



## Executive Director Update

February Issue

**Eric Huffman**

Dear OTR Friends and Family,

*"You can design and create, and build the most wonderful place in the world. But it takes people to make the dream a reality."*

*-Walt Disney*

Thank you all for your continued support in 2015! OTR is working tirelessly to make 2016 a banner year for our residents, staff, board, and supporters. With our Resident Services Program growing, by the end of February, OTR will have a Service Coordinator for every region of OTR apartment communities. These new coordinators will be serving our residents to increase their quality of life, help them face isolation issue, and engage the residents with the community.

OTR would not be where we are today without the generous support of our donors, volunteers, board, staff, and residents. Thank you all for your dedicated support and time!

Sincerely,

### OTR Spring Kick-Off!

Save the Date for March 7th and join us at Lagunitas Brewery Chicago TapRoom! The night will start at 5:30pm and feature live music, raffle and silent auction items, and \$5 beers with 100% of the proceeds being donated back to OTR!

Lagunitas is located at 2607 W. 17th Street, enter the parking lot at 17th and Washenaw!

Learn more about the event [here!](#)

**PLEASE JOIN US!**  
**LAGUNITAS TAP ROOM**  
**MONDAY MARCH 7**  
**OTR SPRING KICK-OFF**  
**Friend Raiser**

# Southwick Place is making headlines!

Over The Rainbow Association and Southwick Place was featured in Skender Construction's *Elevation* publication February issue!

To view this article, please [click here!](#)



**A**ccording to Eric Huffman, executive director of Over the Rainbow Association, adults with mobility impairments who don't have other options are spending thousands of dollars to retrofit their own apartments or condos. They still live with their parents, or they move into nursing homes at a young age because there is nowhere else to live. The supply of independent and accessible housing is just too scarce.

"The need is enormous. I kind of feel like, if you build it they will come," Huffman said.

That's the non-profit's ambitious vision: to be a leading provider of affordable, barrier-free housing solutions for people with physical disabilities. Over the Rainbow is moving toward that reality by building dynamic teams with the entrepreneurial edge to drive social good.

"We've provided a home for people who didn't have a real home before," Huffman said. "We are approaching 300 units at this point, up from 300 people who wouldn't have a home, and the stigma attached to that, without us."

With the help of many, Huffman and his team have built nine apartment buildings in the Chicago area, from Westmont to the west, west to Waukegan and south to Madison. Every development exceeds ADA compliance. Limited carpet to better accommodate wheelchairs, large roll-in showers, drop-in cook tops, wall-mounted oven ranges, precisely positioned kitchen sinks and easy-to-open kitchen windows are just a few of the features that empower people with mobility impairments to be more independent.

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“ WE WANTED TO CONVEY THAT AFFORDABLE HOUSING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE SO BASIC — IT CAN BE EXCITING.”

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AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE BOLD.

Southwick Place opened in July 2015 and has 40 units, including two bed, one bed and studio apartments. When it's full, it will provide housing for about 60 people, many of whom, like the young man from Evanston, are coming from emergency conditions. Hoffman knew that quality would be the thing that made this project different and successful.

"It's really wonderful to make a statement by pushing the boundaries from a design and construction standpoint. We wanted to convey that affordable housing doesn't have to be so basic—it can be exciting," said Hoffman.

The building takes on a geometrical form with an angled roof system, and the facade is a vibrant combination of color and material, connected by a floor-to-ceiling glass vestibule that allows sunlight to enter each floor. The novel truss system, according to project architect Dennis Langley of Vance Langley Weiss, expanded the limits of what was possible.

**ALL ABOUT TRUST**

Being bold didn't come without challenges, especially when construction began in September 2014 instead of July because of a delayed closing. Everyone had been closely communicating, questioning possible solutions to ensure expectations were clear and challenges were called as much as possible, but nothing could hold off Chicago's harsh winter from breathing down their necks.

The main issue was the roof, a modern design that resembles butterfly wings. Given the new schedule, Skender figured it would go down in record time—the worst time of year to put on a roof in Chicago.

"Our team looked at alternatives and quickly set up a meeting with the owner, architect, the roofing manufacturer and roofing subcontractor to discuss options," said project manager Brian Skender. Ultimately, the team chose a roof system that can be installed in temperatures 10 degrees colder than a typical system. The result not only allowed 200 to stay on schedule, but also cost less than the original product.

**SOUTHWICK APARTMENTS**  
Photography: © Rick Cavallari

With Skender's guidance, Southwick changed from a four-story building to a three-story one without compromising the program. The team cut a significant amount from the total cost of the project by creating another bathroom with access dot as opposed to paying to have it hauled away. They considered the value of masonry versus other materials for potential cost savings. They carried out true value engineering and completed construction in nine months.

It would have been very easy for things to go away had the team not agreed to leave their eggs at the door, said Skender.

"No one had an agenda, and everyone was highly motivated to get our tasks done in an honest and upfront style. We developed this give and take relationship where we are wanted to fail because we all knew we were building something that would give others a sense of dignity and independence," he said.

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**WE ALL KNEW WE WERE BUILDING SOMETHING THAT WOULD GIVE OTHERS A SENSE OF DIGNITY AND INDEPENDENCE.”**

"This was a true ongoing professional relationship where Skender was able to identify what was driving the costs within the project and methods that were more affordable, which allowed everyone to make the best decisions," Langley said.

For its efforts, Southwick offers valuable design features, but more importantly, it offers a real home.

"The focus was always what is best for the tenants. There's nothing in there that we didn't want," Langley said of the Southwick project. ■

**CLIENT:**  
HDFP THE HAWKINS ASSOCIATION  
**ARCHITECT:**  
VANCE LANGLEY WEISS  
**GENERAL CONTRACTOR:**  
CENTRAL STATES CONSULTING ENGINEERS  
**ROOFING CONTRACTOR:**  
ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP, INC.

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*Independence is priceless, we make it affordable.*

