

NAHP Update

Creating Community beyond The Property Borders

BY JENNIFER JONES

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Those that succeed in the affordable housing industry work hard to provide a place that residents are proud to call home. Despite their hard work, subsidized housing suffers from a perception problem and pre-conceived stereotypes. One of the ways to overcome outdated ideas of what it means to be an affordable housing development is to do outreach to the surrounding community at large.

Creating relationships can be mutually beneficial for the housing development and its neighbors. It can help provide resources for residents and benefit the greater community.

"It adds to the housing development when you are able to become a part of the community," Nancy Reno, Housing Management Resources vice president of marketing and training, said. "We think it is instrumental to have these relationships. A lot of times, what happens is that there is a stigma that can be 10, 15, 20 years old. It is good for the greater community to see what new affordable housing looks like. The old stigma disappears when they see how beautiful the properties are."



Reno said properties managed by HMR hold blood drives and food drives, collect toys at the holidays, host summer meals programs for children and provides job readiness training, among other programs that are open to not only the residents, but at times the gen-

eral public as well. Additionally, staff members are encouraged to volunteer with local organizations.

Furthermore, the company has an active presence on social media and works to establish relationships with local police, elected officials, the nearest



NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners

college, the chamber of commerce and civic and charitable organizations.

“It’s a holistic approach. It helps build a greater community,” Reno said. “We want people to be successful.”

find volunteers and even get new sidewalks installed in front of the community so the residents did not have to travel in the street. One of the community’s supporters provided a computer so a resident

“In our community, when you have a need they try to respond,” she said. “So, they know if I’m calling I have a need.”

In return for the community’s support, Whitehead wants to hold an open house to celebrate its COQ award.

When Valley Brook Village in Basking Ridge, N.J.,—a NAHMA 2015 Vanguard Award winner—opened, it invited community groups such as the local YMCA, Elks Club and the like, to be a part of its advisory board. Valley Brook, located on a campus of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) New Jersey Health Care System, addresses all of the issues that homeless veterans face by providing housing, health care and employment assistance.

The creation of the advisory board helped foster rela-



HMR was recognized for having the most newly listed properties on the NAHMA National Recognition Program Communities of Quality (COQ) Registry in 2014 and has two 2015 COQ Award winners.

Networking has helped Hattie Whitehead, site manager at Lilburn Terrace Apartments in Lilburn, Ga.,—a NAHMA 2015 COQ Award winner—provide services to her residents, who are physically disabled or mobility impaired, when the budget does not stretch far enough. By reaching out to her neighboring developments, attending business meet-and-greet events and even calling the mayor’s office, Whitehead has been able to provide classes,

could do her schoolwork. Another holds an annual cookout at the property. A local church will come to the rescue to help bring residents home when they are out and about and a wheelchair battery dies.

“I believe in networking,” Whitehead said. “I thought it was important to let the community know Lilburn Terrace was here and what a great place it is.”

The manager said there is nothing to lose by reaching out and asking for help.



ABOVE, LEFT: Lilburn Terrace Apartments; **ABOVE, RIGHT:** Silver Leaf Terrace; **BOTTOM, RIGHT:** Village at Lakeview Apartments. **OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP:** Valley Brook Village; **BOTTOM:** Village at Lakeview Apartments.



tionships with the greater community. It allows Valley Brook residents to know what services and activities are happening beyond the borders of the VA campus while giving the greater community a chance to see what the village is doing. Residents have been able to attend club social events and help out at volunteer opportunities.

“As a result, our residents have formed relationships in the community and are not so

isolated. A lot of friendships have blossomed from these events,” Carrie Radice, Valley Brook property manager, said.

“IT WAS EASIER TO BRING the community to us than for us to go out to find them. Now, people come to us.”

“It helps our residents integrate back into the community.”

Valley Brook has an open door policy, so community members are welcome to come tour the facility and see for themselves what goes on there.

The residents have benefited from classes at the YMCA, Bible study classes led by one of the local churches and food drives, among other activities, because of the relationships established with community groups. They have given back as well, for example, a resident will be providing fishing lessons to children when the weather gets warmer.

“The community embraced Valley Brook with open arms,” Radice said. “In the beginning, we did outreach. We held

open houses, sent postcards to agencies and organizations. We had a grand opening ceremony. It was easier to bring the community to us than for us to go out to find them. Now, people come to us.”

Lilburn Terrace’s Whitehead suggested reaching out to neighboring properties as well as other developments that provide similar services. Sometimes building a relationship, even if it is a competing company, can be beneficial. She networked with

the manager of another local Department of Housing and Urban Development property and now they meet regularly for lunch to bounce ideas off one another and see where they may be able to assist each other. For example, the other property has a van that Lilburn Terrace can use to transport its resident to a local park for picnics.

“It’s not an easy process. You have to be persistent and believe in what you are doing,” Whitehead said. “It’s promoting what you are doing. Just carve out a little time. Go to lunch, make a phone call.” **NU**

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Shine a Spotlight on Your Community

Enter the Vanguard Award Competition

It might be hard to imagine, but spring is just around the corner and so, too, is the deadline for nominating a property for one of NAHMA's 2016 Affordable Housing Vanguard Awards. The deadline is April 4. The application can be downloaded from the Vanguard Award webpage, www.nahma.org/awards-contests/vanguard-award.

The Vanguard Award recognizes new, quality multifamily affordable housing development or significantly rehabbed affordable housing. The award pays tribute to developers of high-quality affordable housing; demonstrates that exceptional new affordable housing is available across the country; demonstrates the creativity and innovation that must be present to create exceptional properties given the financing and other challenges to development; highlights results of private-public partnerships required to develop today's affordable housing; and shares ideas for unique design and financing mechanisms with industry practitioners to further stimulate creative development in the affordable multifamily industry.

The award is a great way to



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highlight an excellent design or an amazing rehabilitation transformation. It also serves to show all the hard work on-site personnel do every day to make affordable housing communities gems in their neighborhoods and places residents are proud to call home.

"ALCO Management believes in recognizing our employees and our properties. It is important to acknowledge people for doing a great job. Whether you have a new property or a 40-year-old rehab property, the employees need

to be recognized for the hard work in managing the rehab or lease up of the property," Sondra Wimbs, vice president of ALCO Management, said of why the company feels it is important to enter the contest. "It takes dedicated employees to push through a lease up or rehab. Often residents are imposed upon during a rehab and it takes a team to work through the process so that no one is inconvenienced for too long. Owners that continually think about how they could make their product a better place for the residents need to be recognized as owners that are truly concerned about their investment."

The award categories

include: New Construction with two subcategories—more than 100 units and under 100 units; Major Rehabilitation of an Existing Rental Housing Community; Major Rehabilitation of a Nonhousing Structure into Affordable Rental Housing; and Major Rehabilitation of a Historic Structure into Affordable Rental Housing.

Affordable multifamily housing communities that are less than 3 years old—as of April 4, 2016—may apply, based on date of completion

of new construction or completion of major rehab. A management company may submit only one entry for each category.

"The Vanguard Awards allow both owner and employee to be recognized. Winning an award is great morale for your company and makes everyone proud to be a part of a company that is recognized," Wimbs said.

Applications and information about entry fees, judging criteria, the benefits of winning an award and more is on NAHMA's website at nahma.org. Click on Vanguard Award Overview.

Winners of this year's Affordable Housing Vanguard

Award will be recognized at a ceremony at the NAHMA June 2016 summer meeting in San Francisco.

The 2016 Vanguard Awards program is sponsored by the NAHMA-endorsed Multifamily Affordable Housing Insurance Program (MAHIP), provided by Wells Fargo Insurance Services. For details on the national resources, depth-of-industry understanding and market strength of the MAHIP program, visit <https://wfs.wellsfargo.com/mahip>.

"Wells Fargo is a proud

sponsor of the Vanguard Awards," said Megan Davidson, ARM, CRIS, vice president of Wells Fargo Insurance Services USA Inc. "We appreciate and support what you do to make communities better and safer places to live and thrive. Wells Fargo believes and supports affordable housing from a lending and investment standpoint, as one of the largest providers of insurance to affordable housing providers, and as volunteers and supporters of organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. Our goal is to support your success by financially protecting what you value most, and fulfilling all your commercial insurance needs." **NU**

"THE VANGUARD AWARDS ALLOWS BOTH owner and employee to be recognized. Winning an award is great morale for your company and makes everyone proud to be a part of a company that is recognized."

Be Prepared for a REAC Inspection

Each year, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) performs roughly 20,000 physical inspections of properties that are owned, insured or subsidized by HUD including public and multifamily assisted housing. The inspections are to ensure the housing is safe, sanitary and in good repair.

I'd want my maintenance guys trained in REAC, so that they'd understand it. That way, as they were going about their daily business, they can look for maintenance issues as they go," White said, "That way you don't have to spend a lot of money all at once. It should be taken care on a daily basis."

Some maintenance items to look for include missing

rent roll that includes the number of occupied and vacant units.

"If you have that information handy for the inspector, it makes them happy because they don't have to ask a lot of questions," White said.

He said the inspectors look at key areas throughout a property: the site, building exterior, building systems such as heating, electrical and

"PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION to the site, exterior, common area and systems.

Inspectors will take away the biggest points from those areas."

Properties that score 59 or below—out of 100—are considered to have failed their inspection and are subject to reinspection and penalties. Additionally, the better a property's score, the less frequently it is inspected; the schedule ranges from every year to every three years depending on the REAC score.

One of the best ways to prepare for a REAC inspection is to fix problem areas on a daily basis and with education, said Steven White, a certified REAC and owner of Reaction Inspection Services.

"If I was a maintenance supervisor or on-site manager,

HVAC covers, blocked access to the electrical panel, damaged door seals or hardware, leaking pipes, damaged sinks or showers, nonfunctioning stove burners and improperly vented clothes dryers, to name a few.

Additionally, White recommends all properties should keep a "REAC book," that has the name, physical address, phone and fax numbers for the property, the owner, the managing agent and the on-site manager. It should also have the measurements, in square footage, of parking lots, driveways, walkways and any streets maintained by the property. The book also needs to contain any bed bug units, a copy of the notification of inspection sent to the residents, a copy of all of the property's equipment certifications and the

ventilation, the common areas, dwelling units, and health and safety issues such as mold or blocked emergency exits, for example. He said properties tend to lose points because they focus on making the interiors look pretty and neglect the outside curb appeal.

"Properties will spend thousands of dollars on the units, which is good, but if the outside doesn't look good they lose a lot of points," he said. "Pay particular attention to the site, exterior, common area and systems. Inspectors will take away the biggest points from those areas."

The HUD website provides useful information including lists of the most cited deficiencies for public and multifamily housing and guidance on preparing for an inspection. **NU**

Welcome New Certificants!

NAHP

- >> Pamela Hunter
Westminster Company
Kershaw, S.C.

NAHP-e

- >> Sean Theile
Solari Enterprises Inc.
Orange, Calif.
- >> Janeen Wiltse
Paragon Management Inc.
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- >> Oscar Tejada
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- >> Jorge Delgado
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For more information, go to www.nahma.org and click on Education.



For more information about REAC, visit http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/react/aboutreact



Making a Difference in People's Lives

NAME: Deirdre Wyman, NAHP, NAHP-e, SHCM, CPO, C15P

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: Trinity Management LLC

POSITION: Director of Public Housing/Compliance Support

Deirdre Wyman said she got into the affordable housing management business, “like most people, I fell into it.” March will mark her 30th anniversary in an industry that has been the only career she has known since college. She has held nearly every position in the industry, beginning as a receptionist, to now serving as director of public housing/compliance support for Trinity Management, headquartered in Boston, Mass.

“I originally stayed because I

liked it. It was fascinating to me—a little world I didn’t know existed,” Wyman said. “The longer I stayed in affordable housing, the more I realized I was destined to be here. I love the challenges. You really do make a difference in people’s lives.”

She says it is rewarding to help people improve their living conditions. The bulk of the properties managed by the company are in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

“It’s important to recognize, for me this may be a business or occupation, but also recognize for some people, it’s their homes. I love it. We are moving people into affordable, quality housing,” she said. “This is a section of the population that needs help. There are people

who have the luxury of having enough money to live in decent housing. A lot of our residents don’t have that luxury. They come from distressed housing.”

As part of her job, Wyman takes part in preconstruction meetings where she explains the process of the upcoming rehabilitation, what steps will be taken to mitigate the inconveniences the construction will create, and to make sure the temporarily displaced residents know their rights. The meetings are also a chance to get feedback from the residents to what amenities they feel are important for their newly rehabbed homes.

“I look forward to every new deal,” she said. “But it is a long process from getting

the first shovel in the dirt to moving people in.”

Additionally, Wyman serves as a board member for NEAHMA and is a member of the organization’s Charity Committee. Wyman said she loves the opportunity to meet new people through her work with NEAHMA.

“You attend a meeting or networking event and there is so much knowledge in one room. If you could just soak it all in, it would be wonderful,” she said.

Outside of work, Wyman is an avid reader who loves the beach, dining out, going to comedy clubs and “taking naps,” she said. Wyman lives in Salem, Mass., with her husband of nearly 24 years and they have two sons, ages 18 and 22. **NU**

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGERS AND OWNERS

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