

Bridges in Norman helps students graduate, have solid foundations

By Joy Hampton Senior Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, September 27, 2015 8:03 pm

Megan Siravo is a young professional who is in a career she enjoys. She is giving back to the community and loves being the mom of an adorable 3-year-old. But things could have turned out differently for the former Bridges student.

“My junior year, I got into the Bridges program,” Siravo said. “I had left home when I was 16 and was living with an aunt and uncle. I had heard about the program and the benefits.”

Those benefits included a safe place to live and the mentorship of Gail Blaylock, an associate judge with the city of Norman.

“My home life was not a good atmosphere,” Siravo said. “I did not get along with my father at all and my mother could not cut the strings with him.”

The unhealthy atmosphere of her home life now informs her parenting.

“I know what not to do,” she said.

But she is quick to say that without the support, counseling and mentorship she received while at Bridges, a nonprofit formed through a collaboration of the Norman community, Norman Public Schools and the Norman Housing Authority that assists high school students who live alone.

“Right now, I work for Love’s at their corporate office under fleet sales,” Siravo said. “I love my job.”

Bridges offers apartments, a connection to social service agencies, assistance with school-related activities, trained mentors and college scholarships.



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Megan Siravo poses with her 3-year-old daughter, Amelia. Megan participated in the Bridges program, starting her junior year in high school. She has since graduated from the program.

Bridges is not a free ride.

“Your rent was set up on a sliding scale, based on what you made. You paid rent and you paid utilities,” Siravo said. “Of course, school came first.”

She said Bridges starts a savings account for students, who get money for things like not missing school.

“They would put money back for us and when you graduate, they cut you a check and it’s everything they have put into savings for you,” Siravo said. “It’s something to take to college; you get back from all the hard work.”

Bridges also hosts events and lunches that are training classes.

“We had different subjects for each one,” she said. “They are an amazing program.”

The mentor program was of particular significance to Siravo.

“My year was the first year they had the mentor program,” she said. “(Blaylock) actually went with me to enroll in classes at UCO and get accepted and take all the steps that I needed to be in college.

“We’re still close friends. There’s still be situations and things that I’ve needed advice on and she’s still there, and so is Debra (Krittenbrink, executive director).”

Her senior year, Siravo was voted to be senior representative on the Bridges board. She had a vote on hiring new staff and other items of note.

“Those are the things that have helped me be successful with jobs since then — seeing how boards operate and interviewing someone,” Siravo said. “I have recently been accepted in the United Way’s Board Serve program of Central Oklahoma. They teach you what you need to know to serve on a nonprofit board. I want to be able to be on the board at Bridges and contribute.

“Without having that opportunity there (Bridges), things could have gone a lot differently.”

Joy Hampton

366-3544

jhampton@normantranscript.com

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