Bridges to a Brighter Future

Furman University

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The face of the future

The Bridges to a Brighter Future program at Furman University has been connecting talented but underserved students with academic success for nearly a decade, and with support from Because Furman Matters is poised to become a national model for creating educational opportunity.

Bridges is a seven-year college readiness program that spans high school and college, providing guidance, mentoring, advisement, and much needed emotional support to students who show great promise, but have little opportunity to pursue it.

`Bridges is critically important to helping students actually see a vision for their future, to give them a sense of purpose and to provide a tangible step to attain their goals,' said Bridges Director Tobi Kinsell. 'Bridges is the family that many of these kids don’t have. To many students, it is their family their lifeline.'

The Bridges program includes three seamless components:

**FOUR-WEEK RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM:**
Hosted on the Furman campus for three consecutive summers, this early incubator brings students into academic classes and also teaches them how to thrive in social situations, including etiquette, social skills, and enculturation.

**SATURDAY COLLEGE:**
Heid monthly each year, the Bridges students gain educational and real-life skill training.

**CROSSING THE BRIDGE:**
After high school graduation, Bridges students attend a summer program geared towards college success to help them jump-start freshman year and to help them persist through successful graduation.

“As of 2013, the multi-award winning Bridges program has 100 percent high school graduation and 95 percent college enrollment,” Kinsell said.

**#WhyFurmanMatters**
Furman matters because it has made a commitment to community outreach and Bridges is the cornerstone of that commitment. Bridges has impacted me personally because it’s given me the opportunity to play an integral role in the lives of these amazing students. It is forever a part of me. Furman gave me that.
It's safe to say that the participants in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Furman are passionate—about learning, about their community, and about the commitment needed to sustain a program that is among the largest in the nation.

So when the call went out to support the construction of a new building that would take them out of a collection of portable trailers that had served as home for more than a decade, they responded.

Within a year of the campaign announcement, members raised $3.7 million toward the design and construction of the Herring Center for Continuing Education.

Today, they are ensconced in comfortable and technologically sophisticated classrooms that spill out into welcoming open spaces for conversation and socializing.

What began more than 20 years ago with 62 members of the Furman University Learning in Retirement now encompasses over 1,600 men and women engaged in year-round classroom, travel, physical fitness, and arts education programs.

- 40% of OLLI members who completed graduate school
- 15% of OLLI members who are Greenville natives
- 1,600 OLLI members in 2013; up from 62 members when the program began in 1993
- 12 gallons of coffee consumed by OLLI members each day