



# BRIDGES: CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF HELPING STUDENTS GO TO COLLEGE

By Mackenzie Frederick

TAOS NEWS FILE PHOTO

**A**re you a rising high school senior with plans to pursue a certification, vocational education or a two- or four-year college degree? Have you completed your GED/HSE (High School Equivalency) and are considering your next step? Are you a freshman, sophomore or junior in high school and thinking ahead toward your future? Have you been thinking about going back to school after taking time off or are hoping to change your career? If so, Bridges Project for Education (Bridges) exists to support you on your path to higher education.

For the last 20 years, Bridges has assisted more than 2,700 students of all ages in Taos County and Northern New Mexico on their journey to creating the future that they dream about. We work with individuals and their families or allies through all parts of the admissions and financial aid process. We help people find schools that are a good fit, work through and keep track of the various steps – so that ideally none are overlooked – and complete FAFSAs and pursue scholarships to

minimize the loans that students may accept as a part of attaining certifications and degrees. Bridges is a nonprofit that is unaffiliated with any particular school and is a free service. To learn more about our organization, please check out “We Are Bridges,” [spark.adobe.com/page/jQyGL-1VueBJal](http://spark.adobe.com/page/jQyGL-1VueBJal).

At Bridges, we use the term college to refer to any postsecondary educational experience, meaning after high school graduation or completing a GED or HSE. You might work toward obtaining a one-year vocational certification that allows you to quickly enter the workforce, a two-year associate degree, a four-year bachelor’s degree or even beyond. All of these tracks have many of the same components that must be completed in order to be accepted and attend, but four-year colleges and universities may have more layered, complex admissions and financial aid processes.

#### “THE LEARNING CURVE”

Each month throughout the academic year, from September through May, The Taos News will publish Bridges’ column

“The Learning Curve,” which will share information about types of colleges, creating a college list, fit, application basics, writing essays, completing the FAFSA, seeking and applying for scholarships, comparing financial aid award letters and making the transition to college. We will share college preparatory information for juniors and younger high school students. To learn even more about college admissions and financial aid, visit the Resources page on our web site [bridgesproject.org](http://bridgesproject.org).

#### WORKING WITH BRIDGES

Since all of your work with Bridges is one-on-one, there is no one exact way your process will unfold, but there are key way-points during which you will be encouraged to connect with your counselor. The initial visit will be an informal conversation about who you are — including your educational background, interests and goals — and you will be provided with an overview about the college admissions and financial process. Together, you and your counselor will create an action plan, so that you can achieve your objectives by the deadlines you set. You will meet

throughout your process in half-hour to hour-long appointments. We ideally like to meet with students multiple times during critical points in the application process.

Each session takes place in our office at 112A Alexander Street in Taos. You can schedule an appointment by calling (575) 758-5074 or email [info@bridgesproject.org](mailto:info@bridgesproject.org).

Bridges Project for Education would like to thank everyone who helped us celebrate our 20th anniversary this past year. Through the support of our numerous contributors, including individuals, families, businesses and foundations, we have achieved two decades of helping people actualize their dreams. Although higher education is not the only way to a fulfilling and successful life, anyone who chooses it must be able to access it. We believe in the power of education to transform the lives of the people within our community for the better, and in doing so, the world.

*Mackenzie Frederick is the college counselor and development coordinator for Bridges Project for Education.*