

BRIGHT SPOTS NEWSLETTER,
AUGUST 2018



Every Child Succeeds, From Cradle to Career

Here's an update on recent "Bright Spots" in our journey to ensure the success of every Bridgeport child:

Bridgeport Prospers Earns National Recognition



Bridgeport Prospers has been recognized by [StriveTogether](#), a national non-profit working to bring communities together around data to make decisions and improve results for kids. Notably, we have been elevated within the StriveTogether Cradle to Career network to the "Sustaining Gateway" benchmark.

Executive Director Allison Logan commented: *"I want to thank our community partners and Bridgeport Prospers/United Way team members for your support that helped to carry us to this major accomplishment."*

Gaining particular recognition is the "Baby Bundle," a group of initiatives designed to ensure that all children are healthy and ready for preschool at age three. StriveTogether has invited Bridgeport Prospers to highlight this work at its annual conference in Seattle in October.

"Bridgeport Prospers is making significant strides in how partners work together to use data to improve results for kids," StriveTogether President and CEO Jenifer Blatz said. *"We congratulate Bridgeport Prospers for the progress they are making and look forward to recognizing them when they reach more milestones along their journey to enable economic mobility for students and families."*

The buzz around the "Baby Bundle" is spreading to other national organizations as well. [The Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\)](#) hosted a national webinar featuring the "Baby Bundle" for the Maternal and Infant Health Bureau in March. And [The Campaign for Grade Level Reading](#) recognized Bridgeport as a "Bright Spot" at its national conference in Philadelphia in July.

StriveTogether establishes a continuum of "gateways"--or *quality benchmarks*--for its members, which signal a partnership's progression toward sustained impact on children's outcomes.

StriveTogether is a national movement of 70 member communities involving 10,800 organizations in 30 states and Washington, D.C., impacting 10.4 million children.

Partnering with CT Medicaid to Improve Outcomes for Young Children

Bridgeport Prospers has been named as a partner in the State of Connecticut's Medicaid redesign work in order to improve health and outcomes for young children in at-risk families. This work is led by the Connecticut Department of Social Services, under the direction of Commissioner Roderick Bremby. It is part of a national initiative known as the [Medicaid Early Childhood Innovation Lab](#).

The goal of this work to develop *upstream innovations* focused on prevention, early detection, and early intervention for young children and their families. Shifting focus of service delivery is critical because the first 1000 days of a child's life lay the foundation for cognitive, physical and social development that lasts a lifetime. Babies born "at risk" are more likely to suffer immediate and long term health problems, behavioral problems, and educational challenges. Medicaid is uniquely poised to help during this key stage since it covers nearly half of all births and 40% of all children in the US. In Bridgeport, Medicaid covers 65% of all births.



Connecticut is one of three states (along with two health agencies) that are members of the Medicaid Early Childhood Innovation Lab. The City of Bridgeport will be a pilot site for testing and refining these strategies, impacting hundreds of babies born "at risk" each year. Lessons learned will be shared broadly with stakeholders across the country.

Executive Director Allison Logan and child expert/team consultant Dr. Janice Gruendel are joining other partners from the Office of Early Childhood, the Department of Children and Families, the State Department of Education, and other early childhood organizations to design and implement new strategies outlined in the Bridgeport Baby Bundle. To date, strategies include depression screening for moms (before and after birth), regular developmental screenings for children, and whole-family services like universal home visits during a child's first three years.

The initiative is convened by the Center for Health Care Strategies and supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the David & Lucille Packard Foundation.

Spotlight on New Team Member: Gwendolyn Brantley



We are proud to welcome Gwendolyn Brantley to the team in the role of **Youth Innovation Specialist**, where she will lead Bridgeport Prospers youth initiatives.

Gwen will collaborate with community partners to improve outcomes in 5 areas identified by our Community Action Networks: Youth Safety, Middle Grade Math Proficiency, High School Graduation, College Enrollment/Graduation, and Youth Careers.

Gwen's first project is the development of a [STEM Learning Ecosystem](#) in Bridgeport. A STEM ecosystem will provide the architecture for cross-sector learning, offering all young people access to STEM-rich learning environments. "The goal is for students here to develop important engagement and skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics so that they can be successful in the modern US economy," commented Brantley.



Collaborators will include youth and families, schools, businesses, faith leaders, unions, out-of-school programs, community-based organizations, and STEM expert institutions. Importantly, the Bridgeport ecosystem is seeking to become part of a national network of 60 STEM communities which will share resources, best practices, and technical

assistance.

Her investment in the success of Bridgeport youth runs deep. After all, Gwen grew up and attended public schools here. She has been a Bridgeport Prospers volunteer since 2014, serving on both the Youth Engagement and the Data Tables.

Gwen is the founder and Executive Director of ACCESS Educational Services. She holds a B.S. from Southern Connecticut State University and an M.S. from the University of Bridgeport.

“Bridgeport Basics” Initiative to Roll Out Through Partnerships



The [“Bridgeport Basics”](#) will begin rolling out to local families through the help of our community partners.

To date, 11 partners have signed on to share “The Basics.” These partners represent a variety of sectors from healthcare, to childcare and education, to government organizations like schools and libraries. The goal is “sociological saturation,” so that The Basics are shared with caregivers in places they already know, by people they already trust. Available materials include free videos, handouts, posters, booklets, and workshop presentations. Most partners will begin sharing information in the Fall, though Read to Grow is already sharing The Basics with families who have babies at local Bridgeport Hospitals.

“We want to ensure that all parents and caregivers can access information, support, and positive reinforcement for doing The Basics,” stated Ron Ferguson, Basics founder and director of the [Harvard Achievement Gap Initiative](#).

Bridgeport Prospers is seeking additional partners to help spread the word.

The Basics are five evidence-based caregiving practices designed for children from birth to three. They cover much of what experts agree is important for young children. Developed by the Harvard Achievement Gap Initiative, they were inspired by three key facts:

- 80% of a child’s brain development happens in the first three years;
- Skill gaps based on race, income, and ethnicity are evident as early as age two;
- Positive early caregiving experiences can build young brains.

According to Ferguson, “The Basics are five simple, powerful things families can do to help give young children a great start in life.” The hope is that doing The Basics with young children can prevent the achievement gap from opening in the first place.

State Budget Funds Collective Impact

Good news for collective impact initiatives: the 2019 Connecticut State Budget includes line item funding for Cradle to Career Initiatives.



The budget allocates \$100,000 to be shared by the state's four Cradle to Career Initiatives: [Bridgeport Prospers](#), [Norwalk Acts](#), [Stamford Cradle to Career](#), and [Waterbury Bridge to Success](#). It was passed with bipartisan support and signed by Governor Malloy in May. Rep. Ezequiel Santiago (D-Bridgeport) was instrumental in the funding. He commented:

"I am pleased to have played a major role in support of the Collective Impact budget line item that supports our Cradle to Career efforts through the organized collaboration of a number of indispensable non-profit organizations across the state. I thank the United Way for all of their commitment and dedicated work and look forward to the continued coordinated delivery of services that contribute to effective outcomes."

Collective Impact movements seek to convene cross-sector partners to improve outcomes for every child. Partners range from parents and educators to civic leaders and local employers. Together, they seek success across the youth continuum: from kindergarten readiness, to grade-level achievement, to high school graduation, to college enrollment and career readiness.

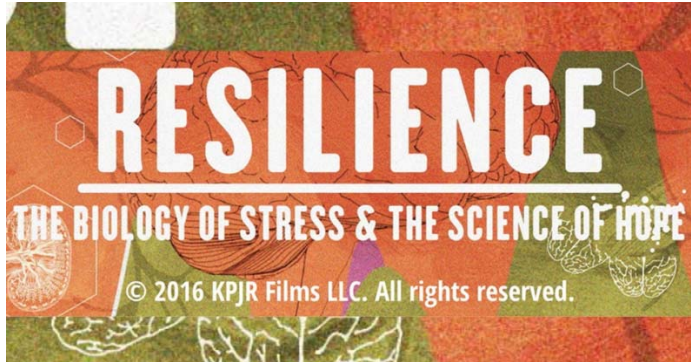
All four initiatives are members of the nationally-acclaimed StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network.

Backbone funding for the Bridgeport, Norwalk, and Stamford initiatives is provided by the United Way.

Growing Awareness of the Impact of Childhood Trauma

Together, Bridgeport Prospers and community partners are raising awareness of the lifelong impact of childhood trauma.

They are doing so by screening the documentary [“Resilience”](#) for a variety of audiences.



To date, we have licensed 13 partners to share the documentary; in turn, they have hosted 10 screenings reaching an additional 264 members of the community. Audience members have ranged from civic leaders to college students, from healthcare providers to community service providers, from educators to the families they serve.

And the impact continues. More screenings are planned for the Fall. Meanwhile, partners are providing additional training for their staff members. The overall goal is to increase trauma screenings and trauma-informed care in all community sectors (health, education, faith, community service).

Bridgeport Prospers began the conversation last December by screening the documentary for 120 community partners. “Resilience” shows how repeated stress can trigger hormones that change children’s brains and bodies, putting them at risk for poor school performance, violence, even prison time, disease, and early death. But treatment of underlying trauma can help interrupt the cycles of violence, addiction, and disease.