



CHURCHES RESPOND. HOMELESSNESS ENDS. HOPE BEGINS.

Dear Neighbors,

Have you enjoyed the crispness in the autumn air or the sight of full and colorful mums and piles of pumpkins and gourds everywhere? Perhaps the shift into a new season feels especially welcome this year as there has been a great deal of monotony and uncertainty with this larger pandemic season. Shifts can help us see and experience life anew. Yet they can feel scary and difficult at times. Autumn invites us to a season of letting go and rest. This is not always easy.

Aria and her two young children are the newest family to join the Bridge of Hope Neighborhood. Aria is a hard-working, resourceful and passionate woman who is strongly devoted to her children. She has been working diligently to gain traction with her finances as she juggles full work hours with transporting her children between multiple caretakers and then spending quality time with them herself. There's not a lot of time and energy left over for Aria at the end of the day.

Aria's neighboring volunteers, a wonderful group consisting of an extended family from multiple local Christian faith communities, is committed to supporting Aria and her children. It's been difficult for this fledgling relationship to take off due to lack of time and access. Aria's introduction to her neighboring group had to take place over Zoom for safety reasons.

But then something shifted.

The group coordinator decided to come to Aria's house, with Aria's permission and safely masked, to be present in person for the House Blessing ritual. The two women lit a candle and walked together through each room with children in tow, while the rest of the group joined via Zoom. There were prayers of blessing read for each room of the house and over the family. Suddenly, the family and the neighbors were no longer socially-distant entities. This meaningful ritual helped shift their connection. They were now part of the blessing and hope that Aria's house represents. This was incredibly meaningful for all involved.



Aria's neighboring volunteers are finding new and creative ways to show up and help support her being able to take a breath, to rest and relax. They want Aria to be able to receive the blessings they prayed for together. They want to get to know each other better and build the trust that authentic relationships require.

We often talk about the miracles of neighboring relationships. They are such a strong and unique part of Bridge of Hope's program. But behind the miracles is the time and effort to forge a new relationship from strangers to neighbors. This is not always easy. It requires letting go of expectations and being willing to simply be present with the Love and let the Love guide the way.

One of the ways we are working to best prepare our neighboring volunteers for this work has been to expand our Cultural Humility training. Our affiliate board of directors issued the following anti-oppression statement this summer, which has helped us nurture the awareness to promote more equity within our work.

*Bridge of Hope is an organization of Christian volunteers who form neighboring relationships to end homelessness. We do this work humbly, recognizing that the same powerful forces of culture and history that create homelessness, provide others with power and privilege. We thus seek not only to end the symptoms of homelessness, but to address and dismantle the racial, economic, and gendered systems that create and normalize the injustices that divide us.*

These are good shifts, even if they are not always comfortable or easy. They require us to continue to show up with Love. But Love is the space of transformation, and that is very often where we find Hope.

FALL 2020

## Our Mission

To engage  
Christian faith communities  
in ending family homelessness  
through neighboring relationships  
that demonstrate Christ's love.

## Who We Are...

Chris Hoover Seidel  
Director

Jane Ellen Reid  
Neighborhood Resource Specialist

Pamela Hoffeditz  
Administrative Assistant

### Board of Directors:

Lois Shank, Chair  
Sue Swartz, Vice-Chair  
Ronda Rittenhouse, Secretary  
Malachi Bontrager, Treasurer  
Wanda Hamilton  
Audrey Myers  
Deborah Raynes  
Mark Metzler Sawin  
Julian Turner

## Our Vision

Harrisonburg-Rockingham,  
a community  
where no family  
is homeless.

Visit us online!

[www.hr.bridgeofhopeinc.org](http://www.hr.bridgeofhopeinc.org)

@bridgeofhopehr @bohhrva @bohhrva

## Neighborhood Needs



Tangible ways you can help build a world of **HOPE** include financial donations, furniture donations, connecting Bridge of Hope with your church, participating as a Neighboring Volunteer, and attending the upcoming Locavore Fundraiser!



## UPCOMING EVENTS



**Locavore**  
**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**Virtual Event**  
**November 14, 2020**

For more info:  
<https://bit.ly/3csOsiz>

## GIVING

Online Donations  
<https://hr.bridgeofhopeinc.org/donate-now/>

Mail a check to:  
PO Box 535 Harrisonburg, VA 22803

Visit our Giving Page to learn more about:

Business Sponsorship  
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Charitable Giving through Everence

<https://hr.bridgeofhopeinc.org/give/>

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**CONTACT US TODAY**

About ways to get involved.

(540) 478-2356