In the past year, we have built on our achievements and laid a foundation for future growth.

We launched a new BT membership. Responding to demand from across the U.S. (and beyond), we created a new way to reach IG practitioners with our membership offering. Each month, members receive a How-To-Guide (H2G) that is complete with building blocks of human development and intergenerational theory, conversation starters, activities geared towards young people from preschool through college for both familiar and formal settings, related healthy snack ideas, and steps to do a formal program. To date, members hail from 10 states plus Canada.

Charlotte and Ted share about the impact of Bridges at BT’s Circle of Love event

Because of YOU, lives are changed:

We asked teachers, volunteer coordinators and intergenerational team leaders about the impact of Bridges Together’s work...

New connections are made that enrich lives...

“There are so many moments when we see students and volunteers looking into each other’s eyes with expressions of appreciation and joy. The students glow with the attention they receive and the volunteers also feel seen and useful.”

“One of our volunteers is a grandparent who does not see his grandchildren as much as he would like. The volunteer works with two young children and at one point I looked over and the youngest child was leaning closer to the volunteer to get help with writing. I’m not sure who was getting more from the moment.”

“One little boy asked his Bridges friend to go to a sporting event he was playing in. When the boy’s Bridges friend arrived, the boy was SO excited!”
Children have moments to shine, grow and appreciate diversity…

“We had a student [who] can often derail others learning. He didn’t always seem engaged in the activities. One day at lunch he stopped me and said, “Can we trade groups soon? I want to get to know ALL of the volunteers.” He became a social butterfly in the class and got to know all the volunteers. During Bridges, it was his moment to shine, and he did.”

“Many of our students don’t have relationships with older individuals in their lives. Not only were they expanding their knowledge towards diversities, but they built relationships with individuals who have different experiences.”

We cultivated and trained Community Intergenerational Leadership Teams on the art & science of strong intergenerational programs and supported them as they carried out their plans to unite bookend generations. We collaborated with UMass Boston to develop and utilize an audit to assess how “age-friendly” a university is. A report of this work will be published in The Gerontologist, a national journal; presented at the national Gerontological Society of America conference in November; and shared through the global network of age-friendly universities. The Leadership Team development was made possible by funding from Tufts Health Plan Foundation and our donors.

We celebrated Intergenerational Month in September and the Kraemer IG Storytelling Contest. We hosted our own intergenerational storytelling evening in conjunction with Fugitive Stories and launched the Kraemer IG Storytelling Contest. You may read the winning “Bathtub” story on our website. We encouraged other communities to host their own events and made available How-To-Guides to assist them.

BT helped “champions” develop a team then trained and supported them as they implemented the Bridges Program Curricula Suite. The total number of participating older people and youth this year alone was 3,000+ – bringing the total to over 18,000 since 1991. This was made possible by funding from Tufts Health Plan Foundation, DCU for Kids Foundation, and our donors.

History comes alive as West Springfield Bridges participants create their family trees

Family connections are strengthened – which research shows supports young people’s development…

During another session, one boy, in interviewing his grandfather, said he had no idea his grandpa had a wood shop in his basement. “Wow, isn’t that cool?” He added.

IG seeds are planted and spread…

“Students got excited to have our older generation come and read to them. We have implemented more intergenerational programs throughout our communities.”
Older people find new meaning...

“When the BT volunteers talk about the program many of them say that it is the one day a week that they know will be a good day. It gives them something to look forward to.”

“One of our volunteers shared that knowing that he would see his group at school gave him a reason to get up in the morning.”

Attitudes about aging improves, which research shows can lead to longer lives...

“During the ‘how old is old?’ session, many of the 4th graders expressed their changed views of what is old because of knowing their volunteers.”

“When I had a student draw an old person before, the description was “old, mean, ugly and smelly” second time after engaging with elderly, “homey, loveable, nice, beautiful and just like me.”

This is a student who really did not want to participate or meet the elderly, but then, the elderly that came to the school did not want to come either. LOL. but after they sat and engaged in conversation and created a quilt square together, they both developed a strong bond. The elderly lady did not want to leave and the student didn’t want her to, which got me all choked up.”

We raised awareness about the need for intergenerational engagement and professional support of this field.

We reached national audiences with live and virtual presentations at the Boomer Summit, America Society on Aging conference and media appearances like one for the cablevision program, The Good Life. Massachusetts State Representative Carmine Gentile from the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs invited us to lead an information session for legislators and their aides on the importance of intergenerational engagement.
We celebrated our Circle of Love. On the evening of our sixth anniversary of incorporation, BT held our spring fundraiser at Circle Furniture. A huge thank you to volunteer Bonny Rollender who helped coordinate the event and Terry and Andree’ Daly who flew in from Georgia to be our auctioneers. It was fabulous to hear from Lisa, Ted and Charlotte who have been touched by Bridges. We honored founding board member Chris Hammer who completed his second term.

We laid plans for a successful future. During the 2017-18 year, we:

- Strengthened our board including adding Eric Saunders & Lori Bitter.
- Developed a strategic plan and a business plan.
- Aligned our staff structure to maximize our impact and growth, led by executive director, Andrea J. Fonte Weaver, and Membership & Business Development Director, Sarah Cavicchi.
- Began planning for the Intergenerational Symposium: Connecting the Dots which will be held on September 28, 2018 at Lasell College. This is the first statewide professional day-long event for people in more than a decade!
- With gratitude to Retirement Research Foundation, Cummings Foundation & Tufts Healthy Aging Foundation, in 2018-2019, BT will be developing an online training program for those engaged in intergenerational work.

Intergenerational programs are a vaccination against ageism and a prescription for longevity!