spotlight
BRIDGES PROJECT FOR EDUCATION

thank you, donors!

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Donor support helps build Bridges

For two decades, Bridges Project for Education has leveraged a small staff and limited resources to help thousands of underserved Taos County students propel themselves into the future. Person by person, meeting by meeting, Bridges has helped students pursue their dreams by unlocking the doors to postsecondary education. Every step of the way, the effort has had the support of generous donors who see the value of the work and the potential of the students Bridges serves.

People and institutions donate to Bridges for all kinds of reasons. Some donate to honor former teachers, mentors, or family members who supported them to reach their dreams. Some, like Karina Armijo, hope to make the path to a college education more accessible for Taos students than she found it. Others, like Quail Roost Foundation, appreciate the efficiency of the organization and seek to maximize the good their grant-making contributes to the community.

Whatever the reason driving their gift, Bridges Project is immensely grateful for the support of every donor. From the five dollar raffle ticket purchase to the substantial bequest, each gift is an expression of faith in our community and an investment in its future. The pages that follow highlight two donors, but every person who has made a contribution is remembered and appreciated. This holiday season, Bridges Project says Gracias por su generosidad.

Created by i2i Institute for Bridges Project for Education. To learn more, or to donate to Bridges, please visit www.bridgesproject.org
JOLEEN MONTOYA DYE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BRIDGES PROJECT, SAYS:

"In a community that can often feel fragmented, in a world that feels highly polarized, Bridges is a place where people come together to support dreams and choice. I am continually in awe of the cross-section of funders who support Bridges. I think this is a reflection of the fact that we work with people of all ages from different walks of life."

Bridges Project is grateful to all donors, big and small, whose contributions support the aspirations of local students.
"Bridges uses a high-touch method to speak to both family and the prospective student. This allows them to be responsive to the nuances that come with the complex nature of delivering education to a new generation."

Dozens of local businesses, regional and national foundations, and other organizations and institutions have contributed over the years to Bridges Project. Whether donating toward general operating expenses or funding a specific initiative, this financial support has been essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of the work.

Some grantmakers, like the Hispanics in Philanthropy Foundation, have noted the value of Bridges’ role as a connector and collaborator in the wider educational community. Others, like the Harry Chapin Foundation, saw how effective Bridges Project has been in reaching out to underserved youth in the area. For the Quail Roost Foundation, the most attractive element was the organizational efficiency of Bridges Project for Education.

We spoke with Sanjay Poovadan, a member of the Board of Directors at Quail Roost Foundation. “The initial draw was the low overhead, and the fact that so much of any dollars given to Bridges [would be] going directly to service,” Sanjay told us.

In Taos, “college counseling is not a simple matter,” Sanjay added. “The way in which Bridges is doing it, paying really close attention to both expressed and unexpressed needs and concerns—both family and individual—seems to me to be really ideal in terms of making the right kind of choices for these young people. It’s the method and [Bridges’] commitment to really paying attention to each individual that makes this special.”
Karina Armijo, a generous and consistent donor, is moved by Bridges' emphasis on lending a hand
to first generation to college students. She knows how difficult it can be to navigate that transition without help. *Sometimes the challenges don’t have to be that challenging if you know what the resources are,* she says.

*My route was just a little harder than it should have been,* she explains. *If I’d had something like Bridges, perhaps it would have been easier for me.* Born in Honduras, Karina moved with her family to the US as a small child. Although language and financial challenges limited her mother’s options, she urged her children to pursue their dreams. But how? That was the hard part.

*Because of this financial situation we were in, there was never any expectation [of parental support].* Karina recalls. As for assisting with the application process, she and her siblings understood that *we were on our own to do it. It was hard. It was a big learning curve. And I remember at one point I was so frustrated I was just throwing the paper all over because I felt like, ‘I don’t understand what you’re asking me!’*

Karina’s drive and tenacity carried her through. Community college followed by a design program at the University of Cincinnati—all this while working full time throughout her college career—prepared her to work as a graphic designer. She visited Taos on a whim, fell in love with the place, and worked for many years in web design and marketing. In 2016 she accepted the new position of Tourism and Marketing Director for the Town of Taos.

She’s in a position to give back, now. Both by donating and by volunteering her time, Karina supports the kind of services she herself could have benefitted from, years before. *I’ve had people who move here, who are older, and they’ve come to me and said, ‘You know, there’s so many nonprofits here and we might get involved. What do you suggest?’ And I tell them that Bridges is the first one that I think of. I feel very strongly about that.*
Small gifts add up

Making a contribution to Bridges doesn’t have to make a major dent on family finances. Some donors choose to pledge a small amount monthly, quarterly, or every year. Bridges is grateful to the consistent donors who give regularly. Even $5 or $10 gifts make a difference in the services Bridges can provide, and every gift is an expression of support and encouragement.

Sponsor a class

Last year, Bridges Project launched College Connections, a multi-year effort to engage youth early in learning about post-secondary options. The program encourages students to reflect on their goals and interests and advises them on concrete steps they can take to support those. Why not sponsor a class? Bridges Project can provide information to institutions or individuals seeking to sign on for a year or commit to the full program.

Engage as a group

Giving draws strength when more people are involved. Some workplaces will match gifts to nonprofits. Businesses or organizations may want to throw a fundraising event for Bridges, devote a percentage of a day’s profits, or create a matching challenge for friends and families.

Add Bridges to your giving plan

Make Bridges the beneficiary of your will through a bequest. Talk to your financial advisor about contributing to Bridges as a part of your life’s legacy.