

Bridges To Life

Bridges To Life (BTL), a 21-year-old 501(c)(3) organization based in Houston, Texas, is a restorative justice program that rehabilitates offenders and brings healing to victims of crime.

Mission. The *mission* of Bridges To Life is to connect communities to prisons to reduce the recidivism rate (particularly that resulting from violent crimes), reduce the number of crime victims, and enhance public safety. The *spiritual mission* of Bridges To Life is to minister to victims and offenders in an effort to show them the transforming power of God's love and forgiveness.

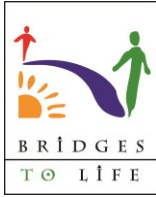
History. Bridges To Life was founded in 1998 by Houstonian John Sage after the brutal murder of his sister Marilyn in 1993. In the wake of this tragic event, John went through several years of trauma, rage, and grief, ultimately reaching a point of deep surrender and forgiveness. He then felt a calling to volunteer for a prison program in which crime victims met with inmates weekly and shared their personal stories. After experiencing the healing impact of this process for himself and wanting to expand it to others, John founded Bridges To Life. The work of Bridges To Life promotes the repair, restoration and reintegration of offenders, victims, their families, and the community.

Recognition. Bridges To Life is a nationally recognized program. The organization and many of its volunteers have received numerous awards, including the 2015 Judith Coleman Chaplaincy Offender Program of the Year Award by the American Correctional Chaplains Association, the Governor's Criminal Justice Award, the Manhattan Institute Social Entrepreneur Award, the Bert Thompson Pioneer Award for Community and Restorative Justice, and the Samaritan Spirit Award. In addition, John Sage received the inaugural American Leadership Forum Public Service Award, was named a Purpose Prize Fellow by Civic Ventures Encore Careers, and was chosen by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice from among over 20,000 volunteers as the 2017 Carol Vance Volunteer of the Year. Most recently, BTL's Chief Operating Officer Jim Buffington received the 2019 Texas Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Pathfinder Award for his contributions to the welfare of crime victims.

2019 Programs

With the assistance of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Chaplaincy Department and other partners (see p. 8), **Bridges To Life completed 213 projects in 107 prisons and alternative facilities in 2019.** The majority (176) of these projects took place in Texas, Indiana and Washington prisons; however, 37 projects were completed in additional states and countries including: California, Colorado, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Africa and Uganda. In fact, the BTL curriculum has now been used in 13 states and 6 foreign countries.

~ 7,004 participants graduated from the BTL program in 2019 ~



Goals and Outcomes

The Bridges To Life program has two main goals: (1) To reduce recidivism (re-offending) rates of program graduates; and (2) To facilitate the healing process for victims and offenders. To date, more than 52,000 offenders have completed the BTL program.

Impact on Offenders. Recidivism studies conducted with the assistance of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) reveal that over 84% of BTL graduates do not return to prison within three years after release. Each year, Bridges To Life tracks a large and diversified sample group of BTL graduates after they are released from TDCJ prisons. In the most recent study of 6,346 BTL graduates released from 2011 to 2015, the recidivism rate is 15.6%, in contrast to the statewide rate of 21.2% for the same time period. Additionally, only 3% of released offenders in the BTL group returned to prison for committing a violent crime. Current national recidivism rates are estimated to be 37% (*Pew Charitable Trusts, 2018*).

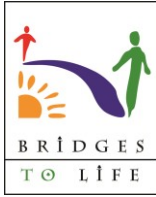
Impact on the Community. Reducing recidivism has significant beneficial economic and societal impact. The cost to the taxpayer to incarcerate an offender in a Texas prison over the average sentence is approximately \$100,550 (*Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2016, Henrichson & Delaney, 2012*), and that is in addition to the significant costs incurred at the county level, such as arrest and jail prior to incarceration. In addition to tax savings, the benefit of savings in emotional trauma to potential victims is impossible to measure.

In 2019, the Bridges To Life program provided services to over 7,000 offender participants at a cost of \$200 per graduate.

Impact on Volunteers. The Bridges To Life program is a ministry of presence. Each BTL volunteer gives approximately 60 hours of his/her time per project, and many volunteers participate in multiple projects each year. Volunteers may be victims of crime or others who have been affected by crime, or may be lay facilitators giving of their time. Since its inception, more than 3,000 volunteers have participated in a BTL project. **Currently, 268 active volunteers have been with BTL for over 5 years, and 102 of these for more than 10 years.**

Facilitation of the healing process for victims is achieved through the dialogue between victim volunteers and offenders. Perhaps the single best indicator that healing is taking place for victim volunteers is the fact that, since BTL's first project in 1999, approximately 1,000 victims of crime have volunteered for the Bridges To Life program. **Over 300 victim volunteers participated in 2019.**

Volunteers often comment that they receive more benefit from the Bridges To Life process than do the offenders, as expressed in this quote from a 2019 volunteer:



Bridges To Life 2019 Annual Report

“Having the opportunity to tell my story during a BTL meeting was healing and empowering. This was the first time I spoke about how being assaulted impacted not only me, but my family, my future husband and my daughters. After my statement, the men in our group saw me in a different light and related to me better. Thank you for allowing me to share my hurts, my pain, and my heart.”

In 2019, 949 volunteers contributed 87,950 volunteer hours, worth \$2,236,569* in kind!

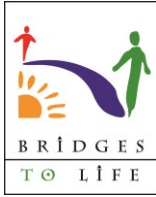
**Independent Sector Value*

Impact on Juveniles. In 2009, in response to interest from the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, work began on a study guide geared toward juveniles aged 13-17, and the first BTL Juvenile Program piloted with 20 youth and 4 volunteers at the Harris County Leadership Academy (HCLA) in Katy, Texas. **Since then, BTL has completed 41 projects in 8 youth facilities, and graduated 744 youth from our 12-week juvenile program.**

While early intervention with juvenile offenders is a small portion of BTL’s work, it is no less important than reaching adult offenders. “A 2007 University of Texas study found that each youth who is rehabilitated can save taxpayers between \$1.7 and \$2.3million in future criminal justice costs. In addition, the more youth who are successfully rehabilitated, the safer we’ll all be.” (*Houston Chronicle, 1/19/17*)

Through feedback from volunteers, juvenile probation staff, and professionals in the field of youth psychology, the BTL Youth Curriculum was developed into a professionally illustrated graphic novel entitled *Makin’ It: A Story of Hope*. This revised curriculum has been used since 2013 at HCLA, as well as in collaboration with mentors from the reVision program, a ministry for gang-affected youth and their families in Southwest Houston, and has been well received by both youth and adult volunteers.

In 2019, 92 youth graduated from five BTL juvenile projects, two conducted at the Harris County Leadership Academy in Katy, Texas, one at Youth Center of the High Plains in Amarillo, Texas, and two at the Pendleton Juvenile Facility in Indiana.



Bridges To Life 2019 Annual Report

Impact on Alternative Populations. Through our work with thousands of incarcerated offenders, we have encountered numerous program participants who have struggled with alcohol and drug addiction. Over the years, we have received frequent feedback that, in addition to helping offender participants deal with their criminal actions, the BTL program also has a substantial impact on helping them understand what role their addictions have played in their behaviors and choices. This feedback has led us to successfully expand the BTL program into halfway houses, homeless facilities and rehabilitation centers such as the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) facility in Houston, Judge John C. Creuzot Judicial Treatment Center in Lancaster, and The Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Centers (ARC) in Dallas and Houston.

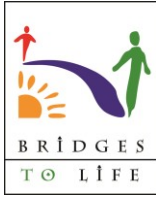
In 2019, 290 clients in residential treatment programs graduated from 14 BTL projects conducted at 7 alternative facilities.

The Peer-Facilitated Model. BTL has also expanded into a peer-facilitated format that allows the program to reach additional participants in units that are not located in close proximity to our volunteer base. Peer-facilitated projects were conducted in 14 Texas prison units this year, each requiring only one TDCJ-approved volunteer for oversight, and in two California prisons. In Texas, the program is facilitated by TDCJ Field Ministers (inmates who have graduated from the theological seminary college located at the Darrington Unit) rather than by BTL volunteers, and has been well-received by prison system personnel and inmate participants.

In 2019, 26 peer-facilitated projects were conducted at 14 prison units, graduating a total of 869 offender participants from the BTL program.

Reaching Sex Offenders. Until recently, the Texas prison system did not allow sex offenders to participate in Bridges To Life. However, after much persistence and discussion with TDCJ management, we are now able to offer our program to offenders in the Sex Offender Treatment Facilities (SOTF). BTL has completed projects at SOTF's in the Neal Unit (Amarillo), Stringfellow Unit (Rosharon), Goree Unit (Huntsville), and is expanding into the Hightower Unit (Dayton) in 2020. Sex offenders in other states have participated in BTL projects since 2010.

In 2019, 5 projects were conducted at 3 SOTF units, graduating a total of 143 offender participants from the BTL program.

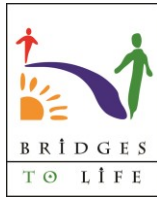


Organizational Capacity

BTL Board. Bridges To Life is led by Chief Executive Officer and Founder, John Sage, and a Board of Directors that provides fiscal and practical direction. The BTL board is comprised of ten members with established interests in social services, philanthropy, law, accounting, and business. Several members provide legal and business-related advice and counsel, and all provide the social and spiritual support needed for BTL staff and volunteers to fulfill the mission of the organization. The term of office for board members is three years.

In addition to oversight duties, Board members contribute financially to BTL, assist with fundraising efforts, and provide in-prison volunteer service. All members of the Board of Directors were donors in 2019, and eight members served as volunteers.

2019 BTL Board of Directors	2019 BTL Advisory Board
<p>Kirk Blackard Author; Licensed Arbitrator</p>	<p>Salem Abraham Canadian, TX</p>
<p>Edward G. Davis, Jr., CPA (<i>Board Chairman</i>) Chief Financial Officer, Juniper Capital LP</p>	<p>Ellen Halbert Austin; Former Board Member</p>
<p>Don H. Haley Real Estate Investor</p>	<p>Wade Upton Houston; Former Board Member</p>
<p>Katherine Cabaniss Parsley Retired 248th District Judge</p>	
<p>Will Perry Founder & CEO, Worldwide Power Products</p>	
<p>Ershel Redd, Jr. Retired CEO, El Paso Electric</p>	
<p>John Sage Founder/Chief Executive Officer</p>	
<p>Richard C. Seltzer Attorney</p>	
<p>George W. "Trey" Strake, III Senior Director, Cushman & Wakefield</p>	
<p>Gay Van Osdall Community Volunteer</p>	



Bridges To Life 2019 Annual Report

BTL Staff. In 2019, Mr. Sage led a staff consisting of: a Chief Operating Officer, Development Director, Communications Manager, 12 full-time Regional Coordinators (one who also serves as Program Director), and 4 part-time Regional Coordinators.

All Regional Coordinators were BTL volunteers before coming on board as BTL staff. They typically manage BTL programs in four prison units located within two hours of their home. This involves many tasks, including, but not limited to, recruiting and training volunteers and working with the prison staff to coordinate BTL projects inside the prisons. Because BTL staff members are located throughout the state of Texas, along with one staff member in Indiana and one in Washington, monthly staff meetings are held by teleconference, and all staff members come together for a three-day retreat each spring.

Bridges To Life continues to grow and serve more victims of crime and offenders. Starting with 41 inmate graduates in one Texas prison in 1999, Bridges To Life has now completed 1,561 projects in 169 prisons and alternative facilities, and is always evaluating the potential for expansion. New opportunities in 2019 brought staff changes along with growth, as long-time Regional Coordinators Eddie Mendoza (Southeast Texas) and Richard Lopez (Huntsville) both retired. New hire James Prochazka joined BTL as Regional Coordinator for Southeast Texas, and formerly retired Regional Coordinator Beverly Epps returned to take over the Huntsville region. Additionally, Washington Regional Coordinator Judy Dutcher returned to Texas in summer 2019 to lead our expansion into the newly formed Lubbock Region in 2020. This shifted BTL projects in the state of Washington to monitored status.

2019 BRIDGES TO LIFE STAFF

John Sage—Founder and Chief Executive Officer

Jim Buffington—Chief Operating Officer

Connie Hilton—Program Director and Northeast Texas Regional Coordinator

Danielle Sims—Development Director

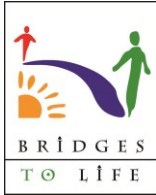
Val Padley—Communications Manager

REGIONAL COORDINATORS, Texas

Belinda Hester, Waco Area #2—Boyd Unit (*Teague*), Crain Unit (*Gatesville*), Hobby and Marlin Units (*Marlin*)

Charles Fisher, Dallas/Fort Worth #1—Allred Unit (*Iowa Park*), Bridgeport Correctional (*Bridgeport*), Coffield Unit (*Tennessee Colony*), Estes Unit (*Venus*), Lindsey State Jail (*Jacksboro*)

Connie Hilton, Northeast Texas—Beto Unit (*Palestine*), East Texas Treatment Facility (*Henderson*), Lewis Unit (*Woodville*)



Bridges To Life 2019 Annual Report

Deborah Hartman, Central Texas—Halbert Unit (*Burnet*), Kyle Correctional (Kyle), Lockhart Correctional (*Lockhart*), Travis Unit (*Austin*)

Dolores Stoughton, Greater Houston #1—Clemens Unit (*Brazoria*); Darrington, Ramsey, Stringfellow and Terrell Units (*Rosharon*); Scott Unit (*Angleton*)

Eddie Mendoza*/James Prochazka, Southeast Texas—LeBlanc Unit (*Beaumont*), Polunsky Unit (*Livingston*), Stiles Unit (*Beaumont*)

Joel Lightfoot, Dallas/Fort Worth #2—Cole and C. Moore Units (*Bonham*), Hutchins State Jail (*Dallas*), Judicial Treatment Center (*Lancaster*), Salvation Army ARC (*Dallas*),

Larry James, San Antonio Area—Connally Unit (*Kenedy*), Dominguez State Jail (*San Antonio*), McConnell Unit (*Beeville*), Torres Unit (*Hondo*)

Linda Windham, Greater Houston #2—Jester I and Jester III Units (*Richmond*), Plane State Jail (*Dayton*); Women Helping Ourselves (WHO) (*Atascocita*), Young Medical Facility (*Dickinson*)

Lucy Segars, Waco Area #1—Hilltop, Hughes, Mountain View, Murray and Woodman Units (*Gatesville*)

Margie Blazier, Bryan/College Station—Byrd, Eillis and Estelle Units (*Huntsville*); Eastham Unit (*Lovelady*); Ferguson Unit (*Midway*); Hamilton Unit (*Bryan*); Luther and Pack Units (*Navasota*)

Richard Lopez/Beverly Epps**, Huntsville—Goree, Holliday, Walls and Wynne Units

Tac Buchanan, Amarillo/Panhandle—Clements Unit, Neal Unit, Randall County Jail, Youth Center of the High Plains (*Amarillo*); Dalhart Unit (*Dalhart*), Jordan Unit (*Pampa*), Roach Unit (*Childress*), Tulia Transfer Unit (*Tulia*)

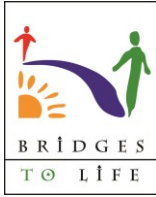
**Eddie Mendoza retired June 30, 2019*

***Richard Lopez retired December 31, 2019*

REGIONAL COORDINATORS, Outside Texas

Judy Dutcher, Washington (Spring 2019)—Cedar Creek (*Littlerock*), Mission Creek (*Belfair*), Monroe Minimum Security, Twin Rivers, and Washington State Reformatory (*Monroe*), Salvation Army ARC (*Bremerton*), Washington Corrections Center (*Shelton*)

Misty Wallace, Indiana—GEO Heritage Trail (*Plainfield*), Indiana Women's Prison (*Indianapolis*), Miami Correctional Facility (*Bunker Hill*), Pendleton Juvenile Correctional Facilities (*Pendleton*), Plainfield Correctional Facility (*Plainfield*), Putnamville Correctional Facility (*Greencastle*)



Community Collaboration

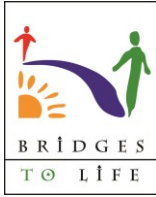
The Bridges To Life program continues to successfully carry out its mission with the cooperation and partnership of numerous community agencies, faith-based organizations, and government entities. Since its beginning, BTL has worked in close collaboration with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to provide a grassroots solution for reducing recidivism and making communities safer.

Based on the success of this relationship, BTL has multiplied its impact by expanding both in and out of state, currently working with the Departments of Correction in California, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington to bring the BTL program to prisons in their states. Extending outside the United States, BTL has collaborated with Promoción de Paz in Mexico, Ukuphula Iketanga Foundation in South Africa, Bridges To Life-Uganda in Uganda, and Prachuap Khirikhan Gospel Church in Thailand.

Bridges To Life works closely with the Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department to implement projects at the Santa Maria Hostel, a women's residential treatment facility in Houston, and with the leadership of the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department to conduct our juvenile program. Additionally, BTL partners with The Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Centers in Houston and Dallas, and the John C. Creuzot Judicial Treatment Center in Lancaster, to serve residents seeking counseling and addiction-related services.

Our education collaboration includes **Southern Methodist University (SMU) Perkins School of Theology**, which offers a Restorative Justice course requiring participation as a BTL volunteer at the Dallas Salvation Army ARC facility. Additionally, students in SMU's Embrey Human Rights Program may volunteer for BTL to fulfill their community service requirement, and restorative justice students in the SMU Dispute and Conflict Management Master's Program can participate as a volunteer for BTL as an approved internship. BTL also has partnership agreements with the **University of Texas** in San Antonio, **Indiana Wesleyan University**, and **Penn State University** in their Criminal Justice Departments for their Criminal Justice program students to participate with BTL as volunteers.

BTL is a steady source of referrals for The WorkFaith Connection, SER-Jobs for Progress, Tarrant County Reentry Coalition, One Man's Treasure, Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP), Unlocking DOORS, and CrossWalk Center. These re-entry partnerships allow BTL to expand resources offered to offender participants, providing them with opportunities for education, training, and employment-related services that will aid them in successfully reintegrating into their communities.

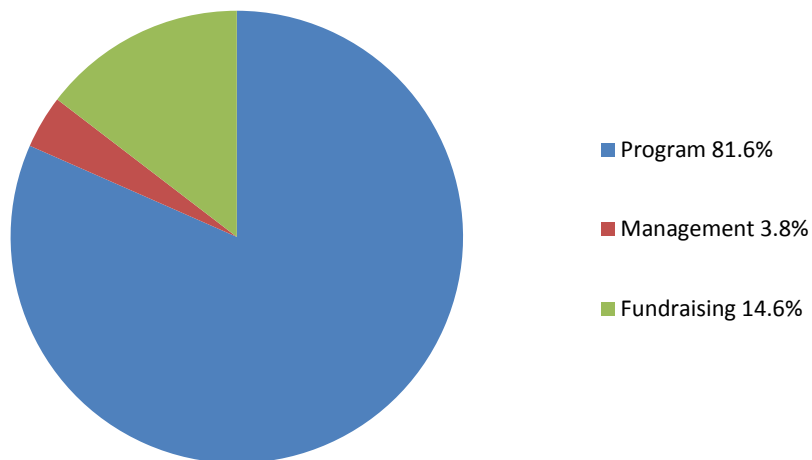


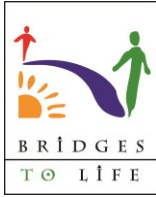
Fiscal Responsibility and Program Value

Bridges To Life is fiscally responsible. **Cash expenses in 2019 totaled \$1,401,102** of which 81.6 cents of every dollar was spent on program services. BTL is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity and a GuideStar Exchange Gold Participant. The agency's IRS 990 and audited financials can be found on the GuideStar profile or by contacting our office. The BTL organizational profile can also be found on DonorHouston, an online database hosted by the Greater Houston Community Foundation that provides nonprofit information to potential donors.

How Is Funding Used?

2019 Expenses (Cash Basis)



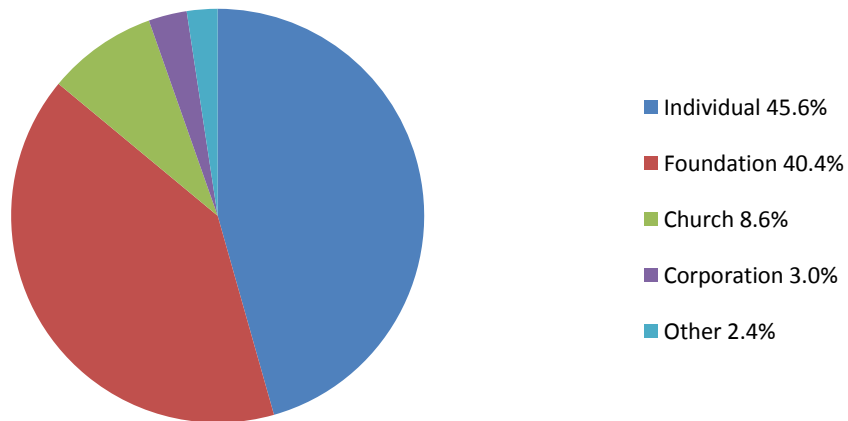


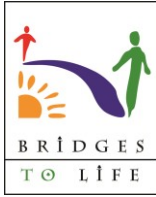
Bridges To Life 2019 Annual Report

BTL is a 21-year old grassroots nonprofit agency that has relied on the generous support of individuals, foundations, churches and faith-based organizations, and corporations that see the value in our work. In 2019, **Bridges To Life received \$1,471,123 in cash donations and other revenue.** Our fundraising objective is to continue to build a diverse funding structure, without relying on any one source for support. We are fortunate to have a broad base of donors (602 in 2019) who continue to support our mission. With frugal spending and careful planning, we have been able to build a reasonable cash reserve to sustain our program during the year, as more than 50 percent of our funds arrive in the last quarter of each year.

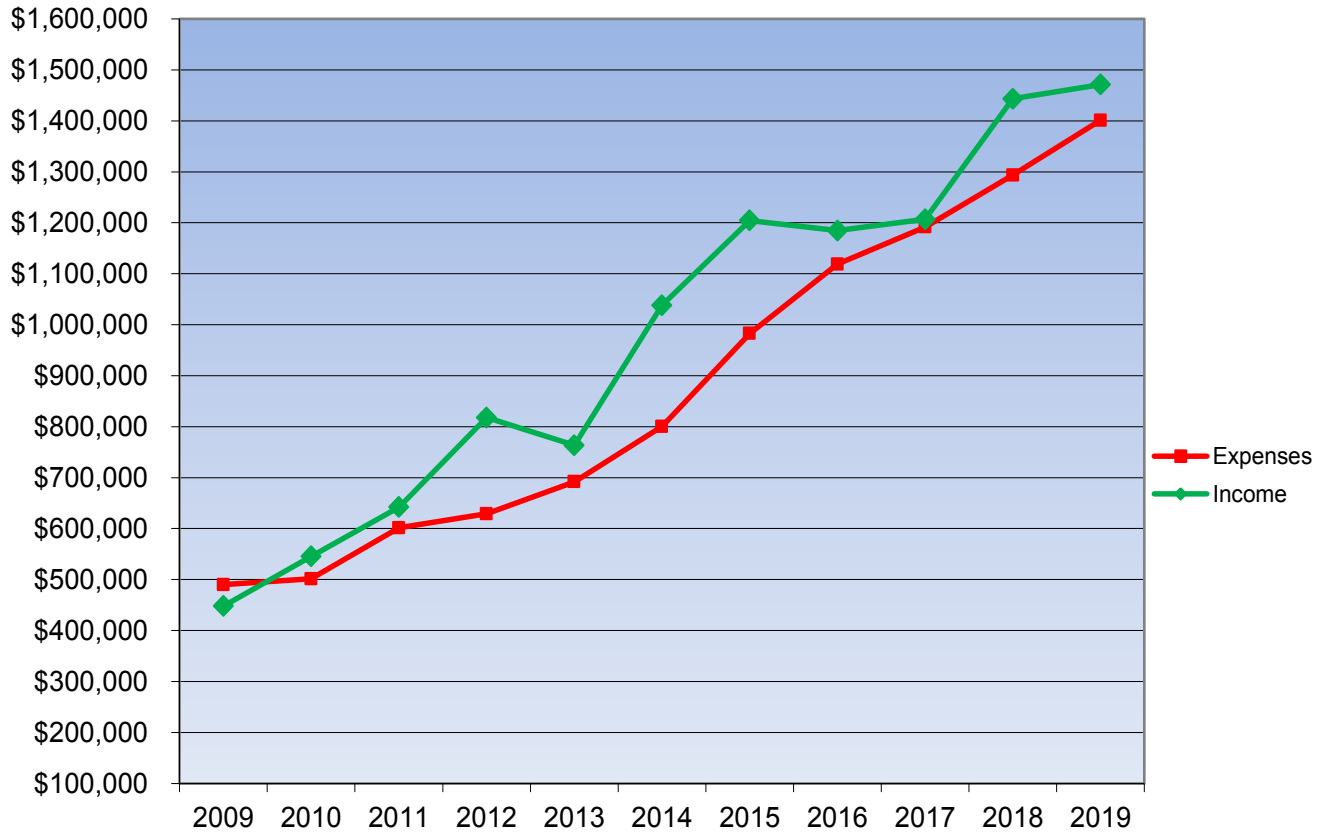
How Is BTL Funded?

2019 Revenue (Cash Basis)

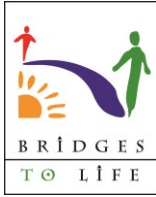




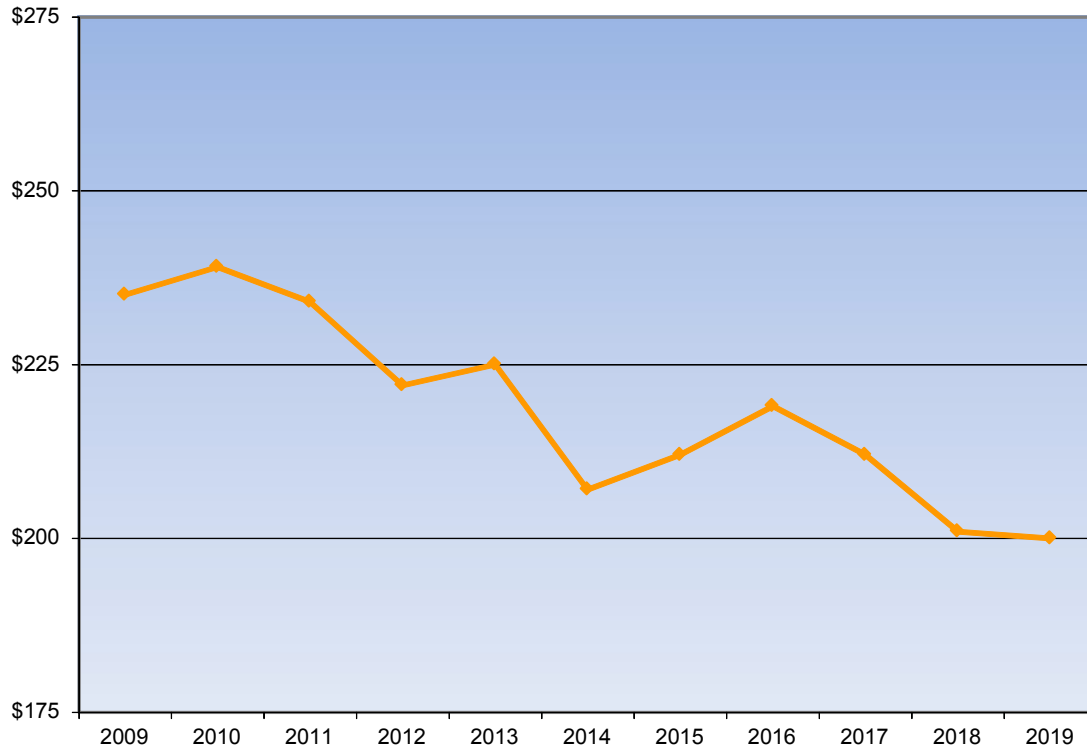
Annual Budget History



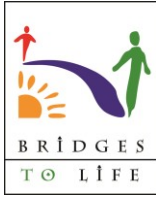
As indicated in the chart, BTL has had steady and significant growth in terms of revenue and expenses. These increases have been accompanied by significant growth in the size and number of projects and number of annual graduates from the program. **Cash expenses in 2019 were \$1,401,102; cash revenue was \$1,471,123.** A breakdown of expenses and revenue can be found earlier in this report.



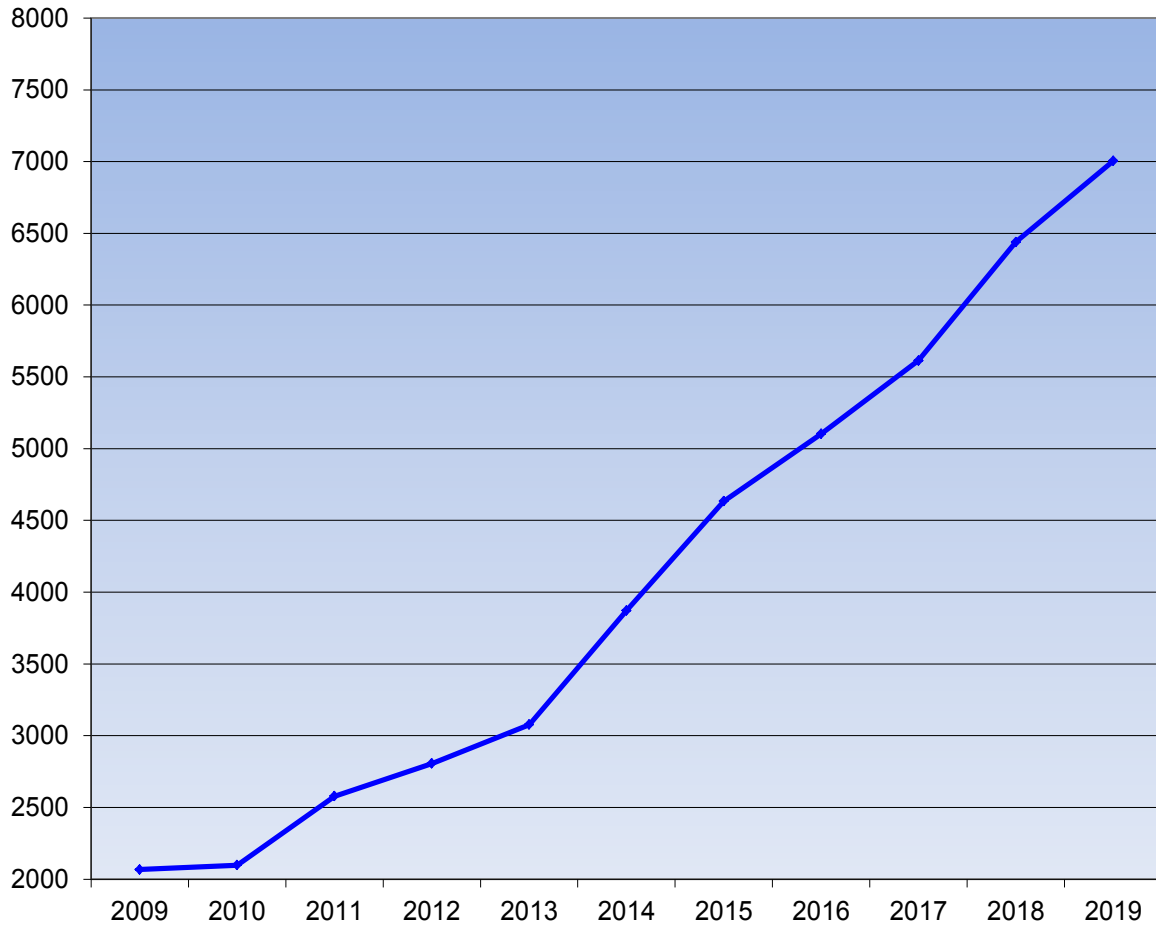
Cost Per Graduate



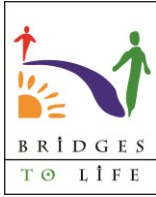
As illustrated above, our cost per graduate continues to remain extremely low. **The cost of the BTL program per inmate in 2019 was \$200 (based on the cash budget)**, a fraction of the cost to incarcerate a first-time or repeat offender. The average cost of incarcerating an offender in Texas for an average length incarceration is approximately \$100,550.



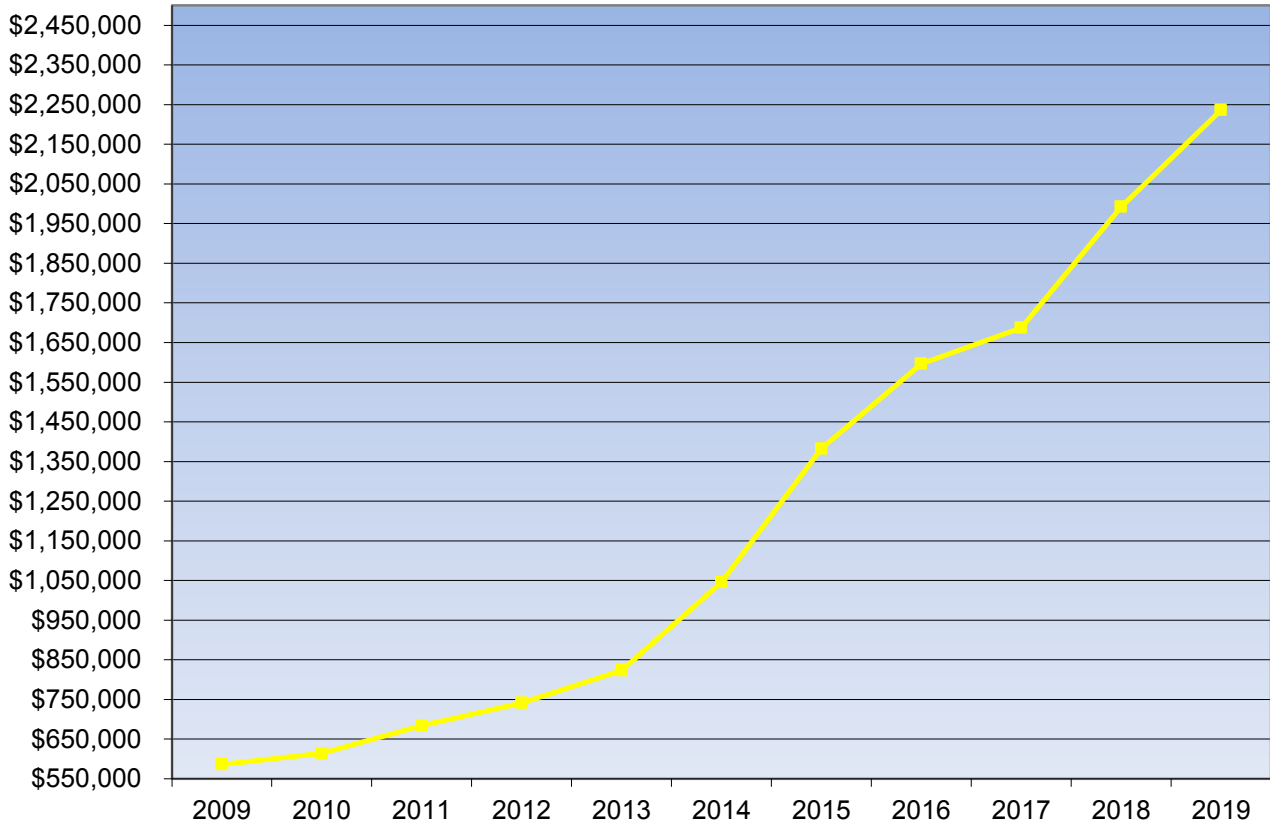
BTL Graduates Per Year



In 2019, 7,004 men and women graduated from the BTL program in 107 prison, juvenile, and alternative facilities, passing the milestone of 50,000 graduates since inception by the end of the year.



Value of BTL Volunteers



Bridges To Life volunteers may or may not be victims of a crime. Volunteers commit to 14 weeks of service, which amounts to 60 hours of volunteer time per project, plus homework and travel time. Most volunteers complete two projects each year.

In 2019, BTL employed 4 part-time and 16 full-time staff members, who collectively managed 949 volunteers in Texas, Indiana and Washington. The chart above depicts the value of this volunteer time, as determined by the Independent Sector website. **Last year, our 949 active volunteers contributed over 87,950 hours of service valued at \$2,236,569 in kind!**