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# Bridging

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How Bridging became the largest furniture bank in North America

## BRIDGING FOUNDER FRAN HEITZMAN

Fran Heitzman, Bridging's founder, had just sold his landscaping business to his sons and was helping out as a custodian at Pax Christi Church in Eden Prairie. One day, a family brought in a piece of furniture and asked if the church could use it. Pax Christi didn't need it, but Heitzman quickly found another family who did.

It wasn't long before Pax Christi began collecting extra furniture from church members and Heitzman became the go-to guy for local families in need of such possessions. Today Bridging has two enormous warehouses in Bloomington and Roseville and helps 80 families every week, who come to them through one of more than 150 referring agency partners. Since its founding in 1987, Bridging has helped furnish the homes of more than 75,000 families.

Bridging works primarily with families coming out of homelessness and poverty. For those struggling to find a place to live, there often isn't much left over to fill a new space with all the things that make it feel like a home. In addition to furniture, Bridging provides essential household items such as bed linens, towels, cookware, and even art.

Instead of just receiving random items, clients make a one-hour appointment to visit one of the warehouses and select what they want for a \$75 fee. Doing their own shopping empowers clients and gives them more control in personalizing their new living space.

There is no junk at Bridging. Every item is clean, sturdy, and even stylish. Every lamp is tested, every hot plate works, and clients have dozens of dish sets to choose from. Bridging also sells new low-cost mattresses and box springs, and for \$180, the organization will deliver everything.

Heitzman encourages potential donors to look through their possessions and consider dropping off their gently used items at one of the warehouses, or having them picked up for a small fee. "We all have stuff!" he says. "Here's an avenue to do good with your stuff!"

## OUR MISSION

Through the effective reuse of donated items, Bridging improves lives by providing quality furniture and household goods to those transitioning out of homelessness and poverty.

## Key Services Provided

Bridging turns a house into a home. We assist over 4,000 households annually by providing essential furnishings and housewares that transform a house into a home. Some of the critical items we provide include beds, dressers, tables and chairs, and kitchen items.

Over half of the families Bridging serves are transitioning out of homelessness. Approximately 80 percent of the households have annual incomes under \$15,000. Of the 13,000 individuals

served in 2015, about half were children.

Furniture and household items are donated by the community and area businesses. We reuse, repurpose, and redistribute more than 500 semi-trailers of furnishings each year, saving 11 million pounds from the landfill.

We consistently provide low-income families with the furnishings and housewares they critically need. And because we believe in the dignity of choice, clients are able to choose the items that fit their homes and lifestyle best.

Our collaborative approach improves our capacity to serve the community, eliminates duplication of services, and increases efficiency. We complement other nonprofits and government agencies rather than duplicate their efforts.

As the largest furniture bank in the United States, Bridging is a valuable resource in our community.

## LEADERSHIP

Mark Wilkening

Executive Director

Fran Heitzman

Founder

Tara Sullivan

Board Chair

## JOIN US

Chairs with Flair – July 19, 2016

19th Annual Gala – October 14, 2016

SUBWAY® Bedrace for Bridging – March 4, 2017

Donate quality, gently used and new furniture and household goods.

Volunteer with a group or as an individual (many opportunities available).

Give Twin Cities Challenge: [crowdrise.com/bridging-givetwincities](http://crowdrise.com/bridging-givetwincities)

Bridging

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