



Champions

Your support advances opportunities for all

ISSUE 8 • SUMMER 2020

Breaking Through Barriers to Transportation in Innovative Ways

School meetings, doctors' appointments, even going out as a family for fun... For many people with disabilities and their families, transportation for any of these needs is rarely simple.

Multiple studies in Rochester have identified the structural barriers to transportation in Monroe County for people living in poverty; however, there are unique barriers experienced by families of loved ones who have disabilities.

Funds to own a vehicle or pay for transport are limited at best. Public transportation routes may be far from home, and service is not available on demand. Private companies have a limited number of accessible vehicles in service.

At Starbridge, we believe every person should be able to access their community whenever they need to.

Joyce Steel, Director of Family Advocacy, began exploring ways to provide transportation support to families who have young and adult children with developmental disabilities. Thanks to a grant from the Region 1 DDRO, we were able to launch GO MONROE in fall of 2019.

The GO MONROE Program provides a maximum of \$500 in financial support and

person-centered guidance about transportation options. Participation is limited to those who live in Monroe County, meet income guidelines, have OPWDD eligibility, and whose children live in the family home.

For families, GO MONROE makes a big difference.

Maria Vazquez Jimenez shared, "Due to not being able to work, I had limited money to use for transportation and had to prioritize and focus on needs, not wants."

Maria and her son Jose were able to visit family in Pennsylvania and even see Niagara Falls, outings they could not have afforded or accessed without support.

Coordinator Maritza Cubi says, "I know Maria is grateful to be able to take Jose places, and he is excited to go out to do fun things and not just go to medical appointments."

The long-term goals of GO MONROE include decreased social isolation, increased community inclusion, increased access to health care and employment, and increased participation in school and community events.

With 33 families served since last fall (except during the statewide lockdown), we are well underway to meeting those goals!



Maria Vazquez Jimenez and her son Jose

GO MONROE
—get where you need to be

CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE!

Call Maritza Cubi at
585-224-7327 or email
mcubi@starbridgeinc.org

Achieving Career Goals Through Project ESTEEM

Joesette Haddad enrolled in Starbridge's Project ESTEEM in July 2017 after graduating from a non-traditional high school. Her career goal was to be a Dental Assistant.

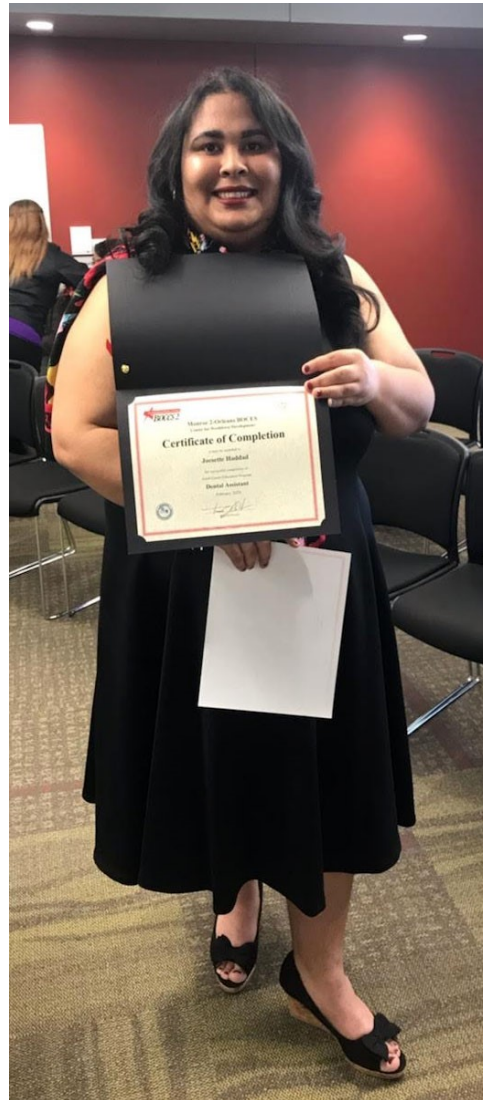
Her Project ESTEEM Navigator, Barb Maryniak, assisted Joesette in preparing to go to Monroe Community College: registering for classes, filling out financial aid forms, and connecting to MCC's disability services.

So that Joesette could travel on her own to school and back, Barb organized a bus training through RTS for her and a few other young adults.

Barb says, "Joesette is a whiz at it now and happy to help others learn the same!"

To support Joesette academically, Barb connected her with tutors and a college coach. While Joesette was not ultimately accepted into the college's highly-competitive Dental Assistant Program, she was determined to keep reaching for her career goal.

Joesette's next step was preparing for workforce training at the Center for Workforce Development (CWD). Transportation was a major barrier. The Center was far from Joesette's home and made the commute costly. Riding the bus would mean more than a half-mile walk – in every kind of weather – from her drop-off point to her classroom.



Barb was able to connect the family with a program offering gas cards. Also, Joesette was supported in reaching out to others who could carpool. Joesette ended up with near-perfect attendance and achieved her career certificate.

Joesette is now working at a paid internship at Rochester Regional Health's Dental Facility, arranged by and supported by her navigator.

What's next? Joesette is not sure, but Barb says, "She is living her dream!"



Do you know someone who is looking to get on track with school or a job?

Project ESTEEM is a free service for youth ages 18-24 who want an education or career and need help with –

- Exploring career options
- Preparing for TASC, college, or occupational training
- Preparing your resume, practicing interview skills, and searching for jobs
- Paid work experience
- Transportation assistance
- Managing money

For more information, call Barbara Maryniak at 585-224-7255 or email bmaryniak@starbridgeinc.org.



Each spring, a group from Liberty Mutual volunteers their time to complete projects at one of Starbridge's residences. Because of the COVID-19 lockdown this spring, it was not possible to continue with the planned project. In lieu of the gift of their time, Liberty Mutual made a generous donation of \$1,000 to Starbridge instead to help with unexpected costs related to COVID-19.

Thank you, friends!



Lifting Up People in Our Community

Last October, the United Way of Greater Rochester announced a major grant from the ESL Charitable Foundation, \$4 million of which was directed to support people and families at or below the poverty line with expenses that were barriers to their economic stability and health.

As one of the agencies participating in this program, we at Starbridge were able to help people like:

- A father of 2 who was in the midst of earning his Nurse's Aide certificate.
- A new mom still working to get in to LPN classes.
- A new grad who was working at Wegmans and starting college classes.

These funds helped pay their rent and save them from homelessness. Other people used the funds to pay bills, make car repairs, buy groceries or baby items, purchase laptops for schoolwork, and more.

Through this program, we were able to help 53 people with urgent needs in a matter of a few months.

On behalf of the people we serve, thank you to



INVEST. CONNECT. SERVE.



Board Member Profile: Matt Perdue

Matt Perdue is Business Relationship Manager at Wegmans Food Markets, Inc. Matt and his husband, David, live in Irondequoit.

Matt has served on several committees and held the role of Vice Chair and then Board Chair.

Q. How did you first hear about our organization?

When I worked in HR at a Wegmans store, we had several employees who had come to us through LDA Life and Learning Services (one of the legacy agencies that merged to form Starbridge). I forged a good relationship with their Job Coach. Many years after I left that store and moved into a different role, she reached out to me to gauge my interest in joining the Board. The rest is history.

Q. Why did you decide to get involved as a board member?

After being heavily involved in community groups in the City and then moving to Irondequoit, I took a yearlong break from community involvement. I began wanting to get involved again with a community organization. So the timing was perfect when I was asked to join.

I was aware of the work that LDA did related to employment and, with my background in HR, employment was something I always found important. The Advocacy Center introduced me to supports and services related to education.

I quickly learned how underserved those with developmental disabilities are in our state and nation, and appreciated the work of both agencies in providing the hope and how for people.



Q. What have you gained or learned from the experience?

It's been a great experience getting to know other people in the community, both those who work at Starbridge and other board members. The diversity of the agency and board and the passion for the work that everyone does are certainly enlightening and provide optimism.

Q. Is there anything you would like to say to someone who is considering contributing to Starbridge in some way?

The work of Starbridge directly supports people in our communities.

Your support allows people here in the Rochester area and throughout the region to live a meaningful and sustainable life.



Thank YOU

The successes of Starbridge and the people we serve are made possible, in part, by the gifts we receive from **supporters like you.**

We thank you for your support and hope you enjoy reading about **the impact you have** in the lives of many!

Will you consider making a **Legacy Gift** to Starbridge?

A Legacy Gift is a thoughtful commitment you can make now that will support people who have disabilities and their families in finding their way to the hope and the how **for generations to come.**

Join our **Champions Circle** giving society by making a bequest today.

To learn more, go to **www.starbridgeinc.org/LegacyGiving**



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Dear friends,

I hope you are well. Here at Starbridge, we are operating much as we have been for the past 5 months. Our staff continue to serve people throughout the region. We are grateful for the technology that enables us to stay in touch with you and with each other!

Back to School

We're hosting "back to school" webinars, and yet we recognize that this school year will be different for us all. If you are looking for guidance related to special education supports, you can look at our schedule of webinars on our website or contact us.

This year our fall conferences will be presented online. More information will be available soon, but I can tell you we have some big names joining us!

Ready to Work

The job market is difficult for many people right now. Our Employment team has been working throughout, from connecting youth and adults with paid internships to guiding job seekers through the search process to coaching supports on the job.



Research indicates employers report equal or better safety records, turnover and absentee rates, job performance ratings, and equal amount of supervision for employees with disabilities, compared to their peers without disabilities. **If you own or manage a business and are looking for qualified employees, we can connect you with job candidates well-suited for those openings.** Contact Ursula Nicholson, Director of Employment Services, at 585-224-7342.

Commitment to Our Community

Starbridge stands with the Greater Rochester Black Agenda in our commitment to working for racial justice – in our organization and in our community. Racism against Black and Brown communities permeates every system: from healthcare to education to employment to home-ownership to legal systems. **Racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire society.**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are core values to our organization. We are committed to ensuring that we are welcoming to people of all identities and we strive to ensure fairness and justice in all matters.

As always, I am grateful for your partnership as we continue to work towards a world that includes everyone.

Kind regards,

Colin Garwood, President/CEO