

Reach for the Stars!

The Bridging Out Program

established 1990

Are you interested in the Bridging Out Program Project, *Stories of Resilience*? The program members developed the idea and want to work on the project. Would you like to share your story, your values and decision making process? If you have a learning disorder, you do, indeed, have a *Story of Resilience* to share.

Bridging Out Program Project Description: Stories of Resilience

Do you know that the members of Bridging Out wrote a book in 1991-1992? Putting the Puzzle Together was written by members of the group who met for nearly a year socializing and discussing issues that were important to the then "twenty-somethings". The group experience was followed by individual interviews with the members who wished to share a personal story. Most of the stories depicted frustration and struggle. The group process provided a structured and accommodating opportunity for verbal and non-verbal expression. This is the first step in healing, empowerment and resilience.

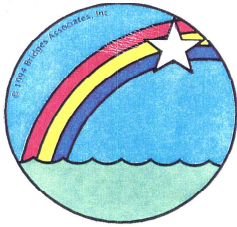
The phrase "reasonable accommodations" was pretty new at the time, as ADA had just been established. Experts were beginning to talk about "self advocacy". Researchers began to look at "strength based practice" in mid-1990. However, stories and the group process for Putting the Puzzle Together was accommodating, empowering and strength-based.

Differences were validated and accepted and the focus was on adaptation and progress. We asked: What is the best way for you to tell your story? Do you want to write, draw or tell me? Would a song or poem help you express yourself? You have an important story to tell and I hope you will do what is most comfortable. The method was limited only to the creative imagination of the individual. We were all surprised and pleased with both the outcome and our first publication!

Bridges published the book, sold a few hundred copies and distributed them to prospective members, parents and teachers and at exhibits. Nearly 17 years have passed since the Bridging Out began (July 1990) and 15 years have passed since the book was published.

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We have all experienced significant personal growth, members, leaders and interns. We have aged, and as we all know, aging imposes new developmental tasks. In recognition of this, we are preparing to write an update of the Puzzle Book. This new publication will be called Stories of Resilience. The title originates from the Steering Committee, and the twelfth lesson in Take Charge!® Coaching. We plan to look at resilience - remarkable solutions to many challenges. Using the Take Charge! lingo, they have bounced back! Mike Kalil was one member who volunteered countless hours on the first edition. He wrote the Introduction as well as some of the content. He wanted a ten year edition and expressed this wish fairly persistently. Sadly, he passed away in 2004. We will dedicate the book to Mike's memory.

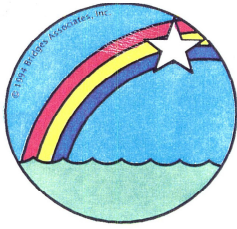
We will create a publication for adults, parents and professionals about succeeding in adulthood with learning disorders. We will document the history of the Bridging Out Program and describe this successful social group model developed by parents, members and John and Mary-Jane. We suspect it is the longest running group of its kind in the field! When finished, we would like to distribute it at no cost as a .pdf document through the website and other organizations. We will hire members of the program to work at tasks, based on their strengths and abilities, and in the process provide "on the job training and coaching" and a reference for future employment.

When Bridging Out began and the Puzzle Book was written we were all "pioneers" and volunteers. The Steering Committee has prepared job descriptions, a budget and a fundraising plan. The project will cost approximately \$25,000 and will be finished in a year. We are excited to reach this place and invite you to join in the project through sharing a story of resilience, offering technical assistance in support of the publication, or making a tax-deductible contribution to celebrate the effort of the Bridging Out Program.

Respectfully submitted:

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