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HOME BONDS US TOGETHER

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A PUBLICATION OF COMMONBOND COMMUNITIES

Redefining Home

When CommonBond Communities opened Elk Ridge Lodge in January, Brennin was the first resident to move in. “I came here with nothing,” he says.

Brennin is talkative and engaged with world affairs. What he is most proud to talk about is his car. Brennin loves his car, a bronze Chevy Impala with flashy rims, tinted windows, and multicolor lights. He has spent many hours investing in its maintenance over the last five years, including rebuilding the transmission and keeping the trunk stocked with supplies. All of this has been necessary because for the last five years, this car has been Brennin’s home.

While his Impala has provided Brennin with freedom to move about, traveling to Florida, Colorado, and Alabama, it’s not really what any of us would expect to call a home. When Brennin moved into Elk Ridge Lodge, he drove the Impala there with a couch strapped to the roof.

“

Home is about the people, not the place.

-BRENNIN

”

Since moving into his new apartment, Brennin has worked with Jackie, the on-site Supportive Housing Coordinator, to navigate the resources that are available to him. She has connected him to income,



food, and energy resources through Sherburne County—key steps in his work towards greater stability. And while Jackie provides the technical support Brennin needs, she also spends time with him figuring out what it means to live in community with others—something he didn’t need to worry about when living on the road.

Working with Brennin to navigate this new part of his life, like grocery shopping and preparing meals, Jackie is encouraging him through all the many changes and responsibilities involved in cultivating stability in a safe and dignified place. “Home is about the people, not the place,” he says.

Shortly after moving into his new home, Brennin had to give up his car. This change has been a tough

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PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT
ELK RIDGE LODGE

Opened January 2022
Elk River, MN
60 units, Family

WELCOME



On behalf of the team at CommonBond Communities, I am pleased to share this first issue of our reinvigorated newsletter with you. Our aptly named “HomePage” will be a way to share the great work of this organization and the impact we are having across the region. It is our hope to inform and inspire you, and recognize the staff, volunteers, and donors who work so diligently in support of our mission each day.

In this first issue, we focus on the impact that one of our newest developments, Elk Ridge Lodge, is having in the community of Elk River, Minnesota. The experience of homelessness and housing instability is all around us. In Sherburne County, where this new development is located, market rate rents have increased significantly over the past several decades, while wages among low and moderate earners did not keep pace. The most recent wage gains experienced by many are now being eaten up by the rising costs of most necessities. Elk Ridge Lodge will provide some protection for those who live there, including 10 units for households that have experienced homelessness.

While the housing challenges our communities face are alarming, we can make a difference. That’s why CommonBond works to ensure that more and more communities have the housing options they need and why we have aggressive goals to build on our more than 50 years of service.

Thank you for taking some time to learn more about our work, and for the support you provide to make it possible.

DEIDRE SCHMIDT,
PRESIDENT AND CEO

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Stable Homes to Strong Futures

Over the past several years, CommonBond’s work in Supportive Housing has continued to grow. Responding to the needs of our community members facing repeated experiences of housing instability or homelessness is one of the most intensive aspects of our services work. Residents in Supportive Housing have experienced multiple barriers to finding housing in the past.

CommonBond’s work to lower those barriers ensures that individuals with the highest needs can find stable housing.

Supportive Housing Coordinators provide residents with case management focused on their individual needs, referring them to resources and assistance for things like food, employment, healthcare, and income supports. Our teams also invest in coaching residents through the transition to living in a new community and the responsibilities of being a good neighbor.

Jackie, Supportive Housing Coordinator with Elk Ridge Lodge, is an experienced social worker from Sherburne County. She emphasizes that Elk Ridge Lodge offers affordable homes to people already living in the Elk River area, not just those exiting homelessness. Many residents are employed in local customer service and retail roles, and as teachers and social services professionals—all qualifying because their incomes are 30-60% of area median income (AMI).

Jackie partners with local agencies such as the Salvation Army, Bridging, local faith communities and other groups to provide essentials for incoming Supportive Housing residents, including cleaning supplies, furniture, and cooking utensils. Jackie also provides ongoing services to ensure that Supportive Housing residents can maintain independence in a stable housing environment. Additionally, she facilitates community building between residents to ensure all feel welcome and connected to the place they live.

Elk Ridge Lodge and our approach to Supportive Housing is one example of how we are creating impact in the community. Our strategic focus for the future includes the following:



Communities expand or retain housing options that respond to their needs, leading to greater opportunity for residents.



Residents maintain or increase their income and assets as appropriate for their life situation.



Youth, families, and adults of all ages receive the support they need for social and academic success.



Residents remain stably housed, or successfully leave CommonBond housing based on their needs and aspirations.

We have a goal that by 2025, 15,000 people will benefit from a CommonBond community as a foundation for their success. As a partner in this work, your support is key to making this goal a reality. □



COVER STORY *continued*

adjustment because it has hampered his ability to move about freely in the way he has been so used to. Getting to appointments, visiting family, and going to work are all a bigger challenge now. But Brennin is resourceful, he has a plan, and he has his eye on a new Chevy Impala.

For residents of CommonBond Communities like Brennin who are coming out of an experience of housing instability or homelessness, moving into a new apartment can be disorienting. Beyond all the steps needed to qualify, move in, and assemble all the furnishings needed for a new home, there is the mental and emotional work of adjusting to a new space and place.

Residents are encouraged to consider their new place as their permanent home. This sense of safety and stability is what Sara Riegle, CommonBond Communities Regional Team Manager, says equips residents to successfully transition into a new chapter of their lives.

A place of peace, rest, and dignity. A place to be with friends and family. A home. It is something we all need; it is something we all deserve. "Putting keys in people's hands is what motivates me to continue this work," Sara says. "When I tell new residents they can come and go as they please, they can turn a light on and off at any time of the day or night, that's dignity." □

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT

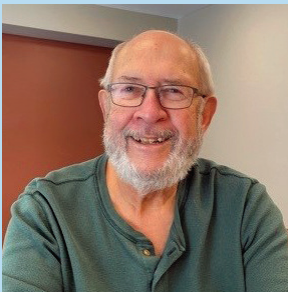
OWASSO GARDENS



Opened October 2021, Roseville, MN
60 units, Senior

- Senior 55+
- Located near Owasso Lake, which provides a great place to walk around and explore
- One- and two-bedroom units
- Section 42 Housing, rent is based on a fixed rental fee for the unit size that is lower than the average market rate rent in the area. Applicants must have a source of income to pay rent. Section 8 Voucher holders are encouraged to apply
- Community room, craft room, and outdoor seating areas available
- More community amenities: on-site management and maintenance, pickleball court, computer room, 2 resident lounges, library, laundry room on each floor, elevator, BBQ/picnic area

WHY I GIVE: George Golden



"Housing is a right; we ought to provide lots more of that in Sherburne County," says George Golden, longtime supporter of CommonBond Communities and resident of Zimmerman, MN.

George settled in this area 14 years ago and is an ardent advocate for affordable housing and homeless youth through his involvement with CommonBond and Open Doors for Youth.

In his view, the general population lacks awareness about how many people in Sherburne County experience homelessness. Homelessness is often thought of as a person holding a sign on a street corner or sleeping in a public space. In truth, homelessness is experienced in many ways, including staying with friends temporarily or sleeping in a car. Or, it can look like substandard housing that lacks basic amenities like running water or electricity. In rural areas, homelessness is not always visible in daily life.

And with this lack of visibility, it can appear as if it doesn't actually exist.

For over 16 years, George has invested in CommonBond's Advantage Services programs, our wrap-around services for youth, veterans, families, and older adults. Our Youth Programs offer tutoring for elementary and teenage students, college preparation, job placement assistance, and mentoring. Youth Programs have been a particular focus for George. "I'm a builder of souls and hearts," he says.

George has closely monitored the development of Elk Ridge Lodge, the newest CommonBond community located in Elk River, MN. The building opened in January 2022 and includes 10 Supportive Housing units for families and individuals transitioning out of short- or long-term homelessness. Support from George and other donors like him ensure residents have the resources to build success on their terms.

"What a great facility Elk Ridge Lodge is for people to enjoy as their home," says George. □

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