

# The RPJ Housing Express

November/ December 2009

Robert Pierre Johnson Housing Development Corporation of the National Capital Area

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## Mountain Oaks and Front Royal Town Apartments Dedicated in Front Royal



The renovation of the Front Royal Town Apartments was completed and both it and the Mountain Oaks Apartments in Front Royal were dedicated, the final step in the transformation of these 80 apartments. Work included installing new windows and siding, adding HVAC systems to the units, increasing the electrical service to the units, enlarging the bathrooms, changing out the kitchen and bathroom appliance packages and lighting fixtures, adding carpet to some units, making plumbing repairs, waterproofing the basements, creating positive drainage away from the buildings, and improving the landscaping.

Pictured (from left) are Herb Cooper-Levy, RPJ Housing executive director; Archie A. Fox, chair of the Warren County Board of Supervisors; Susan Dewey, Virginia Housing Development Authority, executive director; Eugene R. Tewalt, mayor of Front Royal; Todd Peacock of Community Housing Partners (general contractor) and Jeffrey Meyer of Virginia Community Development Corporation (the tax credit syndicator).

## Fort Myer Apartments Dedicated in Arlington

The Fort Myer Apartments in Arlington were dedicated. These 22 one and two bedroom apartments in South Arlington now sport new kitchens, increased electrical service, central HVAC and contain several accessible apartments.



Pictured (from left) are Chris Zimmerman, Arlington County board member; Betts Abel, Arlington Community Planning and Housing; Ernie Butler, past president of the Penrose Civic Association; Herb Cooper-Levy, RPJ Housing, executive director; Jay Fissette, Arlington County board vice-chair and Marc Cooper, chair of RPJ Housing's board

## RPJ Housing Receives Stimulus Funds

RPJ Housing received \$335,000 in stimulus funding from the City of Alexandria to provide a new roof and insulation, new appliances, new doors and improved lighting at the Lacy Court Apartments.

## Repairing Homes Rebuilding Lives



Imagine living in a home where you feel unsafe because the front steps are coming apart and the railings are loose. Then imagine that you are a senior citizen living on an extremely tight income and you must decide between paying for these potentially dangerous repairs or paying your utility bills. Now imagine an energetic group of 25 people armed with saws, hammers, all the materials and skills needed to replace the stairs and railings and address other deferred maintenance needed on your home.

This is exactly what happens each and every April, through RPJ Housing's Rebuilding Together program. This past April, more than 1,500 dedicated community members once again joined forces to make a substantial impact in the lives of 48 low-income seniors, persons with disabilities and families with children throughout Arlington, Fairfax and Falls Church. The projects varied greatly and each team rose to the occasion to address the specific needs of each homeowner and non-profit agency assisted. Some teams focused on deferred maintenance, others concentrated on increasing energy efficiency or accessibility while other teams completely transformed a house that could have been torn down into a warm, safe and inviting home.

We extend our most sincere appreciation to our volunteers, house captains, sponsors, donors, committee and board members who have given countless hours, energy and critical resources to assure that low-income homeowners in Northern Virginia safely remain in their homes in improved conditions. As one homeowner said, *"Words can say so little, when someone has helped so much. My house looks beautiful and the people from Rebuilding Together made it possible. I met so many wonderful people, that they will be inspiration for many years."*

## Helping Hands

This has been the busiest summer and fall yet with over 30 home repair projects being completed. Our Winchester Hearts and Hammers program participated in the United Way's Day of Caring in September assisting several homeowners. One of those helped was a woman with breast cancer and on dialysis. Several weeks later despite her health she volunteered alongside students from Shenandoah University to assist her neighbor "Poppy" a 93-year old decorated WWII Navy veteran. The team worked in the rain removing 200 bags of trash from the basement, tackled an overgrown yard and painted. By the end of the day, the volunteers were tired, but had learned a great deal about history through Poppy's real life experiences.

In Arlington, Fairfax and Falls Church the following groups donated their time and resources to improve the lives of countless homeowners and their families. BB&T, Cheung Ming Group Corporation, Clark Builders Group, CREW (Commercial Real Estate Women), Dulin United Methodist Church, First Presbyterian of Bethlehem, Floris United Methodist Church, Freddie Mac, Kirkpatrick Construction, Lowe's of Chantilly, Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ and Veris Consulting. The impact of their efforts will be felt by the homeowners for years to come. Our staff also worked with individual volunteers that are part of our "handyperson corps". Among numerous projects, the handyperson corps built ramps and installed other accessible devices for an energetic four-year old boy who was born without feet and whose limbs never fully developed.

In August we welcomed Wyatt Schroeder who began his 11-month AmeriCorps service with RPJ Housing to develop strategies and partnerships to recruit homeowners, skilled volunteers and to "green" our organization and homes that we repair. His first task was to organize a United We Serve Energy Efficiency Outreach Project which is in response to President Obama's call for Americans to serve in their community. Wyatt organized volunteers from Vision Hall and Mount Zion Baptist Church to assemble and deliver 500 bags containing CFL's donated by Arlington County and educational materials on how to lower one's energy footprint to residents of Arlington's Nauck community.

## The Tenth Annual Golf Classic is another success!



The weather was perfect, the players were competitive, the prizes were abundant, the course was spectacular and the golf tales were tall. RPJ Housing's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic sponsored by Electronic Security Services, Inc. this past September was a hit, raising \$28,000 to support its two Volunteer Home Repair programs: Hearts and Hammers and Rebuilding Together. Congratulations to the winners of the event, Bill Hendrick, Mike Winters, Steve Johnston and Mike Manders (pictured above in hula skirts). Dolores Stafford, Golf Committee Chair and Sam Alexander, Corporate Sponsor (pictured above) were both honored for 10-years of service to RPJ Housing. We thank all the sponsors, golfers, donors and volunteers who participated in the tournament with a special thank you to: **Corporate Sponsor:** Electronic Security Services, Inc.; **Birdie Sponsors:** John Phillips & Catherine Hechler and United Security & Communications, Inc.; **Par Sponsors:** AlliedBarton Security Services, Branch Banking & Trust Company, D. Stafford & Associates—Dolores Stafford, Integrated Security Technologies, Inc., Kalbian Hagerty, LLP and Mary Baker and Nexus Technologies Group. **Lunch Sponsor:** Allen and April Hall; **Beverage Cart Sponsors:** Tonic at Quigleys and Waltery Insurance Company. **We hope you will join us for our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic being held on Monday, September 20, 2009 at Reston National Golf Course!**

## NEW HOME . . . NEW-FOUND INDEPENDENCE

Four Arlington residents with intellectual and physical disabilities who have never lived independently now have the chance to do so, thanks to a joint effort by several community groups. Two years ago, RPJ Housing purchased a small two-story walkout-style house in South Arlington. With a Community Development Block Grant from Arlington County, funds from The Arlington Department of Human Services (DHS), and a low-interest loan from the Virginia Housing Development Authority, RPJ Housing transformed this home into a fully accessible dwelling. DHS selected the residents, who had lived in institutional settings for over 30 years or with their parents for over 50 years. A community organization is providing support services with round-the-clock staffing in the home.

Jeannie Cummins, RPJ Housing director of development, who has managed the project, is excited about the opportunity this house represents for the residents. "The best part of this whole story is that we are giving people the first chance in their lives to live independently, in a house like other members of the community, away from their parents' homes and institutional settings. Imagine being 60 years old and for the first time having a place you can call your own home." She explained that on weekdays, the residents go either to a day activity program or to jobs in the community. "Then they come home for the evening just like everyone else. The residents look forward to visiting the library, strolling in the park, playing at the recreation center, and going to the movies on weekends."

The purchase and preparation of the house was not a simple undertaking. The cost was nearly \$1 million, about a third of which was for the renovations. "But this house is intended to last for a long time," Jeannie explained. "It does not bear the risk faced by group homes that are subject to the will of a landlord who can decide to sell or redevelop the house, and who might give the renters less than 30 days notice to leave." She listed the renovations: "We added an interior elevator, two bathrooms with roll-in showers for residents who use wheelchairs and an attractive ramped entrance to the house. We also installed lowered cabinets and countertops, and even accessible appliances. We put a swinging door at the top of the steps, so people can't accidentally tumble down. We widened the doorways and used levered door handles, added extra handrails in the hallways and grab bars in the bathrooms, and increased the lighting so we would have a well-lit house. Finally, we installed sliding glass doors in the back of the house so that people have another means of egress in case of fire, and added a wrap-around extension of the deck to the carport to make it accessible."

Jeannie is particularly pleased with the reception of the neighbors. "The neighborhood around this house has been accepting and welcoming," she noted. "At the conclusion of our discussion with the civic association, one community member raised his hand and said 'I hope the biggest argument we ever have about this house is who hosts the welcoming party!' That's when I knew our residents would feel they are home."

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### *Holiday Wishes*

RPJ Housing hopes that you and yours are healthy, happy and warm this holiday season. Unfortunately for many in this region that is not the case. RPJ Housing strives to help people with a limited income to find affordable rental housing and to acquire the home repairs they need, but we need your support. Your time, skills and resources are what make our efforts possible. Perhaps you are in the position to help us this holiday season. There are many ways to give and we appreciate your consideration in this season of giving.



Visit [www.rpjhousing.org/donate](http://www.rpjhousing.org/donate) to donate online through the Network for Good or PayPal.

Checks payable to RPJ Housing may be sent with the printable coupon below to 2666 Military Road, Arlington, VA 22207.

Federal employees can donate to RPJ Housing through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) workplace giving. Our CFC number is 77956.

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