What is the key to ending homelessness? Is it rental assistance for security deposit, first month's rent and often last month's rent – when homeless moms sign a lease? Is it case-management to provide supportive services and begin healing from the trauma of homelessness? Is it supportive friendships that make the difference between families in poverty who can maintain housing (often with the help of family and friends) and those who lose their housing?

What we know about homelessness is that all three of these are key to ending homelessness. And each family in Bridge of Hope receives all 3 of these keys – allowing lives to change and homelessness to end!

This past year, Bridge of Hope launched a new four-year strategic plan called “Keys to Home” – with the goal of expanding the number of women and children served by 75% from 2014 to 2018. The plan’s name is a reminder that receiving the keys to a new home is the first step toward ending homelessness. Keys also become a metaphor in scripture for the kingdom of God and our own kingdom-building role.

In today’s economy, rental housing in most of the communities served by Bridge of Hope is extremely tight and very expensive, making it more and more challenging to provide “keys to home” for the families we serve.

We are blessed to report that in the first year of implementing this plan, Bridge of Hope locations served 12% more families – 283 women and children!

The Bridge of Hope network trained and nurtured 814 mentors from churches across our 23 locations in 13 states and Canada. We launched 3 new locations in Denver, Colorado; Calgary, Canada; and Dana’s Point, California.

Successful nonprofit work includes both successful program outcomes and successful stewardship of your financial dollars. Bridge of Hope National is pleased to do both of these on your behalf, as we engage with homeless single mothers and children and mentoring churches from many Christian faith traditions. We are grateful to God for you, for your care and compassion for homeless single mothers and children, and for your engagement with us in providing “keys to home” for more homeless families in the years ahead.
As the outcomes on the next page show, the current housing and job markets create challenges for single mothers facing homelessness – as they work towards financial stability. Bridge of Hope mentoring friends journey with families as they face these overwhelming realities.

Though she has a master’s degree, Heather was unemployed as her marriage ended and she faced homelessness. As she searched for housing in State College, PA for herself and her 4 children, rent was $1,300 or more a month (due to the competitive real estate market because of Penn State students).

Bridge of Hope’s provision of temporary rental assistance allowed Heather to find an apartment outside of town (but in the same school district). Bridge of Hope staff and Heather worked on budgeting and a plan for childcare. Heather found employment at the YMCA and also at Penn State on a short-term placement.

Both Heather and her mentors from Centre Church report that they “gained a life-long friend.” They built friendships via time together, texts, calls, and emails. Heather even ran a half marathon with one of her mentors.
Since the economic downturn of 2008, increasing numbers of individuals and families are moving from owned homes to rental units. From 2007 to 2013, the number of renters in the U.S. grew by 6.3 million. The result is that middle and higher income renters are filling units previously available to low-income renters. Landlords are raising rent prices. The national fair market value for a two-bedroom apartment is now $1,006/month. And the vacancy rates (available units of any kind) are extremely low. In 2013, for every 100 extremely low-wage renters, there were just 31 affordable units. In this context, many Bridge of Hope families find themselves in decent housing that stretches their resources to the limit, challenging their ability to sustain their housing long term.

54% of women exiting Bridge of Hope had maintained their housing for at least six months.

35% of the women exiting Bridge of Hope had maintained their housing for at least one year.

The nationwide housing wage – that’s the wage required for rent to consume 30% of income – is $19.35. The average wage nationwide is just $15.16. And the federal minimum wage remains stuck at $7.25. In no state is a one bedroom rental unit affordable on minimum wage. In recent years, a full 50% of renters are cost burdened, with nearly half of those paying more than 50% of their income for rent. Wage stagnation poses a significant barrier to many Bridge of Hope families who are challenged to find work that supports the needs of their families. It is fully expected the most Bridge of Hope families will continue to rely on public supports (such as childcare subsidy, food stamps, etc.) to maintain the stability of their families.

89% of Bridge of Hope participants exiting the Bridge of Hope program were employed.

At Bridge of Hope, we believe that family homelessness is more than a crisis of poverty; it’s a crisis of relationships. The gift of mentoring friendships sets Bridge of Hope apart from most housing programs. Increasingly, a support system isn’t enough to prevent a family from finding themselves homeless, but homelessness is far more likely for families without support.

86% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope reported having a network of personal support.

Bridge of Hope does not require participants to attend church or to express any kind of personal faith. Yet our hope is that each woman and her children would experience the love of God through her mentors, and that seeds would be planted and faith would be nurtured.

90% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope reported faith/spiritual life that provides hope, healing, and direction for their daily lives or reported exploring/growing in their spiritual life.

Having enough money and being adept and using that money well are two different things. Many families who find themselves homeless struggle to make tough decisions about how to prioritize their spending when they rarely have enough for the basics. Money management skills are critical for maximizing one’s resources in a tough economy. That’s why Bridge of Hope provides tools and training for women to develop these skills, even while they maintain complete control of their spending decisions.

63% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope were paying their basic living expenses, including rent and utilities, without incurring additional debt.

86% of participants exiting Bridge of Hope reported having a network of personal support.
Leaders of Hope is an annual giving society based on giving for Bridge of Hope National’s fiscal year, April 1 - March 31.
We thank these Charter Members of the Leaders of Hope Society for helping to end homelessness for single mothers & children!

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We thank those who have named Bridge of Hope National as a beneficiary in their retirement funds and/or estate planning.

* Donor is deceased and his/her planned gift is making a difference each year for homeless families through the Bridge for Tomorrow Endowment Fund.

**Legacy of Hope Society**

We thank those who have named Bridge of Hope National as a beneficiary in their retirement funds and/or estate planning.

- Cindy and Bob Petersheim
- Dorothy Pulcher
- Glenn and Anne Weaver
- Ruth and Richard Weaver
- Justin and Christina Weber
- Edith Yoder and Garth Scott
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† Leader of Hope - Young Donor: Those age 30 or younger join the Leaders of Hope Society with a gift of $500.