60-unit Jefferson Oaks development planned for Oak Park

We will be creating 60 additional units of affordable housing in our newest development involving not only the adaptive reuse of the now-closed Thomas Jefferson School in Oak Park, but also additional housing on the grounds. We will be investing nearly $16 million in Jefferson Oaks, our largest development to date, at the corner of Republic Avenue and Leroy Street.

Plans call for 20 one- and two-bedroom units to be constructed in the vacant school, which was part of the Ferndale School District. An additional 40 three- and four-bedroom townhome-style units will be built on the remaining 6.8-acre school site. Construction could begin as early as spring 2016 with completion and full occupancy expected during the summer of 2017.

A total of 21 of the units will be set aside for supportive housing with project-based rental assistance. Jefferson Oaks will be a mixed-income development with rents guaranteed to be affordable for 15 years.

“Jefferson Oaks will provide workforce housing for the people who are the foundation of the current economic growth in Oak Park,” says Kirsten Elliott, CHN’s vice president of Development.

“We are excited to partner with the City of Oak Park to develop quality, affordable housing for people who want to live, work and play in the city,” Elliott said. “There are so many great things happening in Oak Park and we are honored to be part this progress.”
We are pleased to announce that we have just launched a new design on our website! The web address is still the same, www.communityhousingnetwork.org, but the look is clean and updated and the navigation and usability are greatly improved. We have built several new ways for you to engage with us through our website.

If you are looking for help on a certain topic, information on any of our programs, a way to sign up for any of our events, or a way to donate, it should be much easier.

We invite you to check it out. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Joanna Giglio at jgiglio@chninc.net

This year with the support of our donors, Adopt A Family 2015 was able to serve 692 individuals in our housing programs at the holidays! This was made possible with more than $28,906 in cash donations, and $83,188 of in-kind donations!

Many of the recipients, individuals and members of families, move from the streets or shelters into an empty house or apartment and live on very limited fixed incomes. Others have a disability and live in shared housing to make their housing affordable. Most have very little in their budget for basic necessities, not to mention holiday gifts for their children and other items to make their house feel like a home.

The Adopt A Family program helps to create a sense of home for families and individuals in need during the holiday season. On behalf of CHN, thank you to all of our donors and volunteers who helped to make this year’s Adopt A Family a huge success!

Here are a few sentiments from thank you notes received:

Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. Because of you my children had a wonderful Christmas! – Erica

Thank you for your gifts of kindness! My daughter and I hope and pray that someday we will be able to pay it forward! – Kimberly

For information about Adopt A Family or volunteering please contact Lisa Fuhr at LFuhr@chninc.net or 248-824-7313.

Redesigned website launched

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AmeriCorps volunteers collect care package donations for Point-in-Time homeless street count

The three AmeriCorps members serving at Community Housing Network this year were instrumental in collecting hundreds of donated items for the 2016 Point-in-Time homeless street count care packages.

A service project is part of the program year for all AmeriCorps members and Betsy Cooper, Katherine Lennon and Danielle Harvey decided the collection would have a two-fold benefit. They were “a great way to start a conversation about available services with the people who are homeless,” said Betsy, who is serving in CHN’s Community Programs Department as part of Michigan’s Campaign to End Homelessness AmeriCorps Program. “We were also able to educate other community members about the Point-in-Time count and the need and available services in Oakland County while we were asking them for donations.”

The annual Point-in-Time count is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for communities, such as Oakland County, receiving federal funds from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program.

Community donations of travel-size hygiene items were packed in the care packages along with hats, gloves, socks and brochures with available resources. Volunteers throughout Oakland County passed out the care packages during the street count to those they met seeking shelter from the cold in libraries, storefronts, their cars, under highway underpasses, in parks and in 24-hour stores.

Katherine, who is also serving in CHN’s Community Programs Department as AmeriCorps volunteers collect care package donations for Point-in-Time homeless street count part of Michigan’s Campaign to End Homelessness AmeriCorps Program, said they started the collection well before the holidays. She added that most of the items came in after the first of the year, just in time for the street count, which was January 27 this year.

Danielle, who serves CHN as a foreclosure intake specialist as part of the Michigan Foreclosure Prevention Program, contacted area churches and stores. “Kensington Church donated three large bins with cute and warm home-made hats and the Meijer in Rochester was wonderful, donating $350 in gift cards we used mostly for socks.” Clean, dry socks are essential for someone living on the street to prevent frostbite and gangrene. “Usually I am talking to people who are facing mortgage foreclosure, and that can be sad,” she said. “But doing this, seeing how generous people were, helps you know you are doing something good.”
Marc’s Message

Public transportation is fundamental for daily life for many we serve. It’s the means to find an apartment, get to work, drop children off at school, grocery shop and keep medical appointments and link with other supportive services and programs. Accessibility to bus routes dictate where people live, work, shop and receive services and for many, bus fares are cost prohibitive.

For most people who have been homeless and approved for housing, they have no funds to be able to take the bus to check out potential apartments. Or, once they are housed, there is no money available for bus fare to look for a job day after day until they find work. Once employed, bus fare takes a toll on their minimal budget until they start getting paid. There are also instances were those we serve get sick and avoid seeing a doctor because it would involve multiple transfers and waiting for the next bus, difficult even when well. In some cases, an early trip to the doctor can prevent an ambulance ride when the situation grows and becomes an emergency.

We consistently receive critical transportation fund requests from those we serve to help them rebuild their life. A donation of $66 provides a 31-day SMART pass.

Transportation is essential to help someone transform their life. Your donation to our Critical Needs Fund, at www.communityhousingnetwork.org/donate (please click on “Critical Needs Fund” on the dropdown) can help set someone on the road to recovery, housing and employment. 100% of the donations to this fund are used to provide for the unmet needs of the people we serve.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU WANT!
Do you prefer to receive this newsletter (Network News) and our e-newsletter (e-Network News)? Or just one or the other? Email Marylynn G. Hewitt: mghewitt@chninc.net and let her know! We want to meet your needs.