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Carole Gordon,  
The Bridge

## Two Caring Companies, One Fabulous Relationship

### Service Directions and The Bridge Inc.

Life changing. Those two words best describe the work done by The Bridge Inc., a New York City non-profit organization whose mission is to help those living with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, recurring substance abuse, and homelessness. The idea of their clients taking control of their lives to achieve their own life goals is at the core of all of The Bridge's services, one of which is housing. The Bridge operates 18 single-site facilities around the city that provide both transitional and permanent housing, and plans to open more facilities in the near future.

"We're in the social services business and got into housing in 1979 because our clients needed affordable housing in the community," explains Carole Gordon, Director of Development. "The SRO's were closing, a lot of clients were coming out of psychiatric hospitals, and today, many are released from jail and prison. When they come out, they need a place to call home. We have one of the only programs in the country, for example, that offers permanent housing for people coming out of prison, with lots of wrap-around services."

One of the life skills that The Bridge teaches their clients is how to do laundry. "It's a part

of their socialization," says Gordon. "It's an activity of daily living where they can spend time socializing and get out of their apartments. We had always purchased a washing machine and a dryer or two whenever we opened a new building, but then we were stuck with the maintenance and upkeep of the machines. We're in the business of social services; we're not in the business of taking care of machinery."

Enter Service Directions. In 2000, Albert Mayas, who is the Executive Managing Director of Charles H. Greenthal Management Corp. and a Vice President of The Bridge Board, introduced The Bridge to Ron Garfunkel. "Ron came and talked to us about putting machines in our residential buildings," Carole Gordon explains. "He told us, we'll put commercial machines in the buildings and you don't have to worry about it. If there's a problem, your on-site people can call us, we'll be there, we'll fix it, and you don't have to be in the business of operating machinery."

It was a perfect match, providing The Bridge with laundry equipment and service at their many transitional and permanent housing facilities. "We have been enormously pleased with how this has all worked out," says Gordon. "And we're

talking pennies a day to be able to offer free laundry services as an amenity to our clients. SDI is very quick to respond. If they can't fix it, they'll bring in a new machine and it's their headache, not ours."

With 18 current residential facilities, and more on the way, SDI's emphasis on customer service and a 24/7 turn-around has provided peace of mind for a very busy organization. "It just makes life easier," Gordon explains. "Before SDI, we used to hear stories about a dryer not working and clients washing their clothes but not being able to dry them. We work with people who are seriously mentally ill, and they would end up sleeping on wet sheets. I tell everybody to go to SDI because I think they do a wonderful job. In fact, we've never gone elsewhere to look for another vendor since Ron came and spoke to us."

Service Directions is proud to be in a partnership with this life changing organization, and also supports The Bridge as a donor. "Ron was and is very generous to our organization, even before we entered into this professional relationship. Our relationship," says Gordon, "has just been a fabulous relationship!"