

BRIDGING

WE FURNISH HOMES WITH HOPE®



SERVING WITH DIGNITY

SINCE 1987

To: The amazing people
with Bridging. You've
given me HOPE!!!



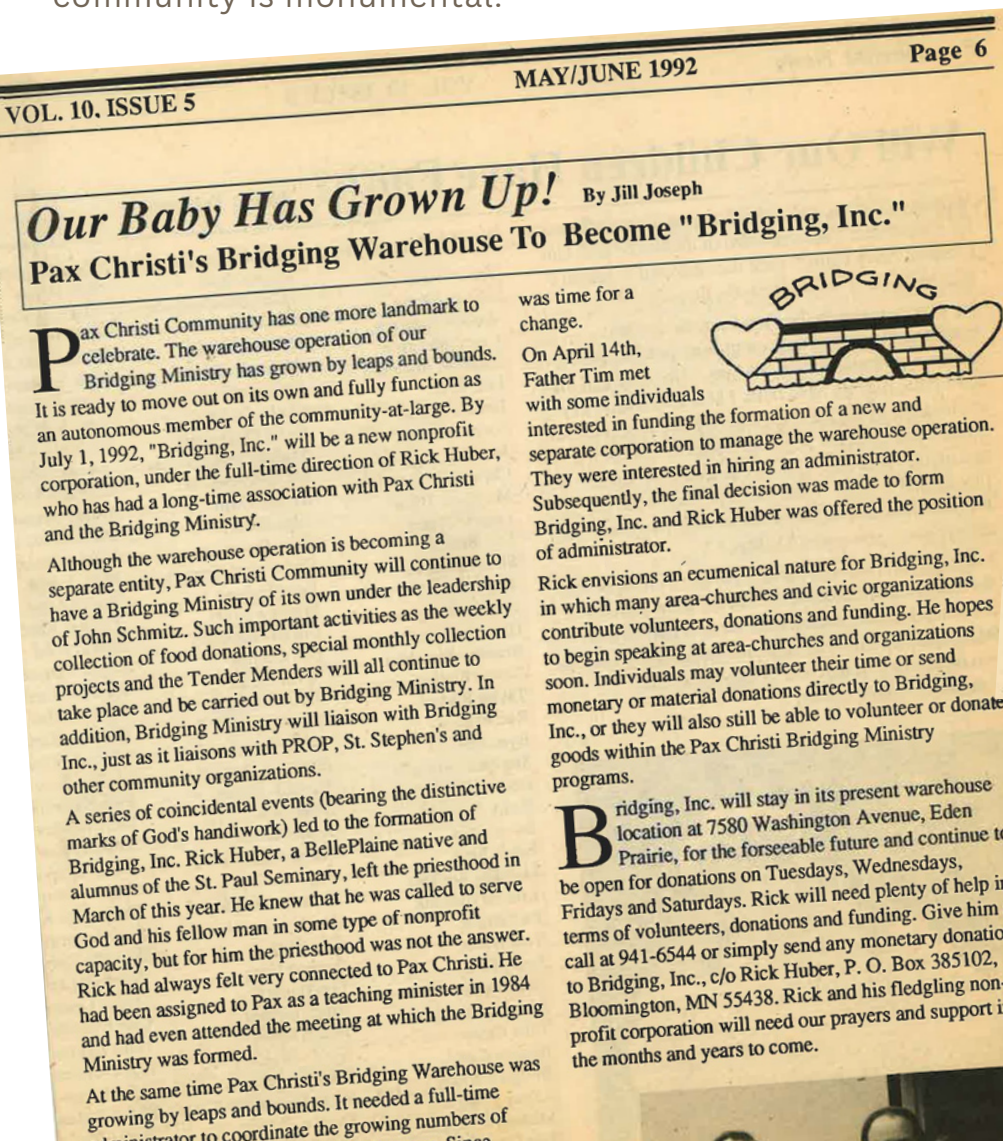
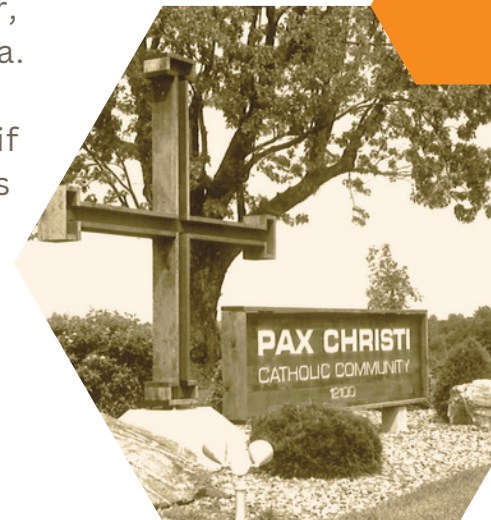
1987 THE BEGINNING

In 1987 Fran Heitzman, a former business owner and entrepreneur, was the custodian at Pax Christi Church in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

On a whim, a woman brought a crib to the church and asked Fran if it could be used in the children's nursery. Fran said no, but he was sure he could find a home for it. He then started making phone calls and found a social service agency that said they would be thrilled to receive the furniture.

That was the moment Bridging was born. Fran thought that if he could find a home for that piece of furniture, then he should be able to find a home for even more furniture – this idea could bridge the gap between those who have surplus and those who need basic essentials.

Since 1987, the impact Bridging has made in the lives of families in need, the environment, and its volunteer community is monumental.



"He says he's an old-timer, almost 65, and plans to retire from his job March 1. But, when he says 'retire' he means as Director of Maintenance; then he will work full-time doing what he loves best - helping other people."

March 1990, Pax Christi News

MILESTONES

- **July 8, 1987:** First organizational meeting of "Bridging Ministries" at Pax Christi Catholic Community, Eden Prairie, MN. Founder Fran accepts a crib at Pax Christi Church.
- **July 10, 1989:** Bridging moves into its first donated warehouse space of 1,100 square feet at 13001 Pioneer Trail, Eden Prairie.
- **June 15, 1990:** Bridging moves into 6410 Cecilia Circle with 2,500 square feet of donated space in Bloomington, MN. Bridging's first permanent home.
- **March 20, 1991:** Bridging moves into 7582 Washington Avenue, 3,850 square feet in Eden Prairie. The first sorting room was two barrels and a piece of plywood.
- **May 11, 1992:** Bridging moves into 5,200 square feet at 6414 Cecilia Circle in Bloomington.
- **November 15, 1992:** Bridging serves client number 1,000!
- **December 8, 1992:** Bridging receives its 501(c)(3) designation from the IRS.
- **1993:** Bridging acquires its first 10 foot cube truck. Agency partners are registered for the first time.
- **August 15, 1994:** Bridging surpasses the \$1,000,000 mark in donated furnishings based on IRS "thrift shop value."
- **November 25, 1994:** Bridging moves into 200 W. 88th Street in Bloomington, occupying 8,900 square feet of space.
- **June 21, 1995:** Bridging gives away bed number 5,000.
- **October 16, 1995:** Bridging serves household number 5,000. Long overdue industrial racking is installed and Bridging now has aisles!
- **April 15, 1997:** Bridging executes a purchase agreement to buy 2 acres of land and a 10,000 square foot machine shop to build their new home at 201 West 87th Street, Bloomington.
- **June 1997:** Bridging hosts the first national "free furniture conference." Participants from all over the United States were in attendance. Five years later, the next conference launched the National Furniture Bank Association.
- **1998:** Bridging dresser shop opens, the first "Boeser Dresser" is built.



Bridging Inc. outgrows site, moves June 1

Bridging Inc., the Eden Prairie-based charity warehouse, has outgrown its current location in the city's warehouse district and will move to a Bloomington site next week.

The operation — which supplies donated household goods and furniture to charities in the Twin Cities and central Minnesota — will move its operations to 6413 Cecilia Circle, just blocks west of Highway 100 and just north of Interstate Highway 494, said director Rick Huber.

"We simply need more space," said Huber. "We've outgrown the space we have, and we were able to get some funding for a new location and we have commitments for more funding, so we're moving."

Bridging Inc. will be closed June 1 through 4 for the move and will reopen Saturday, June 5, at the Bloomington site.

The operation originally started as a ministry of Pax Christi Catholic Community but has been an independent non-profit corporation since May 1992.

In an average month, Huber said, Bridging Inc. distributes "literally thousands" of donated items ranging from teacups to couches to charities and individuals assisted by those charities. In April, Huber said, Bridging Inc. distributed more than 60 beds and 30 couches.

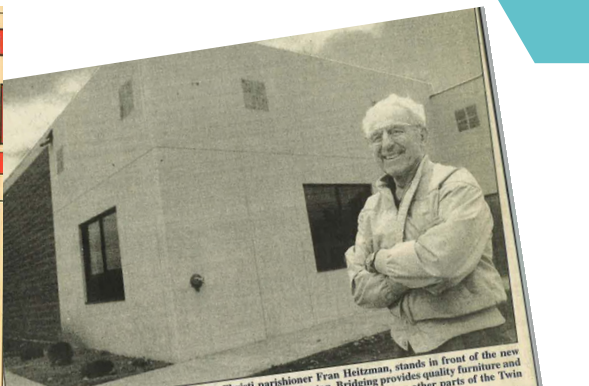


Seeing Fran Heitzman (front) sitting down is a rare occurrence. Here he takes a moment to have his picture taken with (back, left) Nichole Gates, Brian Hayes, and (right) the Bridging Inc.'s executive director Chuck Waletzko. (David Eyestone/Staff Photographer)

'Father Theresa' isn't slowing down

He has built family, businesses, churches, and Bridging Inc.

By Lori Haugen Staff Writer
After 70 years, Fran Heitzman's face looks almost as if it's frozen in a smile. The lines etched around his brown eyes fall into the friendly, genuine grin that has made him hundreds of friends across Bloomington. Heitzman — a Bloomington native, father of seven, businessman, and founder of Bridging Inc., a clearing house that distributes goods to poor people — can't sit in a restaurant for five minutes before someone he knows comes up to greet him. When he turned 70 recently, about 250 people showed up at a birthday roast in his honor.



BRIDGING, INC.'S founding director, Pax Christi parishioner Fran Heitzman, stands in front of the new Bridging building being completed at 201 W. 87th St. in Bloomington. Bridging provides quality furniture and household goods to economically disadvantaged persons in Eden Prairie and many other parts of the Twin Cities area. (Photos by Mark A. Weber)

EP-born Bridging organization looks to grow into new building

By Mark A. Weber
"Thank you so much for the furniture!" writes a Bridging, Inc. client who is an alcoholic and has moved out of his halfway house into an apartment. "I just moved out of my halfway house into an apartment [and] I had nothing to move in with. What a gift from God you people are!"
"When I left my past situation," relates another, "all I could bring with me were my children and the faith in God that I was making the right decision about getting us in a safe environment. I really don't know who [from Bridging] was responsible for picking my furniture out but I believe it was an angel sent from God..."
The testimonials from low-income, Twin Cities-area residents who have been helped by the unique non-profit organization known as Bridging, Inc. — and letters of thanks from volunteers and others who have been touched by Bridge-



JOHN DOYLE and Cecil Frank, Bloomington residents who volunteer for Bridging, Inc., review an inventory of items that are available to needy persons.

Group gets more space to help meet growing need

Bridging Inc., a nonprofit that aids thousands of families as they set up house, celebrates a new warehouse of its own.

By Robert Franklin Star Tribune Staff Writer

Jeanette Galbreath came to Bridging Inc. on Wednesday to get a dresser for her three daughters to share at their home in Minneapolis. But she also found some Christmas presents and a religious figure bearing a prayer that she remembered from her Texas childhood.
Marcia Soto, recently graduated from Concordia University in St. Paul, looked for furniture for herself and her 3-year-old son. "We don't have anything," she explained.
Alexis Demmings, 20 months, clutched a doll that her mother, Rebecca, found in their tour of Bridging's Bloomington warehouse "store," which offers free household goods to needy Minnesotans referred by 80 social-service agencies and churches in the metro area.

Wednesday it was shoppers. Today it will be a congressman, the mayor of Bloomington and others attending an open house for Bridging's new 26,000-square-foot warehouse. The nonprofit group has moved seven times in its 10 years of existence, doubling its space in its latest move two weeks ago.

Bridging, which bills itself as one of five warehouses of its type and size in the nation, also hopes to double the number of families it serves to about 5,000. Last year it gave away about 5,000 beds, 2,000 sofas and an array of other goods, about \$1.6 million worth when calculated by thrift-store standards.

As for this year, "we're far, far exceeding that," said Fran Heitzman, who founded Bridging a decade ago. "If I had 5,000 dressers, I could get rid of them. We're hearing from all the



Jeanette Galbreath, left, searched Bridging's new Bloomington warehouse Wednesday for a dresser, with help from volunteer Maria Montbrand.

At a glance

Bridging Inc.
► **What it does:** Receives donations of clean, usable furniture and other household goods and gives them free to individuals who are referred by 80 social-service agencies and churches in the Twin Cities area. Gave out nearly \$1.6 million worth of goods last year, including about 5,000 beds and 2,000 sofas.
► **Supports:**

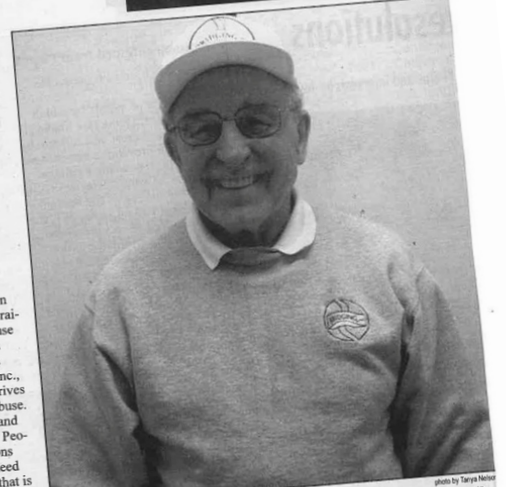


January 30, 2004
The Lions' Roar
campus news

Furniture for the homeless

With the help of volunteers, Fran Heitzman dedicates his days to helping the underprivileged

By Tanya Nelson Staff Writer



Fran Heitzman, 78, began Bridging, Inc., in 1978 with a single crib in the basement of an Eden Prairie church.

From starting with a single crib in the basement of a church in Eden Prairie to a 26,000 square foot warehouse in Bloomington. Inside those walls people's lives are changed in ways you wouldn't imagine. Bridging, Inc., is a non-profit organization that strives to help the homeless, victims of abuse, Chronic life threatening diseases and people who are in job transitions. People who qualify to accept donations are required to be screened and need to be referred to Bridging. After that is done, they are eligible for a 45-minute shopping spree in the warehouse. With only nine paid staff and thousands of volunteers, Bridging allows the less fortunate to start wake up to brighter days. Volunteers can help in multiple ways, such as donating household supplies, furniture, gently used linens, sacrificing personal time to help at the shelter, or simply driving to pick up and drop off furniture. In the year 2002, Bridging had generated 2,718 families. That's a lot of help. Bridging had generated almost 10,000 Minnesota children and parents. Over \$500,000 in merchandise was donated according to IRS "thrifty shop" value. The requirements to volunteer are not very strict, as long as the ages are 12 and up. Depending on the age and physical ability, people are assigned different volunteer work-

Fran Heitzman, 79 years old in March, started in 1987 and is still going stronger than ever. His determination to help others is amazing and inspiring to many. The underprivileged children he heavily motivate him, and in return, he is rewarded simply by the smiles on their faces. With him having almost 20 grandchildren, it is easy to understand why it makes him so happy. "Make the world a better place" says Fran Heitzman. That is exactly what he and thousands of volunteers are doing. He calls the volunteers his "modern day

ended with a story about how an 80-year-old woman without the ability to sit up had taken the time to help make dolls for children. The point of his story stuck out like a sore thumb. There are so many young people that have the ability to help out immensely but simply don't take the time to. "It may be out of a lot of people's comfort zones because it is something so unfamiliar to so many, but if given the chance, it will be one that will never be forgotten" says Fran. The experience is something that could change

MILESTONES

- **Winter 1998:** The first annual Bedrace for Bridging fundraiser is held at Buck Hill in Burnsville. This begins a yearly tradition of teams racing downhill on mattresses to raise funds in support of Bridging's mission.
- **November 2002:** The first annual Bring a Blanket collection takes place thanks to longtime partner Nemer Fieger.
- **January 2005:** Bridging - Central Minnesota opens with 7,000 square feet in Sauk Rapids through the partnership with local nonprofit "Share a Chair" in St. Cloud. 1,303 families are served in the three and a half years of operation.
- **May 2006:** Bridging acquires its first 53-foot semi-trailer with the logo. The Bridging fleet begins to grow.
- **November 2006:** Bridging expands in the Twin Cities, opening a second warehouse in Roseville. Within two months, this location serves 40 appointments a week and 100 agencies refer clients to Bridging.
- **January 2008:** With four brand-new 26-foot trucks donated to our fleet, Bridging launches the client delivery program, which provides a delivery option to clients within the seven county metro area.
- **July 2012:** Bridging celebrates 25 years of service and a milestone of 60,000 households served!
- **2015:** Bridging holds a capital campaign and purchases a 70,000 square foot warehouse, Heitzman Commons, at 1730 Terrace Drive.
- **May 4, 2020:** Bridging reopens for programs and services after a brief shutdown for the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **October 2020:** Bridging hosts a 100% virtual gala. The Heitzman family are the honorary chairs of this historic fundraising event.
- **December 2021:** Bridging celebrates serving its 100,000th household since inception in 1987.
- **July 2022:** Bridging holds the inaugural Founder's Week celebration in honor of Fran Heitzman and service to the community since 1987.



HAVING FUN WHILE RAISING FUNDS!

ANNUAL GALA FOR BRIDGING

The first annual gala was held in 1997. From themed parties, to touching testimonials, and Founder Fran jumping out of a cake on the 25th annual gala, each gala was vital to keeping Fran's dream alive.



BEDRACE FOR BRIDGING

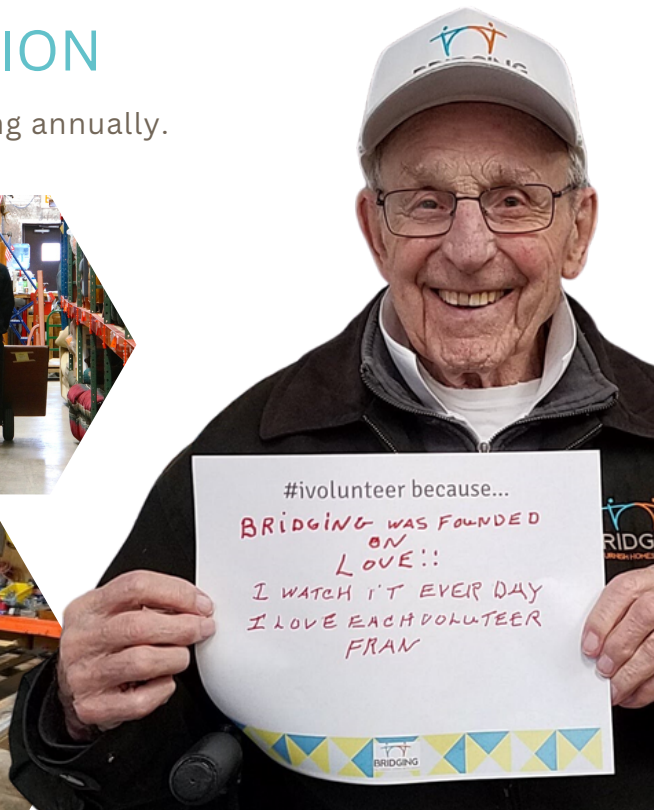
The first annual bedrace for Bridging took off down Buck Hill in winter 1998.



VOLUNTEERS: VITAL TO THE MISSION

Volunteers contribute thousands of service hours to Bridging annually. Since 1987, more than 1.5 million hours have been donated.

“Now, get out there and do something!”
- Fran



SERVING THROUGH THE YEARS

Year(s)	Households Served That Year	Total Households Served Since 1987
1987 - 1992	1,080	1,080
1997	2,424	10,494
2002	2,558	23,195
2007	5,339	41,646
2012	4,470	65,863
2017	4,408	87,849
2022	4,609	108,801



Ribbon cutting at 1730 Terrace Drive.



New "sponsor a dresser build" project launches in 2010.



Aquatenial milk carton boat race.



Virtual shopping begins in 2020.

"When good people get together and do good things, then good things happen."

— Fran Heitzman



FURNISHING HOMES WITH HOPE since 1987

“We can put men in a rocket and ship them to the moon and we allow our little kids to sleep on the floor at night? That’s not right. We can do better!”
- Fran Heitzman

Mission

Bridging empowers people to thrive in their homes by providing quality furniture and household goods for those pursuing housing stability.

VISION: Everyone lives in a furnished home.



Forever in our hearts

January 11, 2020

Founder Fran Heitzman passes away at the age of 94.

“I believe that with all of us just doing what we can, we can change the world. And if everybody practices that, what a beautiful world it would be.”

*Lotta Lova
Fran Heitzman*



BRIDGING.ORG



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