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Over The Rainbow Association

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

UPDATE

Improving Lives Through Accessible, Affordable Housing

Executive Director Eric Huffman

May 2017



Midtown Crossing Apartments in Des Plaines is more than a third of the way completed with the building due to open this winter.

Dear OTR Friends,

As spring turns to summer, our **Midtown Crossing apartment community** is also taking shape in downtown Des Plaines, with nearly 35% of the 4-story, 33-unit building completed. At this writing, crews are waterproofing the building and then will begin construction on the interior and detail work. Thanks to a mild winter and an outstanding construction team, we are on target and on budget for the building's completion this fall. A grand opening will take place in either late October or the early part of November and, most importantly, residents will begin to move into their new homes this November and December.

Currently, our Property Management team is beginning to distribute applications for the building and our first community meeting will be held June 8th in Des Plaines to share information about applying and living at the building with prospective residents. We have been gratified by the strong community support and, with

two other apartment complexes currently going up in the area, we feel that we are part of a revitalization of the downtown area of Des Plaines.



Construction of Midtown Crossing has generated 108 temporary jobs, a boon to the local economy.

OTR continues to be on the move to fulfill our mission and has three other new projects that I am excited to share with you. This May we received funding for our first preservation project, **Arboretum West**. OTR will take an older HUD facility in Lombard that had gone into foreclosure and transform it into a barrier-free apartment community with 14 brand new one-bedroom units. Set in a residential neighborhood, the building and property will provide a good foundation for this project. Construction should begin this winter, with the building scheduled to open in 2018.

We also continue our partnership with Full Circle Communities. They will soon be constructing **Pearl Street Apartments**, a 25-unit apartment community in McHenry, IL. OTR will be providing the Resident Service program for this community.

New Initiative to Improve and Expand Belden Apartments



A rendering for an expansion of Belden Apartments set in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood.

Finally, this next project takes us back to our roots with Belden Apartments, our first apartment community located in the heart of the Lincoln Park neighborhood. While the building won a prestigious architectural award in 1982, it is no longer a state-of-the-art structure and the time is right to improve and expand Belden. We

have developed a rendering and site and floor plans for a potential tear down and rebuild with proposed 29- and 23-unit model types. The alderwoman, Chicago Housing Authority, and the Illinois Housing Development Authority have all responded enthusiastically to our plans. It is a project that we feel has a very strong chance of attracting developers. Stay tuned!

School Partnership with North Shore Country Day School Students Fosters Ties and Understanding

On the Resident Service side of what we do to improve the quality of lives for residents, I'm proud to highlight our school partnership between our Hill Arboretum residents and North Shore Country Day School (NSCDS) in Winnetka. This collaboration brings our residents together with 36 lively fifth graders over the course of the school year.

During their first meeting, participants are placed into teams of 4 to 6 students matched with a resident. The student teams get acquainted through board games, residents give tours of their apartments, and they also simply joke and swap stories. Their teachers also give them a mission: each team needs to create a 3-D printed project for their resident. This involves interviewing residents about what type of object might be most useful to them. The students get to work using sophisticated design technology and a software program called Tinkercad. This year the teams created a myriad of customized projects for their residents, ranging from cell phone cases to pencil holders and grips to painting stands. They put final touches on their design, which gives them a personal touch, such as a resident's initials and insignias from favorite sports teams.

According to Libby Esther, 5th grade teacher, who spearheads the project, the growth and learning that results from the project is enormous, both in learning about people with disabilities and in designing something practical with the newest in design technology. Below are some photos from the final event on May 26th when the student teams proudly presented their projects to the residents. The plentiful smiles tell the story better than I can.



OTR Resident Mike Williams and his 5th grade team proudly display their final projects that they designed for him.



OTR resident Katelyn Joyner's team designed a one-of-a-kind cell phone holder in the form of a blue lion with a handy slot.



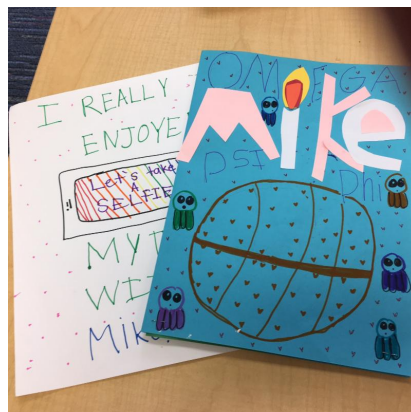
Libby Ester, North Shore Country Day School 5th grade teacher, and volunteer Pat Hughes, second from right) confer with OTR resident Tony Graves and his team about their cup holder project.

Students also wrote up their reflections about their experiences in touching letters to the residents. I'm so pleased to share a few excerpts below that capture how the students felt about the project and the connections they formed.

I enjoyed meeting you so much and loved getting to know you. I had so much fun designing the objects for you and even though we had some bumps along the road they turned out great and we can't wait to give them to you.

As we have learned, you aren't wheelchair-bound, but you are a wheelchair user.

Our Over The Rainbow experience was awesome. We got to meet some really nice people. When we were paired up with you, you were really nice and you love basketball. Now I have started to follow along with basketball.



The project changed me a lot. Before I never knew there was a home for people with disabilities. I also thought before people with disabilities always need help. Over the Rainbow really changed my view on people with disabilities.

Chris, I am so happy we met this year. I am so sad this project is ending, but I had so much fun with you.

Mark Your Calendars!

Finally, we have two special events coming up that you won't want to miss. Save the date for our **10th OTR Challenge Tour on September 17, 2017!** This scenic bike ride on the North Shore is a highlight of the fall season.

More immediately, on **June 15th from 2 to 4 p.m. in our OTR Gallery in Evanston**, we'll be hosting a gallery opening displaying the artwork of our own residents. They have had a lot of fun creating this artwork, while receiving instructions on techniques with some of the featured artists from previous OTR Gallery openings and with teachers from the Evanston Art Center. Come out and see what they've been up to over the past few months.



OTR CHALLENGE TOUR

SAVE THE DATE
9.17.2017

FIND YOUR REASON TO RIDE

For corporate or individual sponsorship, contact Kaitlin Lavelle at klavelle@otrassn.org

Registration begins June 1st. Visit otrassn.org to learn more

Donations are welcome to support OTR's Resident Service Program

The poster features a group of diverse people, some wearing blue OTR Challenge Tour shirts, smiling and posing. A red bicycle wheel graphic is in the top left corner.



Enjoy your summer, whether it takes you to places far away and exotic or as close as a backyard hammock and a good book. As always, thank you for everything you do to support OTR. We couldn't do it without you!

All my best,

Eric Huffman, Executive Director

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