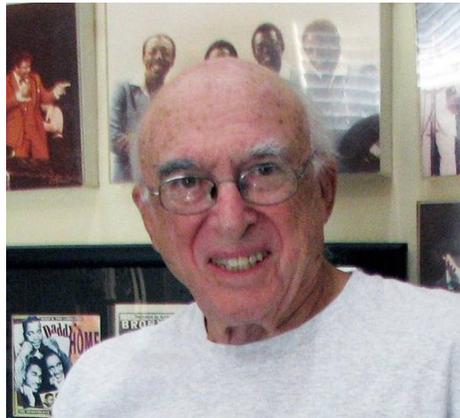


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A bridge grows in Palm Beach County | Opinion

By Steve West
Special to the Sun Sentinel
Apr 21, 2022 at 3:46 pm



Steve West (Mort Mazor / Courtesy / South Florida Sun-Sentinel)

You're about to read a real-life adaptation of the true story I wrote about in [an accompanying column](#).

The [Palm Beach County IN-CROWD's mission](#) is to help underserved neighbors and their neighborhoods develop themselves by equalizing their opportunities to reach their highest potential.

[PART ONE: The solution is at your feet | Opinion]

Meet the action program, Building Bridges. These bridges don't span water. They connect people. They're bridges of hope, relationship and unified action to equalize access to opportunity.

A bridge connects two localities. The IN-CROWD bridge has one side planted in neighborhoods whose residents struggle to survive. The other is grounded in neighborhoods of sufficiency.

Through partnerships with the Palm Beach County Office of Community Revitalization and many other organizations that serve the underserved, the IN-CROWD has built significant partnerships on both sides of their bridge.

They've gained direct lines of communication into scores of financially disadvantaged neighborhoods in which residents are working hard to improve their own quality of life

and can use a hand-up to reach their potential. On the other side is a large cadre of caring volunteers who want to partner to even up access to opportunities for those who have current needs and future aspirations.

Palm Beach County is a land of plenty, but not for all of us. There is easy access to bountiful resources here, but the door to equal opportunity is closed to some. A complex mix of poverty, waste, prejudice, politics, greed, and just plain inattention, indifference and inaction keep the door locked.

The key to the door of opportunity is simply caring. Empathy exists in most human hearts, but we can't show we care unless we know what we can do. The IN-CROWD provides information about the unjust plight of our disadvantaged neighbors as well as inspiration to do something. When we know what we can do, we can act. Building Bridges provides the means to get involved in a meaningful way.

The solution is at our feet. Together, we can rearrange the very stones that block progress and turn them into useful tools of advancement. Relocating the "rocks" that block growth to where they are needed is a good start. At the same time, sharing information to build a better life creates a reservoir of life-changing fluid for those living in a drought of opportunity..

The bridge has two lanes on which people on both sides benefit from the connection made on the overpass. By moving goods, services, knowledge, ideas and jobs across the span, we can act together to make unimagined miracles.

"Love Your Neighbor" fills immediate needs by collecting and transferring usable goods across the bridge. Anyone who wants to organize a drive in their community is welcome to do so. Donations go directly into the hands of the recipients with no middleman or costs involved.

The IN-CROWD University is a route to a brighter tomorrow. Its comprehensive variety of interactive Zoom courses provide people with information and skills that improve their abilities to advance in life.

The "ICU" provides free classes such as English as a Second Language, remedial and advanced mathematics, job training with real employment opportunities, home gardening and much more. There are also a variety of mentoring programs conducted by our partners.

Your partnership will make a difference. As the IN-CROWD grows in its ability to fulfill its purpose, the need for partners grows apace. We are particularly looking for two experienced, computer-literate volunteers: one with a working knowledge of Wordpress and another experienced with SEO. We also need a social media wizard.

If you have a skill, knowledge or a passion to be a Love Your Neighbor organizer — or an ICU instructor or mentor for one hour a week — email steve@thein-crowd.org or visit thein-crowd.org/building-bridges/ and use "contact us" after you tour the site.

Steve West is a social justice advocate and entrepreneur living in Delray Beach.