



**Business Plan 2009 - 2012**

### *Executive summary*

Domus proudly uses the slogan, “Love lives here.” In the simplest of terms, this is what Domus offers the highest-need youth of Stamford, Connecticut – children, teens, and young adults who may not often hear that they are valued, believed in, and loved. Driven by a philosophy that you can never give up on a child, Domus staff actively seeks out youth who have been thrown out of school, are unable to reach their full potential in a traditional school or are barred from other programs. This passionate organization helps them change their lives – and realize their full potential.

### *Domus’ current programs*

Founded in 1972 as a group home for 10 boys, over the years Domus has expanded its services to include:

- Three **residential programs** which provide youth ages 12 – 23 with the education, relationships, and life skills they need to live independently;
- Two **charter schools**, Trailblazers Academy middle school and Stamford Academy high school, which focus on education, but which also give high-need students the supports to ensure that they regularly attend class and make academic progress; and
- A range of **community programs** for children ages 5 and up and their families, to support high-need youth and to help children avoid problems down the road.

Today, Domus serves 600 of Stamford’s highest-need youth and their families with a budget of \$11 million. For those Domus helps – be they charter school students, residents in the houses or families participating in programs at a community center – the Domus experience is a transformative one.

One aspect of Domus’ programming that makes it so effective are Family Advocates, who work predominantly in the charter schools, doing whatever it takes to keep students in school. Each student is paired with a Family Advocate, who does everything from guiding students through family troubles to getting them a ride to school if the family’s car breaks down – all in an effort to help students overcome the non-academic barriers to success.

And Domus youth *are* succeeding. In the charter schools, students are graduating at rates that far exceed national averages for high-need students. It is exhilarating to see how, one-by-one, they are transforming themselves and finding pathways to productive lives.

*What Domus seeks to achieve moving forward and how it will achieve it*

Domus knows from experience that key transition points – including the transition from elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and high school to work, college, or vocational programs – are critical to a young person’s success. They are also the times when youth are most vulnerable.

Moving forward, Domus will intensify its efforts to help Stamford’s highest-need youth, ages 3 – 23, achieve key life transitions. For each transition, Domus has laid out the specific population it will target, the services it will provide, and the outcomes it hopes to achieve. Before, during, and after these transitions, Family Advocates will play an important role, ensuring youth have the supports they need to succeed.

It follows that Domus will need to expand its outstanding Family Advocates program. It will also seek to strengthen aspects of its programming and organization. Specifically, over the next three years, Domus will implement three strategic initiatives:

- **Enhance current services**, particularly at the middle and high school levels, including expanding health services for charter school students; expanding job, college, and vocational preparation; and providing high school supports to former Trailblazers students;
- **Expand the Family Advocates program** to young children and elementary school students, as well as to high-need middle and high school students in public schools; and
- **Enhance the organization** to improve the tracking system, add IT and HR staff, build a development team, and enhance Family Advocates management as the program grows.

*A plan for the future*

With its fortieth anniversary on the horizon, Domus has a solid grasp of where it stands today and where it would like to be in the future. Its business plan for the next three years details Domus’ current programs, as well as what it hopes to achieve moving forward. It also lays out an implementation plan, along with a budget that will require a substantial increase in funding. Even in these tough economic times, Domus’ goals for its organization are no less ambitious than its goals for the children served.

The business plan also shares the stories of some of the young people Domus has helped. Brandon, who ran away from an abusive home when he could no longer take it and was welcomed into Domus House. Antonio, a Trailblazers student who lost his home to fire and

who, with the help of his Family Advocate, still managed to make the honor roll. Marcus, who traded in incarceration for an education at Stamford Academy. And Sasha, who, in the process of learning how to read, found her self-esteem.

The enhancements and expansions Domus seeks to make are impressive indeed, requiring enormous effort on the part of Domus staff, as well as significant donations from private funders. But in the context of extraordinary individual victories, the needed investments seem a small price to pay for the hundreds, even thousands, of youth and families with whom Domus will share its loving care.

**About Bridgespan:**

Founded in 2000, the Bridgespan Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that helps nonprofit and philanthropic leaders in the hard work of developing strategies and building organizations that inspire and accelerate social change.

We work to build a better world by strengthening the ability of nonprofit organizations to achieve breakthrough results in addressing society's most important challenges and opportunities.

At the heart of our mission is the belief that a strong and effective nonprofit sector can be a powerful force for change as well as a source of human inspiration.

We believe that results are driven by three levers: solid strategy; access to appropriately structured capital; and talent that begins with leaders and senior managers. We exist to apply the best relevant thinking and tools to strengthen these levers and help organizations deliver on their missions.

Bridgespan and Bain & Company are separate, independent organizations with no legal affiliation; however, the close relationship between the two has been a key factor in Bridgespan's history and development. In addition to having incubated Bridgespan and committing more than \$2 million in seed capital and other grants—plus essential infrastructure support—Bain generously offers Bridgespan employees access to its intellectual capital and thought leaders. In turn, Bridgespan hosts Bain consultants for six-month externships.

We are privileged to have Bain senior management team members serving on our board of directors.