



Homes for Generations



Solutions

Spring 2009

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Vital partnerships create stable homes

Nothing gets done in the affordable housing world without partnership and collaboration," said Aeon President Alan Arthur. Aeon's partnerships — both with funders who finance developments and also with service providers who offer residents stabilizing support — are vital, especially as the need for affordable housing increases.

Aeon's partnerships make a life-changing difference to individuals like 20-year-old Ranisha, who lives at Archdale Apartments with her child.

Ranisha was just a toddler herself when she was removed from her drug-ridden home and placed in foster care. She spent her childhood cycling between home and foster care.

"I remember several drug raids in my home," Ranisha said.

She often stayed with friends, but when she became pregnant, Ranisha wanted to find a stable place to raise her child. She found Archdale Apartments, an Aeon property for formerly homeless youth where YouthLink offers resources and goal planning.

For Ranisha, a partnership between YouthLink and Aeon has meant a safe place for her child to live — and a place for her to work toward greater self-sufficiency.

"Now, we have a place of our own and I am going to college," she said. "I didn't want my baby to go through the same stuff I went through as child."



Fulfilling our vision through collaborations

"The fundamental value of Aeon's partnerships and collaborations is to achieve our vision that every person has a home and is interconnected within community," said Arthur.

Whether it's Aeon's collaboration with Hope Community to transform the intersection of Franklin and Portland Avenues, or the organization's partnership with Oak Grove to provide services for individuals with mental illness — collaboration is an integral part of Aeon's work.

To illustrate how collaborations are vital to building a stronger community, we've asked several executive directors to give their perspectives on the value of partnerships in their work and in today's economy.

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Aeon residents are among the hardest hit

The number of homeless students continues to climb as more families face foreclosure.

Unemployment rates and food shelf usage continue to soar.

Today's news headlines illustrate how the current economy negatively impacts everyone in the community. Those who Aeon serves — families and individuals at the low end of the economic ladder — are among the hardest hit.

Families like the Quinns are finding it hard to make ends meet, especially with increases in food and gas.

DuWayne and Lita Quinn quickly felt their stability slipping away when DuWayne was laid off after 11 years in maintenance for a large organization. His job never made him rich, he said, but was enough to pay the bills.



At a time in their life where many of their peers are thinking about retirement, the couple, in their upper 50s, became homeless.

"I used to walk around and see the warm glow inside of people's houses and I'd say to myself, 'I wish we could be like that again,'" DuWayne said.

The couple lived with family — a stressful and unstable situation where there were asked daily, "Have you found a place yet?"

"It was a very unsettling feeling," Lita said.

They found comfort in the most unlikely of places: a 6 x 6 storage stall where they kept their belongings. Surrounded by family photos and personal belongings, the storage was as much of a

home as they had, said Lita. She set up a cot in the corner where she would rest while DuWayne sorted through their belongings.

After months of looking for a place they could afford, DuWayne and Lita were grateful to find a one-bedroom apartment in an Aeon property last fall. They moved their belongings from storage into their new home.

A continual struggle for stability

Even in Aeon's properties — where a quality place to live is offered at an affordable cost — the economic downturn is causing people to make difficult choices between home and food, or home and medical care.

DuWayne now works six days a week as a mechanic, but isn't consistently scheduled for 40 hours a week — making it hard for his \$7/hour job to cover rent and other living expenses. One week, Lita went without her insulin medication because she could not afford the \$30 co-pay. Aeon's Resident Connections staff helped the Quinns by connecting them to community resources and a rental payment program.

Despite the challenges, the couple is grateful for their home.

"So many families today need an affordable place to live. This is my safe haven," Lita said. "I want to do all I can to keep it."

They found comfort in the most unlikely of places: a 6 x 6 storage stall where they kept their belongings.

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What do you see as the overall value to partnerships like the one your organization has with Aeon?

Dr. Heather Huseby, Executive Director of YouthLink:

The value of YouthLink's partnership with Aeon is that an opportunity is created for homeless young people to have a home of their own. Aeon's work as the developer of the property is combined with YouthLink's expertise at helping young people achieve self-sufficiency, self-empowerment and healthy connections. The intent of all of this is that formerly homeless young people will be self-sufficient, productive community members in the future.

Dan Cain, Executive Director of RS Eden (which collaborates with Aeon at Alliance Apartments to serve formerly homeless and chemically addicted individuals):

Partnering allows us to grow services exponentially. When organizations partner a service provider with an owner/developer, resources are maximized. The owner/developer doesn't need to find services, and the service provider, who is likely providing the service to a homeless, or near homeless population, can serve them in a safe, stable environment.

What is the impact of partnerships on your bottom line and/or quality of service?

Dr. Heather Huseby, YouthLink: The most significant impact of the partnership has been to provide another needed resource to homeless young people in our community. This has expanded the array of services offered through YouthLink.

Dan Cain, RS Eden: Partnerships are cost effective because they utilize the strengths of each organization, without requiring a one-to-one increase in resources.

Alan Arthur, Aeon: Our bottom line is achievement of our vision and mission, and of course, there are always financial implications. But an ideal partnership or collaboration also allows each organization to focus on what they do best, and results in better service to our residents and the community.

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Do you see the importance of partnerships increasing during these challenging economic times? If so, how?

Dr. Heather Huseby, YouthLink: Partnerships between agencies, groups and entities across both public and private sectors need to expand not only in numbers, but in depth of focus. This means that partnerships need to engage in intense analysis of ways that services can be leveraged, combined and delivered more effectively. It no longer can be the same way of doing business, but rather a more intentional look at being more cost-effective in terms of service delivery.

Dan Cain, RS Eden: Outcomes will need to improve and non-profits will be expected to do more with less. That's the purpose of partnerships. Furthermore, if there is movement beyond strategic alliances to true partnerships, a sharing of resources and potentially support, or back room services, is a real possibility. Then, more emphasis can be placed on mission-critical services.

Alan Arthur, Aeon: Challenge and crisis focuses the creative mind. Aeon is absolutely considering how creative collaboration might help us achieve our vision in these tough times. We have already proposed some new collaborative initiatives to other organizations. On the other hand, partnerships should never be forced because they are conceptually positive, but only created when thoughtful planning clearly illustrates positive impact.

Aeon values its many partnerships which help fulfill its vision that every person has a home and is interconnected within community.

New and Newsworthy

Aeon sponsors HOURCAR in Elliot Park

Sustainability is one of the core values Aeon upholds in all of its work.

To help further its commitment to sustainability, Aeon has sponsored an HOURCAR at its 1625 Park Avenue office in Minneapolis. The HOURCAR is a car-sharing program with 18 cars located in 16 hubs throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul. HOURCAR members are able to rent the car for as little as 30 minutes.

"Aeon's sponsorship is an indication of its commitment to a green and sustainable community," says Gina Ciganik, vice president of Housing Development. "We believe the HOURCAR program will help make the neighborhood more functional for more people and will provide positive, affordable transportation options for many Aeon residents."

To make an HOURCAR reservation, visit www.hourcar.org.



Celebrate the transformation of the Franklin and Portland intersection

Join Aeon and Hope Community from 4:30 — 6 p.m. on May 12 to celebrate the grand opening of The Wellstone at 1925 Portland Avenue. This is the third phase of the Franklin Portland Gateway, which transforms a formerly blighted and vacant intersection into a vibrant place to live and work.

The Wellstone features 49 apartments, 4,000 square feet of neighborhood scale commercial space and 3,000 square feet for community programming.

A brief program at 5 p.m. features Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, David Wellstone and Dana Bourland, Enterprise Community Partners. No RSVP is necessary.

Aeon and Hope Community are grateful to Pierce Pini & Associates, Inc for sponsoring the grand opening celebration.



Meet Aeon's Housing Development Team

Aeon has welcomed several new faces to its Housing Development team in the last six months. Pictured is the entire Housing Development team (from left to right):

Dan Walsh, project manager; Gina Ciganik, vice president of Housing Development; John Rocker, senior project manager; Anne Heitlinger, senior project manager; Pam Bookhout, project manager; and Rosemary Dolata, project manager.



Our Vision:

Every person has a home and is interconnected within community

Our mission:

To create and sustain quality affordable homes that strengthen lives and communities

Established in 1986, Aeon has built or renovated 1,705 units of quality affordable homes and serves more than 3,000 people annually.

Learn More:

Attend Building Dreams, a one-hour informational session and tour.

Register today at:

www.aeonmn.org/bd

or email jjohnson@aeonmn.org.



Homes for Generations

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Development Updates



Renaissance Box

Aeon will transform the historic O'Donnell Shoe Factory into a vibrant residential building offering 65-70 efficiency, one- and two-bedroom apartments. The property will offer a range of affordability, primarily for artists and individuals working service sector jobs in downtown St. Paul. Construction will begin this fall.



Alliance Addition

The groundbreaking ceremony for Alliance Addition will be held April 15. The Alliance Addition will create 61 units and preserve a vacant, boarded house in the Elliot Park neighborhood of Minneapolis. The development will be adjacent to the Alliance Apartments, an award-winning collaboration between Aeon, RS Eden and Alliance Housing. Residents will share amenities, providing a significant cost savings.



Har Mar

Har Mar Apartments — Aeon's second suburban property — will serve as a model for transforming a struggling, outdated apartment building into a viable community asset. The first phase of development — the preservation of 120 existing one-bedroom apartments built in 1968 — begins this summer. The second phase — construction of approximately 50 two- and three-bedroom apartments to meet the need for affordable homes for families in Roseville — is scheduled to begin in 2010.