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### **Looking Upwards, Inc. & Bridges, Inc. to Merge**

Looking Upwards, Inc. based in Middletown and Bridges, Inc. of Jamestown are announcing a merger in which Bridges will become a part of Looking Upwards.

This is the merger of two strong organizations that share the same values and have worked closely together for decades. Both organizations support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live fully as active members of their community.

The anticipated date of the transition is July 1, 2017. All services Bridges offers will continue under the management and the name of Looking Upwards.

Currently, Bridges serves 70 adults and Looking Upwards provides services for 225. Looking Upwards also serves 875 children and families, supporting children with diverse needs to get the best start in life and thrive as they grow.

Says Bridges Executive Director, Lisa Rafferty, "This merger will help position Bridges for the future in a changing regulatory and fiscal environment. We have confidence that the quality of our partnership with people participating in our services will continue under Looking Upwards' stewardship."

As a result of the merger, Looking Upwards will become one of the largest agencies in the state serving individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Says Executive Director of Looking Upwards, Carrie Miranda, "Our increase in size will add to our strength and flexibility while Looking Upwards continues to offer a wide range of personalized services to meet the needs of the community."

The organization will employ 800 full and part-time workers, serving 1,200 individuals and families throughout the state. The total services provided are not fully reflected in these numbers, since many individuals participate in more than one program, including 130 adults receiving 24-hour support while living in the 28 homes the agency will manage.

The merger will also leave Looking Upwards with an expanded geographic reach. At present, Looking Upwards serves mainly Newport County and the East Bay, though its

children's services are statewide. Bridges primarily serves Southern Rhode Island, thus the merger will strengthen Looking Upwards' capacity to serve South County.

The merger has come about as part of the succession planning for Bridges' Executive Director, Lisa Rafferty. Rafferty, with her husband Jim, founded Bridges, 30 years ago, after first entering the field while working at Looking Upwards.

Over the decades the two organizations have shared ideas, resources and in the early parts of their careers, various members of the management teams have worked at both agencies. Most recently the two organizations created a shared online staff training program, funded through the generosity of The Rhode Island Foundations' Newport County Fund.

Says Miranda, "We at Looking Upwards look forward to continuing our mission, enhanced by the added skills and resources of the Bridges team and their like-minded commitment to the individuals and families we serve."