

Bringing it All Together

Bridges Out of Poverty provides training to employers and other organizations to build a mutual understanding that can enhance employment and access to resources to those transitioning out of poverty. *Bridges* promotes a common language connecting those in poverty to the middle-class.

Those in poverty participate in the **Getting Ahead** program, which exposes the hidden rules and barriers that exist within the middle-class. This exposure provides the tools necessary to navigate community resources and aid in the transition out of poverty.

This may not be a smooth shift and, therefore, with **Circles®**, those in poverty are paired with middle and upper-income Allies. With these Allies they establish effective relationships and move toward a more secure future.

The combination of training, instruction, and Ally engagement seeks to bridge the gap between people in poverty and middle-class institutions and resources that provide opportunity and inclusion to all members of the com-

“The bottom line of it is, nothing changes until you build relationships.”

-Rebecca Stewart
Empower Portage Circle® Leader



“It’s time for individuals to stop blaming the community and for the community to stop blaming individuals.”

-Francesca Fortson
Empower Portage Circle® Leader



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Visit our website at www.empowerportage.com



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Building relationships
across class lines
to eliminate poverty
in Portage County

JOIN THE COMMUNITY!



Empower Portage allows volunteers to help support peoples' success.

What is Empower Portage?

Through a comprehensive approach of educational outreach and social network support, Empower Portage examines relationships across class lines to develop long-lasting solutions, not temporary band-aids. Incorporating two national initiatives, aha!Process and Move the Mountain, our job is to find what works and transfer it to the community.

Bridges Training

Bridges Out of Poverty is a curriculum based on the work of Ruby K. Payne, Ph. D., that provides the structures,



ideas, and concrete tools a community needs to counter poverty and its impact on people and local businesses. Through diversity training and community education outreach events, people from all economic classes come together to improve job retention rates, build resources, improve outcomes, and support those who are moving out of poverty.

Getting Ahead Workshops

Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World is a course curriculum designed by Phil De Vol for people who are working to transition from poverty to self-stability. Each *Getting Ahead* class of the 15-week series demonstrates how to use the rules of the middle-class to access financial, emotional, community, and social resources. Participants explore the impact poverty has had on their lives, investigate economic realities, complete a self-assessment of their resources, make plans to build future resources, and develop a plan for community prosperity.

Weekly Community Meetings

The *Getting Ahead* class takes place once a week at the United Methodist Church of Kent located at 1435 E. Main Street in Kent, Ohio. Before each class begins, a healthy meal is provided free of charge to *Getting Ahead* participants, their families, and the greater Empower Portage community. After dinner free childcare is provided so that *Getting Ahead* participants have the opportunity to focus on their class.



Circles® Matches

Circles® is an innovative model based on a body of research suggesting that in order for families with low income to improve their situation, they must have *bonding social capital* within the community, *bridging social capital* to access the resources contained by higher income networks, and *linking social capital* that connects the first two with public institutions.



Who is part of a Circle® ?

Operating in communities around the country, each Circle® initiative consists of a family working to transition out of poverty and several middle and/or upper-income Allies who befriend them and lend support. The Circle® Leader is a graduate of the *Getting Ahead* curriculum who has opted to engage in the Circle®, directing its activities and purpose. With the help and friendship of their Allies, each family sets and achieves goals unique to their own needs.