

the door to brighter futures

SPRING 2009

# Wesley Housing NEWS



## 1974 Participant Celebrates Our Origin

Trinity United Methodist Church in McLean was the site of a spring celebration in which Wesley Housing and faith community members marked the 35th Anniversary of the Urban Consultation. An extraordinary gathering of individuals, convened by the Northern Virginia United Methodist Board of Missions, identified the needs of Northern Virginians. Divided into

seven task forces—Child Care, Youth, Crime and Jails, Transportation, Alcohol and Drugs, Aging, and Housing—participants studied conditions first hand and reported their findings to the group.

Doug True, a 1974 participant who attended Arlington UMC, spoke at the celebration event. He shared his recollections of the spirited discussion that took place after the final task force reports were shared. Consultation participants vigorously debated the merits of each focus area before settling on housing as the problem to address.

“The obstacles associated with housing were seemingly insurmountable—legislation, transportation, education.... And then there was funding. If you think there’s little money for housing now, you should have been around then. But none of that mattered to Virginia. She was a dreamer with a powerful vision. She believed. She made us believe.”

Later that year, Virginia S. Peters and other inspired United Methodists founded Wesley Housing to address the needs of those who were powerless to advocate for themselves.

The heart of the faith community’s commitment can be seen in the scores of volunteers who have given of their time and talents. Advocating for affordable housing, teaching classes, visiting seniors—all are ways in which Wesley Housing has been enriched by those who believe in our mission.

“I was on the opposition,” True admitted wryly. “I thought Virginia was crazy. I was wrong. What she created in Wesley Housing was a miracle. That miracle continues today.”

To learn more or view our DVD, *Roots of Our Mission*, please call Rev. Joanne Maughlin at 571.237.8920.

## Ben Franklin House Opens!

Wesley Housing celebrates the completion of our newest project in Fairfax County, *Ben Franklin House*. We converted a single family house into a group home serving individuals with disabilities.

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board partnered with Wesley Housing, by providing funds for handicapped-accessible renovations, ensuring long-term stability for the project with a 25-year lease, and managing onsite resident programs.



The new facility is 100% handicapped accessible, with six bedrooms, a sitting room, dining room, living room, kitchen and pantry, laundry room, office, mechanical

room, and two and a half bathrooms, one of which features a walk-in bathtub. The property also makes use of its expansive backyard with a new deck, shaded by large deciduous trees.

The project features *universal design* to ensure safety and promote independence for the special needs residents. Touch plate lighting, seamless transitions in flooring, and levered handles are examples of small changes that can have a profound impact on the occupants. In this house, incorporating a gently sloped, no-step entrance was key to meeting the needs of residents, as well as widening all doorways, pathways, and hallways, and placing switches and outlets at heights appropriate to everyone, including those who may use wheelchairs.

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## Notes from Shelley

Spring is the time of new beginnings. Thirty-five springs ago, a small group of concerned individuals became the catalyst for beginning a new mission that would change the lives of Northern Virginians.

Through their participation in the Urban Consultation, members of the Housing Task Force discovered far too many individuals and families in dire circumstances and without decent affordable housing.

Initially, some members thought the complexities surrounding this issue would be insurmountable. Yet, as Doug True so eloquently pointed out at our celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the Urban Consultation, vision and faith can sometimes transform the impossible into *Possible*.

Since 1974, thousands of individuals and families have found new beginnings in Wesley Housing's mission because of the support and vision you have given us over the years:

- ❖ Through our supportive programs, a new mother and high school dropout, found the courage to return to school and become a labor and delivery nurse in Fairfax County.
- ❖ A victim of violent crime, left with traumatic brain injury, garnered independence by living in his own apartment designed specifically for his needs.
- ❖ A new immigrant took computer classes, gained citizenship, and secured a better job.
- ❖ A middle-school student improved her English so much that she was able to advocate for herself and win admission to mainstream classes.

The final report of the Urban Consultation concluded that they could not solve the whole problem, but they could make a vital contribution. They could and they did. We can and we do. You can, too.

Come join us in creating new beginnings for those who need us most!

*Shelley*

Shelley S. Murphy, President/CEO

## Independence Gained

Ravella lives with the daily challenges brought about by having cerebral palsy and mental retardation. Prior to renting at *Coppermine Place I* in 2008, she lived in a group home with daily support. Having a new home meant living independently—a prospect that frightened her even though she wanted to move.

While Ravella has family members in the area, they were unable to help her in locating supportive resources. In need of assistance, Ravella turned to Coppermine Place's onsite social services coordinator. She helped Ravella complete applications for Medicaid and Metro Access, arranged for counseling through the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, and referred her to Fairfax County's rehabilitative services, where she receives job training. Ravella's new goal is to work on a part-time basis.



The resident programs coordinator encouraged Ravella to attend the programs and activities offered at Coppermine Place. Over the past year, Ravella joined the Life Stories chat group, participated in the Resident Advisory Council, and attended craft classes and social events. In her new community, Ravella has blossomed and brightens the lives of staff and residents with her brilliant smile and engaging demeanor. Coppermine Place I has provided Ravella with a home, friends, and the support she needs to successfully live on her own.

## Senior Resource Fair

The Herndon Senior Center hosted a Senior Resource Fair on Saturday, May 16, 2009, sponsored by the Herndon Senior Center, Wesley Housing, and the Alzheimer's Family Day Center. Presenters and exhibitors provided information and education for adults preparing to retire, retirees, caregivers to senior adults, and professionals in the field of aging.

Organized by Catherine Gander, Wesley Housing's Social Services Coordinator at *Coppermine Place I & II*, the Fair was designed to provide many answers under one roof. Displays featured local resources for medical, housing, transportation, legal, and caregiving needs. Presentation topics included memory loss, wills and powers of attorney, medical issues affecting older adults, and Fairfax Area Agency on Aging's services.

## Group Home *(cont'd)*

The house is located in a quiet residential neighborhood, close to many commercial businesses, including a variety of shopping and service establishments. Residents also have access to public transportation via the Franconia/Springfield Metro and the VRE train less than a mile away.

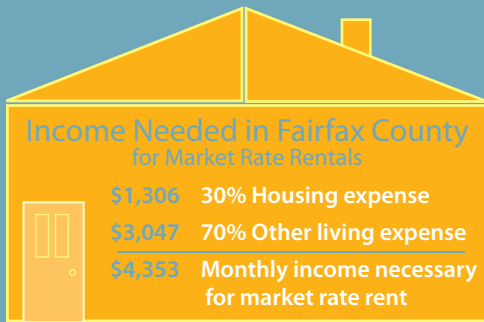


Other partners on the project include Virginia Community Capital, Inc. (VCC), a nonprofit community development financial institution who provided construction financing in the amount of \$700,000. With construction complete, VCC was repaid with long-term financing provided by the Virginia Housing Development Authority, via a SPARC loan in the form of a 35-year mortgage.

# Making Ends Meet

On July 24, 2008, the minimum wage was raised to \$6.55 per hour. While that represents a 27% increase since 2007, it is still only \$1.40 more than a rate that was not close to a livable wage.

For example, a head-of-household working 40 hours/week for minimum wage earns an annual (pre-tax) salary of \$13,624, roughly \$1,135 per month. However, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Arlington is **\$1,874**. In Fairfax County, the rent is **\$1,306** (\$171 more than the entire monthly income).



With the generally accepted definition of affordability being no more than 30% of annual income (HUD website), a minimum-wage earner would need to increase his/her annual salary at least 3.85 times to qualify for that Fairfax apartment without assistance or subsidies.

A recently published HUD report showed nearly 6 million U.S. households had "worst case housing needs" defined as unassisted renters with very low incomes who are either paying more than half of their income for housing or living in severely substandard housing. Clearly, the work you support at Wesley Housing is truly a critical need for low- and moderate-income families and individuals in Northern Virginia.



## A Portrait of Home

Nine-year-old Akrem, a participant in *Strawbridge Square Apartments'* Homework Help program, won the grand prize in an annual children's art contest, *Mi Casa es Su Casa*, sponsored by Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND). Akrem's artwork appears on the cover of HAND's annual meeting program. His prizes include a \$50 gift certificate and a \$250 savings bond. Wesley Housing is receiving \$250 for its resident services programs. HAND featured Akrem and Wesley Housing in a short video for its annual awards luncheon.



## Special Thanks

- ❖ **Urban Consultation 35th Anniversary Donors:** Beverley Hills UMC and Cherrydale UMC. **Event Sponsors:** Charles Wesley United Methodist Women (table decor, desserts), Great Falls United Methodist Women (desserts), Korean UMC of Greater Washington (dinner), Lyle and Nancy Minter, Stan and Rev. Joanne Maughlin, and Trinity UMC McLean.
- ❖ **Centreville United Methodist Women** donated a portion of the proceeds of their annual Bazaar & Craft Fair to support Wesley Housing's resident programs.
- ❖ **Northern Virginia Community Foundation** gave funds to support Wesley Housing's *TEE Up! Technology and Education for Everyone*.
- ❖ **The Acacia Foundation** gave funds to support Wesley Housing's real estate development activities.
- ❖ **Chi Beta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.** volunteer for the youth literacy project at *Wexford Manor Apartments* on Saturdays.



## Technology for Seniors

Hamel Builders, Inc. generously upgraded the community computer labs at *Quarry Station Seniors Apartments* and *Coppermine Place*. The company donated 10 new Dell computers with 19" flat screen monitors and ambidextrous/ergonomic mice, Windows VISTA, SonicWALL with McAfee antivirus, and Mavis Beacon typing software. Hamel

contracted with Smart Computing Solutions, Inc. to purchase the equipment and complete the installation.

## Ways to Help:

- Volunteer
- Help the Homeless
- Advocate
- Make a Donation

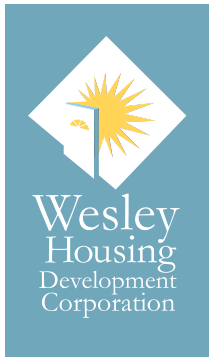
Wesley Housing  
Development Corporation  
5515 Cherokee Avenue, Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22312

## Visit [www.WesleyHousing.org](http://www.WesleyHousing.org)!

Wesley Housing announces a new Donate Now button on our website. Online visitors can make a donation in mere minutes using a secure connection via Network for Good. Visit our *News and Events* section to stay current with our work. Read our *Ways to Help* section to see how you can support Wesley Housing and join us in our mission.

**Donate Now**  
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United Way #8989  
CFC #60939

## Sharing What You Know Best

*Volunteers Enrich Quarry Station and Coppermine Place*

In today's fast-paced, globalized, highly-connected society, we tend to forget the significance of our local community and the positive impact we can have on one another. The easiest way to do so is to share with others what we already know and do.

Volunteers Carol and Phil love to watch movies, so they host a quarterly film club. They bring a favorite DVD to *Quarry Station's* TV lounge on Saturday nights, followed by a discussion of the film with residents.



Glenn, a resident of Quarry Station, was having trouble reading the evacuation plan. He decided to make it easier to see. He created a map for each wing, highlighted the directions, and distributed copies to each apartment, earning a certificate of appreciation from the local fire department.

Tyler and Torrence, a father and son team, tutor residents in our computer lab on Saturdays. They learned about the opportunity because they go to church with some of our residents.

Every year, women from the Manassas Department of Revenue come and assist residents in filing their income taxes. Local piano and voice teachers host student recitals at Quarry Station. Youth groups make musical presentations, play games, or just visit with residents. At Christmas, carolers sing and local brownie troops serve cookies. Occasionally, a local youth community theater performs.

Residents lead monthly Resident Advisory Council meetings and brainstorm new ways to improve life in their communities. They assemble and deliver monthly newsletters. They manage Bingo Night, lead exercise classes, and give presentations from their personal experience. Topics included the history of the City of Manassas, adapting to adult onset blindness, and surviving being a prisoner of war.

One resident had Home Depot donate an American flag and pole and organized a flag-raising ceremony. Another resident's daughter, a master gardener, helped landscape and plant flowers and utilized her connections with a local garden to donate sweet potatoes.

A final key part of volunteering—often forgotten—is offering not only what you can do, but also the resources within your network of friends, family, and colleagues. In this way, you serve others by creatively sharing information, education, and opportunities with those who may not otherwise benefit from those connections.

