

RESIDENTS AT CLARE MIDTOWN ADAPT TO THEIR NEW HOME WITH HELP FROM MACALESTER STUDENTS



For seven weeks this summer, Clare Housing built a community at our newest apartment building, Clare Midtown, through the efforts of two Macalester college students, Bethany and Madisen.

Bethany and Madisen were introduced to Clare Housing when their choir sang for the residents at Clare Apartments. "After that experience, we both wanted to do something over the summer that would be meaningful and make a difference," says Madisen. While deciding how to spend the summer before their junior year in college, they were encouraged to apply for a grant from the Live It Fund of The Institute for Global Citizenship Student Council at Macalester. They submitted a proposal to set up a community-building program for new residents at Clare Midtown. The proposal was accepted and they received \$4,000. For seven weeks, they worked with the residents to help them get to know each other, feel comfortable in a new home, and become familiar with resources in the neighborhood.

Angie Musich, resident service coordinator for Clare Midtown, worked with Bethany and

Madisen and coached them along the way. "Many of the residents came from homeless situations and were quite isolated. The project helped residents adapt to their new housing environment and develop relationships with their neighbors," says Angie.

The first activity was movie night. Bethany says, "We didn't know what to expect, but four people showed up, and we ended up talking through the whole movie." Over two months, they set up 12 events from cookie

baking and canoeing to bowling and bingo nights. They also did physical activities such as walking clubs, yoga and meditation, even salsa dancing. But everyone's favorite activity was Clare Café. "Every Sunday we brought coffee and pastries to the community room and offered a place for people to stop by and chat. It was wonderful," says Bethany. Their favorite moments were when they saw the residents visit with each other and form their own relationships. "That is when we realized our goal had been accomplished," says Madisen.

By July, the residents were calling them "the girls" and teasing them. For Bethany and Madisen the residents had become family. "After working at Clare Midtown this summer we both have a new respect for people who come from challenging situations or have made unfavorable choices. Everyone deserves a home and a place to be respected," says Bethany.

"What I learned is that people are capable of taking an idea and turning it into an experience that can positively impact everyone involved," says Madisen. During this interview, they also decided they would come back next summer to volunteer or possibly work as a resident assistant at the front desk. One thing is certain – the project they started was just the vehicle to build a community at Clare Midtown. And still today, every Sunday, the residents participate in Clare Café.



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CREDITS

Contributing Writers:

Lee Lewis, Elisabeth Loeffler, Ginger Sisco
and Debbie Wyman

Designer: Brooke Lunneborg

Photography: Winick Photography

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

REFLECTIONS OF 2011

The best part of 2011 was opening Clare Midtown.

After four years in development, Clare Midtown opened in March and is now home to 45 people living with HIV/AIDS. They each have a key to their own apartment and do not need to worry about where to find a warm bed this winter.

It's a fantastic feeling to be able to provide affordable housing and supportive services to 45 individuals who are HIV positive, have experienced homelessness, are low-income, and very often, on the margins of our community.

But then we also experienced the state shutdown in June. Though our services were eventually deemed to be essential, we did not know that during the build-up to the shutdown. The board and staff made preparations for the possibility that 80% of our revenues would cease on July 1. We analyzed our cash position and determined that we had sufficient reserves to allow us to operate for three months. In addition, we had a line of credit that could keep the doors open for another month. We wanted to have several contingency plans available. Thankfully, we did not need to pull the trigger on any of those plans.

Once Minnesota had an approved state budget we identified three major changes that will impact Clare Housing:

- Payments for foster care and assisted living services were reduced 1.5%.
- Thirty of those 50 individuals – 60% – were subject to an additional 8.5% reduction that was targeted to “low need” individuals. The individuals in our programs were dramatically and disproportionately affected by this targeted cut due, largely, to an inadequate method for determining “low need.” Over the last two months I have been meeting with Department of Human Services staff, legislators, and other providers to explore ways of ameliorating the impact of this unfair and discriminatory reduction.
- Project Cornerstone, our scattered-site program for individuals and families who've been homeless a year or more, was also impacted by budget cuts. We had previously been funded for 20 units; that has been reduced to 18.

With these budget issues it has become more apparent that Clare Housing needs to have a public policy presence. This year, we created our first public policy work group comprised of staff and board members. The focus of the group is to work toward building support and alliances to educate those who make decisions about allocating public resources for HIV-specific housing in the state. The group is putting a plan in place for the next legislative session and we will keep you informed.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2012

Over the last year, I have spent a lot of time trying to understand the changes occurring at the state and federal levels, especially as a result of the Affordable Care Act, and how they will impact services and programs that serve people living with HIV/AIDS in Minnesota.

It has become evident to me that - we as a community - will have to respond creatively, strategically, and collaboratively. Changing federal and state policies and funding will demand new ways of doing business - ways we haven't even thought of. Some find that threatening. I find it exciting.

In September, I invited five of my colleagues to visit AIDS service organizations in Milwaukee and Chicago. The purpose of the trip was to learn how other agencies are positioning themselves for the

future and to start a discussion. The environment in which we provide services is changing rapidly and it is critical for us to be in a dialog with funders, other providers and the community we serve.

I look forward to the challenges ahead and working with Minnesota leaders to assure continued care and services to people living with HIV/AIDS in our community. I have the utmost confidence in the board and staff of Clare Housing to provide innovative leadership in meeting these challenges.

My vision, day-in-and-day-out, is that every person living with HIV/AIDS in the state of Minnesota has a stable and affordable home and the support they need to live a full and satisfying life.

Thank you for supporting us this year and as I have said:

Pessimism is about analysis of the situation.

Optimism is about the orientation of the spirit.

Yours truly,



Lee Lewis
Executive Director

You are invited to attend a guided one-hour tour of Clare Housing's HIV-specific housing and supportive services programs.

January 18 – Clare Midtown

January 25 – Agape Home

February 8 – Clare Apartments

February 22 – Clare Midtown

March 14 – Clare Apartments

March 21 – Agape Home

All tours are from 4:00 - 5:00 p.m.

To register and for directions please call
Debbie Wyman at (612) 236-9528 or
debbie.wyman@clarehousing.org.



Learn how affordable housing and supportive services improve the quality of life for low-income, individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the Twin Cities.



AN ART PROJECT HELPS CREATE A COMMUNITY

When the architects of Clare Midtown, Cermak Rhoades Architects, designed the community room, the intention was to have art in the space. "The long wall opposite the windows in the community room was where we were thinking some kind of art would go," said Executive Director Lee Lewis. "A few months ago, I was introduced to local artist Carole Bersin who offered to help." Carole specializes in group mural paintings and lives in the Corcoran Neighborhood. She also has been a volunteer cook at Damiano for a little over a year.

"I love to bring the joy of art-making to people who may not have had that opportunity before," says Carole. "I was thrilled to participate in the creation of a wall mural for the community room."

The project began in October. Carole started slowly with casual art gatherings for the Clare Midtown residents. She supplied sketchbooks, pencils, paints and encouragement. They used the journals to do drawings, doodles and put down ideas. Eventually a nature theme emerged. The collaboration of ideas resulted in three large colorful panels.

"I enjoyed the energy in the room during the workshops. We had a lot of laughs and many of the residents rediscovered their art skills," says Carole. Once the rendering of the painting was complete, Carole sketched the drawings onto 10x3 panels. Then, over a five-day period, staff and residents came in to paint. "It was like a big paint by number process and we had so much fun," says Carole.

Mark, one of the most active resident painters, turned out to be an old acquaintance of Carole when they were at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. At an unveiling event last month, Mark spoke warmly about the project and residents who were regulars on the wall art project.

"Lynita painted the birds with a lightness that is reflected in her enjoyment of her grandchildren. Terrell did as good a job of shading on the middle panel as he does on his eye shadow when he's preparing for his burlesque show. And Marvella sang a lot and, she's darn good as Aretha Franklin."

Carole has offered to continue to lead the workshops and now, twice a month, they meet in the community room for their Tuesday *art salon*. "We just might start another art project but in the meantime, we are just having fun sketching, painting and laughing," says Mark.

"It takes a while for a new group of residents to jell as neighbors. They have only been living here since the spring. This project gave them a chance to do something fun and creative together."

— *Lee Lewis, Executive Director*



Left to Right: Marvella, Carole, Mark and Terrell



Mural in the Clare Midtown community room

929 Central Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413
Phone: 612-236-9515
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HAPPY NEW YEAR

from your friends at clare housing

Thank you for helping Clare Housing provide affordable housing, supportive services and compassionate care to people living with HIV/AIDS in the Twin Cities.