



Homes for Generations



# Generations

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**"It's not enough to have a place to live. Many people need someone to guide them to get back on their feet."**

— Marsha Gille

## Giving the gift of home

**F**rom the 14th floor of their condo in downtown Minneapolis, where they have lived for more than 30 years, Roger Raina and Marsha Gille have an interesting perspective on the need for affordable housing.

They see homelessness first hand nearly every day.

"I see women on the street corner and wonder, 'how do they survive?'" said Raina, who owns a business downtown.

"Or I'll notice someone that I haven't seen on the streets for years. My heart sinks when I realize he's homeless again," said Gille, a retired school teacher who volunteers at Park Center High School in Brooklyn Park.

Their desire to help the individuals they see living on the streets led to their decision to support Aeon's vision that every person has a home. The couple became one of the founding members of the Cornerstone Society in 2002.

"Housing is a real, basic need," Raina said. "It's important to support Aeon because government funding [to develop affordable housing] is becoming tighter and tighter and unpredictable."

"We feel strongly that we benefited greatly from our education and opportunity," Gille said. "It's our duty to give back now."

### More than a house

Aeon is not an "organization that builds a place and walks away," Raina said. Through Resident Connections, Aeon helps residents maintain their housing and increase their stability.

"It's not enough to have a place to live. Many people need someone to guide them to get back on their feet," said Gille.

Aeon provides much-needed housing and Raina believes Aeon is "doing it in a way that is long-term."

"Hearing residents tell their stories, I can hear how they have pride in their homes. It's much more than a room to stay," Gille said.



**Marsha Gille and Roger Raina are compelled to support Aeon because they believe everyone needs a place to call home**



Marie Harris, a resident at Paige Hall, started a food shelf for her fellow neighbors

## A helping heart

Like most of us, the possibility of becoming homeless had never crossed Marie Harris' mind.

Harris moved back to Minnesota to be a nanny for her cousin's children. But when her cousin lost his house to foreclosure, Harris found herself homeless.

Without the stability of a home, Harris knew she was at risk of losing the sobriety she worked so hard to reach. She had kicked her chemical addiction two years before.

Harris stayed with friends for a while — until her welcome wore out and she had no other option but to stay at a shelter. "There, I saw a part of the world I never thought I'd see. I wouldn't wish that on anybody," she said.

Harris was ecstatic to learn about Paige Hall, one of Aeon's properties. When she moved in, she found a home — and an extended family.

"It's the family type atmosphere here at Paige Hall that I love," Harris said.

## Reaching out to neighbors in need

Harris has created a sense of community at Paige Hall by planning resident gatherings, and has even organized a food shelf to help her neighbors in need.

"I had extra stuff in my cupboard and I knew there are people who needed it," she explained. "Organizing the food shelf has been a blessing to me."

Harris' desire to help others is never-ending. Since gaining a stable home, Harris returned to school to earn her GED. Ultimately, she hopes to attend college and become a drug counselor so she can help others with what she's managed to overcome.

"When I was addicted, I had support. And when I was homeless, I found Paige Hall," Harris said. "I want to help people find the help they need, just like I did."

## Learning the importance of giving back to the community

Took garbage out. Cleaned bathroom. Swept kitchen and washed dishes.

These household tasks may not seem like normal after-school activities for 10-year-olds, but for children in the "World Citizen" class at 2828 Portland Avenue Apartments, completing these tasks for an elderly neighbor was one way to give back to the community.

The seven-week class is hosted by two volunteers, Benjamin Hartin and Katie Thoennes. The class is designed to help youth discover their place in the community through taking part in service projects.

"We hopefully are laying a foundation for community service, so youth learn that service is a daily thing," said Hartin. "We want them walking away believing that community service is really important."

Hartin and Thoennes led the youth in completing two large community service activities. The youth planted flowers to help beautify their communal living space and have eagerly taken ownership of launching a recycling program for the entire apartment building. Children will be responsible for educating their families and helping elderly neighbors carry out their recycling.

Hartin and Thoennes say they volunteer their time because they believe it is important to help children learn values they will use well into the future.

"We're seeing so many challenges with adolescents in the world. When you help youth channel their energy, they can achieve great things," Thoennes said. "They can learn principles of justice, equality and compassion."



Children at 2828 Portland Avenue Apartments have participated in several community service projects thanks to the help of two volunteers



### Generosity makes Beyond Bricks & Mortar breakfast a success

More than 800 individuals attended Beyond Bricks & Mortar and helped make the fund-raising breakfast a success. The event, held May 14 at the Hilton Minneapolis, raised more than \$440,000 in support of Aeon's mission.

If you missed the breakfast and would like to learn more about Aeon, attend an upcoming Building Dreams informative session. Visit [www.aeonhomes.org/bd](http://www.aeonhomes.org/bd) to register.



Patience Wilson, a resident of St. Barnabas, and Rachel Greenwald, YouthLink



Former Vice President Walter and Joan Mondale



Tonya and Mary Kate Hollen, Ripley Gardens residents



John Cunningham and Chuck Denny



Sally Cunningham, emcee at the breakfast, and Pearlie Sims

### Aeon acquires property management company

On June 1, Aeon acquired 60% of Property Solutions & Services, LLC (PSS) and formed an independent property management entity called Aeon Management, LLC. This new entity will manage a significant portion of Aeon's housing portfolio and related properties.

Prior to the acquisition, Aeon contracted with three property management companies, including PSS, for the day-to-day management of its approximately 1,500 affordable apartment homes. Aeon identified greater long-term control of its property management as a goal in its 2007–2011 Strategic Plan.

Bringing the property management under one umbrella with the rest of Aeon's services will enable the organization to take a more integrated approach to its core concept of "providing homes."

## Construction/Development Updates



### Clover Field Marketplace

Construction is nearly complete on 117 apartments and 12,000 square feet of commercial space in Chaska. The development is part of a traditionally designed neighborhood and is expected to be completed in Fall 2008.



### The Wellstone

The Wellstone, Phase III of the Franklin Portland Gateway development, a partnership with Hope Community, is well underway. Construction of 49 apartment homes and 7,000 square feet of commercial space is expected to be completed in December 2008. Stop by the site and check out the progress.



### Old Third Townhomes

Aeon is partnering with Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity to construct and sell eight three-bedroom townhomes for families. Construction is expected to begin in late Summer 2008. The development also included Clare Apartments, which was completed in 2004 and provides affordable homes for persons living with HIV and AIDS.

### Aeon recently welcomed the following new staff:

**Sue Hackett**, Director of Property Management, Aeon Management, LLC

**Amy Pfarr Walker**, Communications Manager

**Steve Plotz**, Director of Property Improvement, Aeon Management, LLC

Aeon also welcomes 53 former Property Solutions & Services employees who joined the Aeon team.

Aeon congratulates Roxanne Peyton who has been promoted to Director of Resident Connections.



Homes for Generations

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