



THE BRIDGE



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THE HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY AWARDS THE BRIDGE INC. \$110,000 FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE ADOLESCENT EDUCATIONAL SUBSTANCE USE OUTPATIENT PROGRAM (AESUOP) IN IRVINGTON

The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey has awarded \$110,000 to The Bridge, Inc. to continue its support of the Adolescent Educational Substance Use Outpatient Program (AESUOP) in Irvington, a substance abuse treatment and prevention program serving high school and middle school students in Irvington, NJ.

The Bridge's **AESUOP** Program was launched in 2018 with funding from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey. The goal of the program is to help students referred from Irvington High School and Middle School develop new habits that reduce or eliminate current substance use and deter them from becoming addicted in the future. AESUOP takes a holistic approach, working individually with each teen to uncover root causes of substance use, including trauma and community factors, while also giving teens the tools they need to become substance free. As a result, teens are healthier and more likely to stay in school. AESUOP also provides education to parents and family counseling that helps both the teens and their parents or guardians find new ways to resolve conflict and reduce stress.

“By addressing both substance use and the underlying trauma or other factors that lead teens into it, The Bridge’s AESUOP Program improves the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Irvington,” said Marsha Atkind, executive director/CEO of the Healthcare Foundation. “We are proud to provide a second year of support to ensure that this vitally important program continues.”

AESUOP is a collaborative venture between The Bridge, Inc. and the Irvington School District to help address the growing alcohol and drug issues in their schools. Kareem M. McKenzie, M.Ed., LAC, NCC, leads the program, developing trusting relationships with

students and parents, providing individual and group counseling sessions and educational programming.

Dr. Neely Hackett, Irvington School District superintendent said: “Teens in the program not only overcome their substance use issues, but begin to focus on long-term goals that will help them find a path to complete their education and pursue a viable career path. The District is very grateful to the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey for this generous grant, which will allow us to continue our partnership with The Bridge in the 2019-20 school year.”

“I am delighted that the creativity and dedication of Kareem and the staff in building a model of partnership between local schools and a community-based mental health agency to address substance use in our children has once again been recognized by the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey,” said Lou Schwarcz, CEO of The Bridge, Inc. “We are pleased that this grant will allow the program to continue teaching Irvington’s children the skills they need to achieve their dreams.”

The Bridge is a nonprofit community-based organization that provides behavioral health care services designed to strengthen and support the family and promote the personal growth of children, adolescents, adults and seniors. Founded in 1971 in Essex County, the agency has a long-term commitment to helping children and families overcome mental health challenges that threaten to derail lives and tear families apart.

For more information contact Louis Schwarcz, The Bridge CEO, at Lschwarcz@thebridgenj.org or www.thebridgenj.org

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