



*The Bridging Out Program empowers members with support, friendship and activities to build community and improve quality of life.*



### **The Bridging Out Program**

The **Bridging Out Program** was established in 1990 by a group of concerned parents, their young adult children with significant learning disabilities and BRIDGES' founding directors who continue to co-lead the group. The families were concerned about the life after high school. They had questions about future planning.

However, the priority was to create a long-standing community support network, like an *emotional safety net*. The group has met monthly, consistently and continuously since 1990. A shared group project, sharing ideas and recording them in a publication, created a proud bond. The book, *Putting the Puzzle Together: Ideas About Independent Living* was published in 1992 and has served as a blueprint since then.

Members value socialization, support and sharing news. They have made lasting friendships. As a group, they have set and met goals for activities, health, socializing, work and independent living. They have welcomed new members and envision helping begin more groups. Eight to ten members and two leaders are a good size. From the beginning, leaders focused on emotional safety, self-awareness, identifying strengths, learning style accommodation, social relationships, communication, and self-advocacy; eventually called *TAKE CHARGE!*®.

### **Stories of Resilience Project**

In 2008, the program embarked on the *Stories of Resilience Project*, using TAKE CHARGE! Coaching and significant help from Family Therapy Intern, Betty Anne Bevis. The Project was evaluated by Gonzalo Bacigalupe, Ed.D., M.P.H. Members and leaders set and met goals. In 2012, initiated by Katrina Vidal, MSW Intern, members began evaluating their progress and goals. The program completed a five year follow up review of the *Stories of Resilience* in 2014 and presented their progress to their community. *Write your story! Do you have a story to tell about taking charge of your life?*

### **Emerging Artist Project**

In 2015, the program began raising money for painting lessons, intending to create cards to sell. At the suggestion of a group member, Jax McKinnis, *InspireArt* joined us to begin the project in 2016. Members painted together, presented the cards in 2017 with their families and friends, displayed their work at an Art Show at Community Support Associates in August 2018, and in December 2018 and launching sales with a larger community! The plan – really a vision – is to expand the project to include painting classes and sales through partnerships, exhibits and fairs.



*Bridges Associates, Inc. helps children and adults take charge of their lives.*