



NETWORK NEWS

Community Housing Network, Inc. Edition 10, Spring, 2006

Message from Marc: New Projects Spur Collaboration



CHN President & CEO,
 Marc Craig

In this tenth edition of Network News I would like to talk about three new and important projects. Each activity will give us concrete data about housing needs and future housing strategies in Oakland County.

The first project, is an assessment of the housing needs of people with disabilities in Oakland County. The assessment was performed by Wayne State University for Community Housing Network and is currently available. Findings from this assessment indicate that people with disabilities first and foremost have a preference to live self-determined lives in a wide variety of inclusive settings and communities.

The second project, which is nearing completion, is a county-wide, housing needs assessment undertaken by Oakland County. This broad assessment will include a section detailing the housing needs of a variety of vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, those affected by domestic violence, and others experiencing difficult situations due to special circumstances. I would like to commend Oakland County for doing the countywide housing needs assessment. It's a strong local leadership that sparks this unique kind of effort.

The third project is a strategic plan to meet the housing needs of persons with disabilities in the mental health system. The Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority is spearheading the development of this plan, which is in the final stages. OCCMHA also deserves a tremendous amount of credit for seeing the need and valuing the importance of housing.

I hope the two needs assessments and the strategic plan will result in even better planning and greater coordination among the various organizations who

care about the vulnerable populations in Oakland county. Collaboration, rather than competition for scarce resources is going to be our most effective strategy. That said, I do believe Oakland County is on the right track. The Oakland County Taskforce on Homelessness and Affordable Housing is doing a wonderful job. Along with OLHSA and Lighthouse, CHN is participating in a newly formed collaborative of local organizations committed to finding new, creative ways to fill existing affordable housing gaps in the area. That group has already received some funding from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for a planning grant.

The current patchwork of programs needs to be woven into a tapestry that will leave no gaps or loose ends when it comes to serving those who need our help the most. The CHN-Wayne State disability housing needs assessment, the Oakland county-wide housing needs assessment, and the Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority's strategic housing plan can provide the impetus we need to go forward together.



Who Are These Men & Why Are They Smiling?

See Page Two for Answers

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“Celebrity Football Bash” Supports Work of CHN



Former Detroit Lions quarterback, Eric Hipple, (left) chats with Mental Health Advocate, Claudia Sweeney (right).



TV host and disabilities advocate, Roger McCarville (Left) with CHN President & CEO, Marc Craig (right).



OCCMHA Director, William Allen (Left) with John McCulloch (right).

Laughs, a few tears, and tremendous support for the people served by Community Housing Network was in full gear on February 3rd, the eve of the Detroit Super Bowl XL weekend. The “Celebrity Football Bash for Disability Housing” was the sixth annual fundraiser sponsored by the HOMES Coalition. This year the occasion was also co-sponsored by the Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame, and was sanctioned as an official event of the Super Bowl XL Host Committee. The festivities were held at Penna’s of Sterling, where over 300 guests enjoyed a delicious dinner, bid on silent auction items, and listened to a humorous but heartfelt address by former Detroit Lions quarterback, Eric Hipple. Milt Wilcox, of the Detroit Tigers also reminisced about triumphs in his baseball career and encouraged all present to bid on silent auction items. A live auction and afterglow rounded off the evening.



Who Are These Men?

Detroit Tiger All Star, Milt Wilcox, (left) and David Layne, Homes Coalition President and Chair of the Celebrity Football Bash (right). Both are dedicated to furthering the work of CHN.

HOMES Coalition President and event Chairperson, David Layne, thanked all the committee members, sponsors, and volunteers who had worked so diligently to bring together in 90 days an event that usually took nine months to prepare. Mr. Layne also noted that there were 150% more attendees and 200% more sponsors at the event than in the previous year. Neal and Karen Hopkins worked with Layne as co-chairs. Cindy Boudreau and Sue Cole were auction co-chairs.

Hipple, a mental health advocate, motivated the audience with inspiration and humor. Guests viewed a very funny video montage of numerous “things that worked and things that didn’t” during his sports career. He inspired everyone present by concluding, “I put this video together for a specific reason . . . there are things we have no control over, they just happen. The only control we have is what we do with a life situation. What we can control more than anything is what we give to other people. It is wonderful to give someone a home but we cannot do that without teamwork. Tonight’s event represents teamwork. People came together to break down barriers, changing the things they can control by making a positive input and going forward that way. As corny as it may sound, the bottom line message is love.”

After this touching address, guests scurried to make their final silent auction bids on tables loaded with unusual and valuable sports memorabilia and gift baskets. The

later live auction included such luxuries as a Detroit Pistons suite for twelve, an autographed Dan Marino football, week-end packages at five star hotels, and dinner for six, prepared by professional chefs.

Total proceeds from the evening were over \$75,000 to support the work of Community Housing Network, Inc. The HOMES Coalition is a volunteer group of realtors, builders, and lenders dedicated to bring attention and funds to the desperate need for housing for people with disabilities. The

“Celebrity Football Bash” continued



John McCulloch, former OCCMHA Board member, Chair of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, and now Oakland County Drain Commissioner, and Jim Merritt, Chair of the CHN Board and auctioneer of the night, share the festivities in support of housing for people with disabilities.

Coalition has contributed to the work of CHN in numerous ways, such as by providing funding to assist homebuyers, to purchase wheelchair ramps, and for grant writing.

Community Housing Network extends thanks to everyone attending and participating in the event. Special thanks go to the HOMES Coalition, the Athletes with Disabilities Hall of Fame, the Super Bowl XL Host Committee, and major contributors including:

Platinum Sponsors: The Michigan State Housing Development Authority, National City Bank, and the Rochester Women's Council of Realtors,

Gold Sponsors: Lasalle Bank, Metropolitan Consolidated Association of Realtors, Wright & Filippis, and Carol & John Swoboda,

Silver Sponsors: A Pole Lot of Fun and Rock Financial.



CHN Board Member, Paul Landry (Left) with CHN Vice-president of Operations, Dawn Pischel (Right)

SAVE THE DATE !

Understanding Section 8

SAVE THE DATE !

Come and learn all about HUD's Section 8 program and how you may be able to apply for the Housing Choice Voucher for affordable housing. There will be staff available after the workshop to answer your questions and help point you in the right direction.

Where: Community Housing Network

570 Kirts Blvd, Suite 231

Troy, MI 48084

When: Monday, June 12, 2006

1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Who Should Attend: Oakland County consumers of Community Mental Health, their families, case managers, support coordinators, or support persons

RSVP: Please call 248-928-0111 to reserve your seat

Success Story: New Roommates Create Good Life Together



Friends and roommates, Kerry Korn (Left) and John Francis (Right) shake hands on balcony of their shared condo.

John Francis and Kerry Korn know that sharing living quarters can be very rewarding. The men became roommates last summer and have created a partnership that works well. Information posted on the CHN website's Roommate Database led to the connection. CHN Housing Resource Specialist, Linda Velandra arranged the first meeting between the two men and their families. An agreement was reached for John to share Kerry's two bedroom condo.

Both men live with disabilities and have worked hard to lead independent lives. Kerry is fifty-nine and lived with his mother for forty-two years. After she passed away, he lived by himself in a condo, with the support of his brothers and sisters. Kerry is very industrious and has worked full-time in the container industry for over thirty years. He has held his current job for eighteen years and is looking forward to retirement.



Kerry finds living with his new roommate enriches his life.

Each year Kerry saves one week of vacation so he can volunteer in the information booth at the State Fair. He gains much satisfaction from this activity. Kerry owns and drives his own car and does much to take care of John, who lives with greater challenges. In turn, John per-

forms most of the housekeeping duties in the condo because Kerry suffers from a bad knee.

John, who is thirty, was born with Cerebral Palsy, developmental disabilities, and visual impairment. He lived with his family until he moved in with Kerry. John receives services from MORC and the Michigan Commission for the Blind. He has volunteered as a library aide, an elementary school office assistant, and a nursing home aide. John is currently receiving assessment and training so he can find work that will help him give back to the community.

John and Kerry have developed an active, well organized life that is satisfying to both. On a typical week-day Kerry goes to work and John stays home, taking care of the house. In the evening, Kerry cooks and John cleans up. They relax for the rest of the evening. Kerry prefers watching sports on TV while John likes American Idol and National Public Radio. Both men take great joy in finding useful treasures other people have discarded. Most of the furnishings in the home come from "special finds" or from family members. Both men proudly display family pictures and are eager to talk about their various sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews.



John looks after the condo while Kerry is working.

Week-ends are special. On Saturday John and Kerry walk at a local mall and treat themselves to breakfast out. They do the weekly grocery shopping together in the afternoon. On Sunday they attend two different church services where they volunteer as greeters and refreshment servers. On summer week-ends, Kerry sometimes drives John to a family cottage near Lake Huron.

Kerry attended monthly meetings of the CHN Independent Living Club prior to meeting John. Now, both men regularly participate in the club meetings. They enjoy contributing to the group discussions about the rewards and challenges of living self-determined, independent lives. If you would like more information about the CHN Roommate Database, please contact Linda Velandra or Chuck Bratton at 248-928-0111 or go to: www.communityhousingnetwork.org.

CHN Offers Programs for Clubhouses



Two exciting programs will soon be available to Clubhouse and Drop-In Center members in Oakland County. The programs are sponsored by Community Housing Network, Inc. and will offer new opportunities for clubhouse attendees to learn more about living independently.

Starting next month, the CHN Independent Living Club (ILC) will go on the road. Currently, one ILC meeting is held on the third Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the CHN conference room. Soon, ILC facilitator, Jillian Alexander, will be bringing the monthly meetings to each clubhouse. Meetings are fun and include discussions about a subject related to living independently, sharing, support, snacks, and door prizes.

Another activity called "Consumer Peer Support Initiative" will offer "peer to peer", first hand experiences of what it is like to live independently. So far, a CHN staff member has been accompanying an individual with a disability, who lives independently, to clubhouses and drop-in centers. They have made monthly presentations on topics such as self-advocacy, transportation, housing, and recipients rights. The program started in March, 2006. For more information on the "Consumer Peer Support Initiative" program or the Independent Living Club, contact CHN at 248-928-0111.

Did You Know ???

The Housing Resource Center is expanding! To meet the growing need for housing and disability related information and services, CHN has added an additional Housing Resource Specialist to the HRC staff and will soon be extending the HRC hours of operation. Various educational workshops are also planned. You can now contact Linda Velandra or Chuck Bratton at the HRC at 248-928-0111 for information about extended hours or workshops.

Apply Today! The Housing Resource Center will be filling two positions for PEER ADVOCATES by June 1, 2006.

Those hired for the temporary, part-time positions will be consumers of OCCMHA services and subsidized housing. They will assist consumers and their support persons with using CHN HRC services and will perform other clerical tasks. Advocates must read, type, and have good phone skills. Those interested in the position (or in referring someone) should send your or the individual's name, contact information, availability, and preferred compensation method to: Tanya Madsen at tmadsen@chninc.net or call her at 248-928-0111. Fax: 248-928-0122.

In Memoriam

Members of the Community Housing Network staff and board have been saddened by the recent passing of two remarkable men.

Joel struggled with extreme mobility issues, yet accomplished much in his life and was an inspiring example to many people. He demonstrated great courage and advocated for many others with disabilities. Joel was a complex person with many talents and abilities. Having a chance to live in a house he loved, as opposed to a nursing home, expanded his world and allowed him to engage in life in a very empowering way. Joel will be sorely missed. You can find Joel's story in the Eighth Edition of Network News.

Safa was a participant in the Leasing Assistance Program. He generously made small donations to Community Housing Network during the time he received rental assistance and supportive services. Like so many of the people we serve, Safa bravely struggled with multiple challenges. We will miss his presence in our program.

We never know how long or how much we are going to serve people through our various programs. We recognize the intense daily struggles of people like Joel and Safa. It was an honor knowing them.



Network News
Community Housing Network, Inc.

570 Kirts Blvd., Suite 231

Troy, MI 48084

Phone: 248-928-0111 Fax: 248-928-0122

Toll Free: 866-282-3119

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Community Housing Network, Inc., is a non-profit community organization dedicated to the acquisition, development, and maintenance of safe, affordable, and desirable housing for individuals with disabilities.

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Network News is designed and created by
Jillian Alexander, MSW, Consultant to CHN

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You can help someone with a disability find safe and affordable housing today by donating that old vehicle to Charity Motors. Vehicles need not run...Free timely pick-up. Please call Charity Motors at (313) 255-1000 and designate COMMUNITY HOUSING NETWORK as your charity of choice.

DON'T MISS IT! FREE & IMPORTANT ONE DAY CONFERENCE !

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE, IF WE DON'T, WHO WILL?

This caregivers conference is designed for all caregivers; aging caregivers, parents and professionals, who have a loved one or support a person with a disability. This conference will present thought-provoking topics to consider and plan for the future. Sponsored by: Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority, Community Housing Network, Community Living Services of Oakland, Easter Seals of Michigan, Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Oakland County, Macomb-Oakland Regional Center, Office of Area Aging 1B

Also Featuring:

STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN AND DISCUSSION

Affordable and safe housing is important! Attend this brief presentation on the strategic housing plan for persons with disabilities and have an opportunity to provide input into the implementation of the goals and objectives. Sponsored by: Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority, Community Housing Network, and Regional Interagency Consumer Committees.

When: Monday, June 5th, 2006

Where: The Hilton Detroit/Troy

Caregivers Conference: 9:00 - 2:30 p.m. (Lunch included)

Strategic Housing Plan and Discussion: 2:45 - 4:00 p.m. (Light refreshments served)

Call Cheryl Lewis at 248-858-0929 for more information.