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Seniors find new homes in Robbinsdale: Robbins Way

What: 36 one-bedroom apartments

Who: Seniors earning no more than 50% of the area median income

Where: Robbinsdale

Several years ago, Faith Lilac Way Lutheran Church in Robbinsdale, MN noticed that many of their older parishioners were moving away. The seniors simply could not find affordable homes in Robbinsdale. Concerned, the church approached CommonBond Communities to develop the solution: **Robbins Way**, apartments for seniors with low-incomes. Residents began moving into their new homes in June.

Under construction in Milwaukee: Bishop's Creek

What: 55 townhomes

Who: Mixed income families

Where: 30th Street Corridor in Milwaukee

When the factories that once employed nearly half of the 30th Street Corridor neighborhood closed their doors, the neighborhood became one of the poorest in Milwaukee. The tanneries and foundries have left a trail of environmental contamination and nearly 1 in 3 corridor residents live in poverty.

The City of Milwaukee and community partners invited CommonBond Communities to lead off a neighborhood-wide revitalization. CommonBond will tear down a former tannery, clean up the urban brown-field (an industrial toxic site) and create 55 townhomes for families in need. The development will be the first of many improvements in the area to spur economic development and build community.

CommonBond Communities has served more than 35,000 people since 1971 and is currently providing 4,800 homes in 43 cities. The average household income for a CommonBond resident is less than \$14,000 per year.

Stay connected via e-mail.

For periodic updates about new developments and organizational highlights, e-mail info@commonbond.org to be added to our e-newsletter mailing list.

Comments or omissions?

Contact Elizabeth Johnson at Elizabeth.Johnson@commonbond.org.

Wish to donate or include

CommonBond in your estate plans?

Contact Marilyn Peller Nelson at nelson@commonbond.org.



Bibi traveling abroad with the College of St. Benedict

From civil war to college: Bibi's Story

This year, CommonBond honored former resident Bibi Abdalla with the Joe Errigo Advantage Award at the GrandeGala. Now a college graduate and a public policy fellow, Bibi shared with us why she valued her CommonBond home.

WHEN I HEAR THE WORD HOME, I IMMEDIATELY THINK of family, comfort, and laughter. Home is a place of joy. It is a place where my stress is set free and a place where I truly feel I belong.

When we were leaving the refugee camp in Kenya to come here, people described America as “going to heaven.” But of course, it was much more complex than that. I had so many more opportunities at Skyline, but being a teenage immigrant, I had to persevere through more problems at home and school than ordinary American students.

Without the good people I found at the Advantage Center, I don't think I would be in college today.

Without the good people I found at the Advantage Center, I don't think I would be in college today. My mom did not

speak any English and was unable to help with my homework. The Skyline Advantage Center director was and is the mother of all Skyline children. One day, I told her about how I was struggling with physics and how there was no one to help me. Within a week she had found a private tutor for me who was a physicist. The tutor did not just become a tutor for me, he became like a father figure. He mentored me all the way to sophomore year in college. Because of him, I raised my physics grade from an “F” to “B.”

My experience at Skyline and CommonBond has influenced what I want to do in life. After my journey from civil war to a refugee camp to now—graduating from college—how could I not show my gratitude and work for change, a better and a more peaceful world. It is my past that has inspired me to seek a career in US foreign policy. When I leave this world, I want to have a smile on my face knowing that I was born in the midst of war and left this world in the midst of peaceful reconciliations.

—Bibi Abdalla, former resident of Skyline Tower,
a CommonBond housing community in St. Paul

The people who make it possible



Over the years, Julie Poehling has done almost everything possible to help CommonBond residents, from stuffing envelopes to chairing a past GrandeGala. Here, she talks about why she has given time, treasure and talent to CommonBond residents for over 10 years.

How did you get involved with CommonBond homes?

I started out as a volunteer through Ignation Volunteer Corps (a spiritually-based volunteer program). I feel especially passionate about senior housing, and CommonBond is a good fit for my passion. Through my real estate career, I learned how challenging it is for seniors to leave their family homes.

What is so important about affordable senior housing?

We are all living so much longer than a generation ago. I stress to everyone,

make sure your parents are okay, that they can afford where they are living. Many are outliving their “nest egg,” especially in this economy and most parents are too proud to ask their adult kids for anything. That’s one reason I support the affordable homes and tight-knit communities like CommonBond.

What was your favorite memory working with CommonBond residents?

One of the first volunteer projects I helped with was at a senior building. I was expecting 8-10 teens to do a volunteer project. Well, low and behold, a bus pulled up with 26 kids. Both the seniors and I were a bit overwhelmed.

However, it was wonderful. Seniors and teens have so much in common—they listen to weird music, wear strange hair colors and styles and sleep strange hours. The teenagers loved hearing about things the seniors did when they were

Join the Wall of Doors



Show your support for affordable homes by putting your picture on our online wall of support. By donating \$1 to \$1 million to the *Open 4000 Doors* Campaign, you can post your picture and message to the wall and share that message with friends and family as an e-card. Please join the community of support and help us open doors for those in need.

Join at <http://www.commonbondopen4000doors.org/>

Left: Julie Poehling at the GrandeGala with the Fund-a-need performers she supported.

young, like cow tipping. The young people visited many more times, and formed a lot of warm relationships.

Why would you recommend people give to CommonBond homes?

CommonBond’s concept is great. The services on-site are as important as the roofs. I remember a CommonBond resident who was invited to the GrandeGala. Giving what she could to the Fund-a-Need initiative made her so happy. No

CommonBond’s concept is great. The services on-site are as important as the roofs.

matter who you are, combining giving and volunteering takes that extra step from charity to social justice. It seems that every time I give, I receive so much more.



Dear Friends of CommonBond,



Summer greetings! First, I want to thank you for all you do to keep CommonBond resilient and impactful. This organization provides a foundation in people's lives—a safe, stable, affordable home with Advantage Services. We provide the platform for people with low incomes to have greater economic success and independence. We emphasize dignity and

respect in all regards. Your support is critical to our success. Your work as volunteers and your help spreading the word about what we do, as well as your financial contributions, have been invaluable.

Recently, dozens of supporters hosted *Open Hearts Open Doors* gatherings in their homes, their communities of faith and at our housing communities. These gatherings have helped us raise both funds and visibility. Others have learned just how

important affordable homes can be for people through the CommonBond Open Doors display, an educational exhibit moving throughout the Twin Cities. Efforts like these are successful because supporters like you are willing to step up and help out. We thank you for your enduring commitment to build hope and community together.

This issue features some remarkable stories: former resident Bibi Abdalla; donor and volunteer Julie Poehling; highlights of the GrandeGala; and upcoming developments in Robbinsdale, Minnesota and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I invite you to visit our website www.commonbond.org to learn more. Hope to see you soon.

Paul Fate, President and CEO,
CommonBond Communities

CommonBond's GrandeGala Communities



Open Doors at the GrandeGala

"Just a few years ago, I was standing outside these doors looking in, homeless. CommonBond has changed my life,"
—Mary, a CommonBond resident

On May 29th, 750 guests flocked to The Depot in Minneapolis to open doors to affordable homes. The issues raised are serious: 5,800 on waiting lists for CommonBond homes, and demand for resident services, including employment assistance, skyrocketing. However, in the true spirit of opening doors, GrandeGala guests stepped up to the challenge. This

year, despite tight budgets, the GrandeGala raised over \$336,000 for CommonBond homes and residents. Donors went home with auction items like a hard hat tour of the new Twins Stadium and a new Kindle 2.0, helping fund services like computer access and homework help.

Youth from a CommonBond housing community in St. Paul helped kick off the evening's Fund-a-Need initiative. They performed a song they wrote themselves about learning through CommonBond's programs. They sang with the audience, "I know I can be what I want to be. If I

work real hard, I can do most anything. Advantage Centers make a difference to me and open doors to opportunity." Fund-a-Need raised almost \$40,000 for academic mentoring at CommonBond homes. Although times are tough, guests maintained a sense of hope for the possibilities of open doors, dancing until midnight to the Bruce A. Henry Band.

Thank you to everyone who helped open doors at the Eleventh Annual GrandeGala.

Stay Involved!

The GrandeGala is just the beginning. Take your passion for homes to the next step:

• Join a Giving Circle or Society

Increase your impact by joining a society like the Builder's Circle. Members par-

ticipate in special events and are recognized prominently in our publications.

• Spread the Word

Help us educate others about the housing crisis by inviting a CommonBond staff member to speak at your next group meeting.

• Be an Inspiration—Volunteer

Change lives by volunteering at one of our sites. The opportunities are nearly limitless!

Get involved by visiting www.commonbond.org, or by calling 651-291-1750. We can't do this work alone!

Your contributions in Action

The GrandeGala raised over \$336,000 this year. But what does that money actually accomplish for people who need homes and services?

\$336,000 can provide CommonBond residents with:

- 672 learning programs for on-site computer labs
- 1680 jobs for resident teens to tutor their younger neighbors
- 224 hours of phone interpreters to arrange basic needs
- 6720 packs of school supplies for resident children

Big or small, your help adds up. Thank you for opening doors of opportunity for so many residents. We hope you stay involved at www.commonbond.org.

CommonBond in the community—Public Schools

"In the Saint Paul Public Schools, we are grateful for our partnership with CommonBond Communities. In addition to working together on specific programs, like Learning Circles mentoring, CommonBond's Advantage Centers give us an additional way to connect with students and their families.

Perhaps even more importantly, by providing our students with stable housing and resources close to home, CommonBond homes and services help us provide a premier education for all."

—Joe Munich, Family & Community Involvement Coordinator at Saint Paul Public Schools

The Legacy Award—John and Nancy Berg

This year at the Eleventh Annual GrandeGala, CommonBond honored John and Nancy Berg with the Legacy Award for their longterm commitment to affordable housing. Since John joined CommonBond's board of directors 10 years ago, he and Nancy set an example for others with their gifts of time, talent and treasure. They deepened their commitment by giving a lead gift to our *Open 4000 Doors* Campaign. They also provided leadership in our partnership with Interfaith Outreach and Community Partners (IOCP) to develop Vicksburg Commons. For their deep and lasting commitment to safe homes and successful families, we honor this extraordinary couple.

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