

# BRIDGE is Organization of Year

—Elma group to be honored by Times Plain Dealer on May 30

**CRESCO** - The BRIDGE Organization in Elma has been chosen as the Organization of the Year for the *Times Plain Dealer's* annual awards presented during the Howard County Business & Tourism Banquet. This year, those in charge decided to "let the cat out of the bag" before the event, rather than during the dinner. This allows friends of those chosen to get their tickets early to attend the event.

Look for the Citizens of the Year and Hall of Fame in the next two weeks. Call Cresco-Area Chamber at 563-547-3434 for tickets to the May 30 banquet featuring Congressman Rod Blum as speaker.

The town and residents of Elma are a prime example of how working together for the greater good, and some part of BRIDGE is usually involved in those projects.

**BRIDGE** (Building Relationships In the Development of a Greater Elma) Organization Inc. was nominated by Laura Zenner, who gave a long list of accomplishments for the group.

BRIDGE is an off-shoot of Elm-Go, which was organized in the 1970s to help establish low income housing. Around 2002, the group disbanded but had some funds remaining, which were turned over to Elm-Go Business Group for improvements and developments.

In 2004, the owner of the old trailer factory business in town donated their property to the community. The BRIDGE organization was founded in 2005 as a 501c3 organization and the rest is history in the making!

See Bridge Organization  
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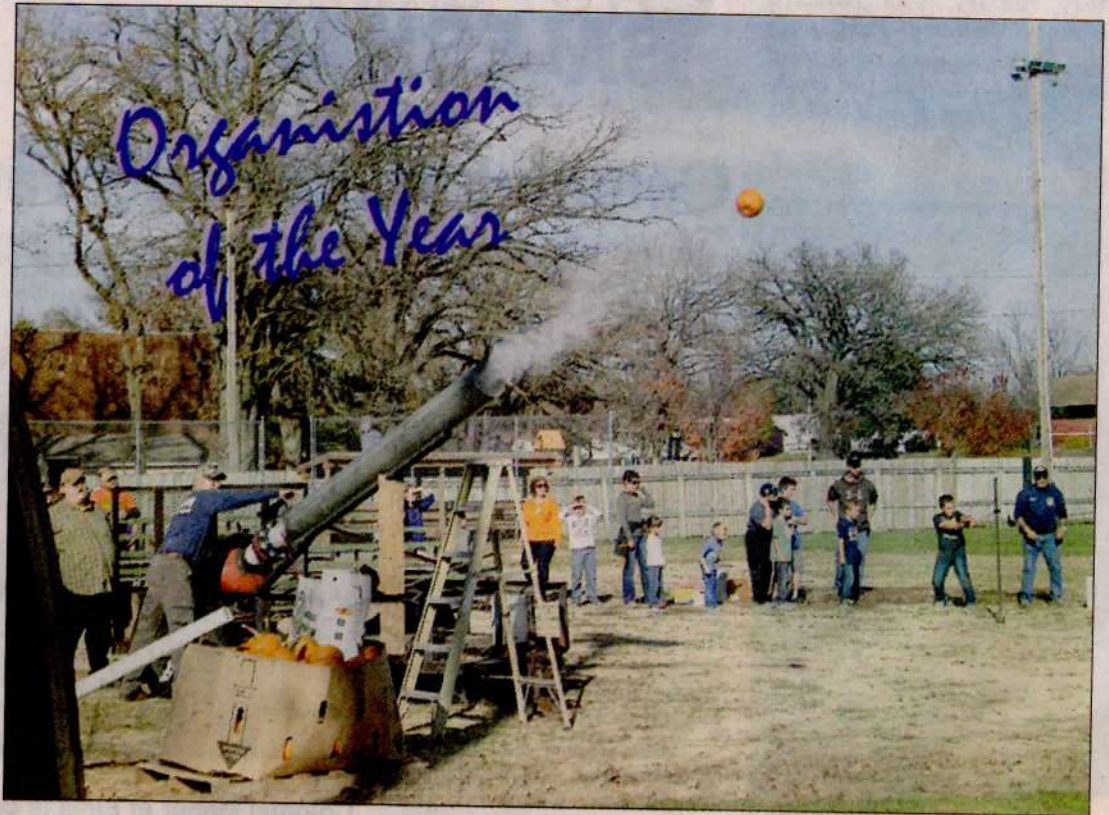


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Elma's BRIDGE Organization was chosen as Organization of the Year in the *Times Plain Dealer's* annual awards presentation. This coming fall will be the fourth year for Pumpkin Fest. This event keeps growing every year! There is pumpkin painting for the kids, a cake walk, games, snacks and pumpkin launching! This past year the SOCC Committee and Entertainment Committee teamed up for the event with concessions and live music in the evening.

Right: The Christmas Light Committee first desired to light the large tree by the trail head and have a Christmas tree lighting ceremony, with caroling, hot chocolate and horse drawn sleigh rides. This event has grown each year and now includes light displays for the park. BRIDGE served as the fiscal agent while donations were being received. For the 2018 season, the group received grants that will allow for the addition of a musical light display.



## BRIDGE Organiza

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Erin Ludwig said, "We sold the trailer factory property, creating a larger pool of funds from which to operate. BRIDGE funds are now used to be seed money for community betterment projects. BRIDGE partners with the City of Elma and area non-profit groups assisting them with grant-writing and offering matching funds for community projects."

The goal of BRIDGE and its members is to be catalysts for positive change in the Elma Community.

The BRIDGE Organization Inc. currently has three officers, Dale Roethler-President, Roger Meirick-Vice President and Bruce Weigel-Secretary/Treasurer. Along with the officers, there are four active committees in the corporation with a chairperson in each and an overall membership of around 30 businesses/individuals. The four committees include:

1. Executive Committee is comprised of the three corporate officers and leads the organization by conducting monthly meetings, recording minutes, sending our meeting notices, and overseeing/reporting the finances of the corporation.

2. Marketing & Promotions Committee is comprised of Chairperson Callie Weigel along with co-chair Shannon Gebel and help from other BRIDGE members. This committee seeks to positively promote the Elma area in marketing Elma events, businesses and services. The committee oversees the Elmaia.com community website, the "Elma, Iowa" Facebook page, responds to inquiry e-mail messages at elmaia@mchsi.com and elmaiowa@gmail.com, manages the Elma community digital message board, and

3. Serving Our Community Committee (SOCC) is comprised of Erin Ludwig Chairperson and Laura Zenner Vice-Chair. This committee's purpose is to develop and coordinate community programs for Elma residents of all ages, as well as promotion of and finding staff for these programs.

This committee liaisons with the City of Elma, Elma Park Board, and BRIDGE

marketing committee.

4. Community Development Committee currently has no Chairperson but BRIDGE members Bruce Weigel, Erin Ludwig, Callie Weigel and Shannon Gebel have all helped with this committee's duties. This committee's purpose is to assist in seeking outside funding opportunities for Elma area businesses, non-profit organizations and City programs, as well as to seek community development programs to improve Elma. This committee liaisons with the City of Elma and Howard County Business & Tourism.

Other committees include Entertainment Committee, Christmas Lights and SOCC - Serving Our Community Committee. "These committees are always brewing up new ideas on how to improve Elma and doing a lot of the "groundwork. Without their vision, dedication, and hard work we would not have as many good things happening," said Dale Roethler, President of BRIDGE.

### Projects

BRIDGE has assisted the Elma community in several community projects or programs through many ways such as financial aid, finding funding resources, grant writing, program development to name a few. The BRIDGE Organization is/was a large financial sponsor (\$10,000 or more per project) in these Elma area projects:

2003-present: Old Roundhouse Trail Days festival annually each July.

2005: the Elma Area Community Foundation fund.

2007-2009: Elma Park Playground Equipment, Shelter & Restroom project.

2008: Elma Early

Recreational Trail

2011: Elma's 125th  
Anniversary Celebration

2011-2012: Elma  
Memorial Hall Expansion &  
Renovation Project

2012: Young Professionals  
Mentoring & Leadership  
Program

2013: Elma Area Wellness  
Center

2014-present: Busti  
Avenue/Blue Bird block

Revitalization Project

2016-present: Re-purpos-  
ing the former Elma  
Elementary School build-  
ing/grounds Project

2016-2018: Spruce up  
Elma (home beautification)  
Project

Because of its non-profit status, from time to time, the organization has groups come to them with a worthy project and need BRIDGE to act as a fiscal agent for them to allow donations to that project to be tax deductible. As long as the proceeds are going to community betterment, BRIDGE has no problem being the fiscal agent. Recent examples of this would be the Christmas Lights project, art/painting classes and Pumpkin Fest."

"BRIDGE often serves as the governing body assisting the committees, with the volunteers on the committees seeing the projects from start to finish. For example, the entertainment committee proposed the idea of doing a murder mystery dinner. We told them we supported them and run with it. They did a great job." Roethler explained.

Elma was recently named one of the 12 "shrink-smart" communities in the state of Iowa by an Iowa State Extension study conducted in 2017.

Ludwig responded, "BRIDGE is proud to have helped in any capacity to gain this recognition for our community but wants to acknowledge that many passionate, caring individuals also work within the community to make it a better place for us all to live, work and thrive in. There are several non profit organizations in Elma doing good things."

"It is important that our non profits and city are work-

fortunate to have many community members who have stepped up and volunteered time and talents to ensure community betterment," shared Laura Zenner.

"I think everyone of us in the BRIDGE Organization Inc. are members because we want to make our community the best that it can be; that we (BRIDGE members) are visionaries who seek great opportunities and positive outcomes for the Elma community," said Callie Weigel

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community. But most volunteers do not like to fund-raise. If someone or some group has an idea and they have the passion to see a project through, BRIDGE can act as fiscal agent and help direct them to funding sources for their project. The original BRIDGE members were instrumental in forming the Elma Area Community Foundation which helps fund area projects," explained Bruce Weigel

The BRIDGE Organization Inc. hopes to continue assisting and growing our community one project at a time well into the future.



Each fall SOCC (Serving Our Community Committee) coordinates a photo contest in effort to collect non-perishable food donations for local families in need for the holidays. People vote with the donations for the People's Choice Award. This year's winner was Marge Ludwig.