

The Goals of Bridges to Pals:

The primary goals of the Bridges to Pals program are to provide children and adolescents with the support necessary for the development of a strong sense of self worth, an ability to interact with others in positive, satisfying ways and to build trusting relationships. Volunteer mentors are trained to assist children in acquiring problem-solving skills so that they may learn how to make decisions that will contribute to future success. Bridges to Pals provides information and referral about other available services to parents and guardians. Mentors provide

parents/guardians temporary respite from child care responsibilities and introduce children to healthy activities and resources in the community.

“I have a new friend.”

— Little Pal
- 8 years old



The Mental Health Association (MHA) promotes mental health and wellness, and supports those with mental illness, by sponsoring and implementing advocacy, education and community service programs. A private, nonprofit, United Way (#8151) agency, the MHA has served Montgomery County residents for over 45 years.

The MHA currently manages 13 major direct service programs for children, teens, families, senior adults and individuals with long-term mental illness. Over 1000 volunteers implement programs under the direction of the MHA professional staff.



Mental Health Association
Serving Montgomery County Residents

1000 Twinbrook Parkway
Rockville MD 20851

PHONE **301.424.0656**

FAX. 301.738.1030

e info@mhamc.org
www.mhamc.org

“Great Place to Work”
Washingtonian Magazine



bridges to pals



 **Mental Health Association**
www.mhamc.org

Bridges to Pals Serves the Community by:

- Supporting the positive efforts of parents, foster parents, teachers, social workers and therapists
- Helping children explore their interests and learn more about community resources through a variety of recreational and cultural activities
- Providing referrals for parents and guardians to other community agencies for needed services



“Having a Big Pal has made me feel like I had somebody to rely on.”

— Little Pal
12 years old

Volunteer Mentors:

- Are caring, supportive adults, 21 years and older who want to help a child in need
- Are able to commit a minimum of 4 hours each month to activities with a “Little Pal”
- Are willing to attend bi-monthly volunteer support meetings and periodic group recreational activities
- Are able to successfully complete all steps of the application, screening, and training process
- Are provided with ongoing guidance and direction by a mental health professional

Little Pals:

- Are children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 18 who live in Montgomery County and are referred by the Department of Health and Human Services, judges, teachers, counselors, or parents
 - Are youth who are in need of a caring friend because of circumstances that place them at risk of developing emotional or behavioral problems
- These include:
- Having been placed in foster care because their parents are unable to care for them
 - Having experienced abuse or neglect
 - Having a family member with a mental illness or substance abuse problem
 - Having witnessed domestic violence
 - Having learning disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Disorder
 - Having experienced significant loss or trauma in their lives

Mentoring Makes

a Difference for Children:

Research has shown that children in mentoring relationships are more likely to

- Avoid engaging in drug and/or alcohol use
- Resolve conflict without resorting to violence
- Attend school regularly without truancy
- Improve grades
- Improve relationships with family and friends
- Demonstrate a positive sense of self-worth

Funding Bridges to Pals receives funding from the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services.

“He has taught me valuable lessons I can use in everyday life.”

— Little Pal - 14 years old