friendship and school.



Cooking for the students has been a learning process. We all come from different families and different families have their own favorite meals.

Learning what people like and dislike has been a journey for me, and I am still on it. Thankfully, the students have been very gracious to me. The Bridge has been blessed with the number of people willing to help cook. It has been especially helpful during busy weeks for our family. As much as I love cooking, it can be hard to cook every week for The Bridge. And what do I love more than cooking, eating other cooks' food! Thank you so much!

Youth Group, Giving Back and Future Endeavors

The Bridge works in partnership with Carried Away Youth Group, and we invite students to attend youth group on Wednesday nights (which includes indoor and outdoor games, worship & prayer, Bible studies and service projects).



Last year, in partnership with Carried Away, we served at Feed My Starving Children and packed Operation Christmas Child boxes.

We were also able to help two different families move. It is always nice to give back, even if it is in small ways. We hope to do more things like this in this new year, and are also planning to do a fundraiser in the spring.



A Word From Our Executive Director - Pastor Marcus Johnson

We are a relationship-based mission who invests our hearts and time in the lives of students, introducing them to the life-transforming power of knowing Jesus Christ, the joy of living by faith, and the high calling of being servant-hearted and responsible in life and cross-cultural and globally-minded in our world

view. The Bridge works in partnership with families, churches, schools, and organizations, to equip students with a passion and the skills to excel in all areas of life and avoid the pitfalls of destructive choices. Thanks to Neomi and Jeff Nicoline who go above and beyond in working with students, to our youth group leaders, and to all of you who have volunteered, prayed for and financially supported The Bridge, including the people of Lake Region Bible Church in Round Lake, IL.



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