



# NEW DIMENSIONS

ELDERLY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & OPERATIONS CORPORATION

## *Economic Recovery Plan Must Include Senior Housing*

Winter 2009

**P**resident Barack Obama, in his inaugural speech, offered a frank assessment about where we are as a nation, and challenged all of us to participate in the remaking of America.

Senior issues are high on the President's priority list. The President has promised to protect Social Security, strengthen Medicare, and reduce the cost of prescription drugs for older Americans.

The need for housing for low-income seniors also must be a priority. The current number of units available under the HUD Section 202 program is extremely inadequate. Qualified seniors often must wait years for space to become available. Current statistics show a shortage in available housing for seniors for 2009 of 450,000 units - and the number of available units could decrease as older properties complete their subsidy contracts, and some opt out of the program to sell these properties to for-profit organizations that turn them into luxury condos or rental units.

About 12 percent of the U.S. population is age 65 and older. It is estimated that by 2030, this number will increase to over 20 percent. As people live longer, thanks to advanced medical technology and healthier lifestyles, the need for improved services for older people will continue to increase.

*There are many issues we must face, but we cannot forget that the housing crisis for seniors is no less important than Medicare or Social Security.*

A government report says that more than two out of every five people over age 65 have significant housing-related problems - such as housing cost burdens (expenditures on housing and utilities that exceed 30 percent of household income), physically inadequate housing, and/or crowded conditions. Taking into account the large numbers of seniors who live on fixed incomes and have little or no savings or investments, the housing situation

for older people constitutes a crisis - a crisis that only will get worse as the future unfolds if it is not addressed immediately.

An obvious starting point is building or acquiring thousands of additional Section 202 units, as well as providing funds for capital repairs for existing properties which would also create union jobs in the construction and service industries improving the economy by putting people back to work.

Helping low-income seniors live their retirement with dignity and security is EHD's mission, and our officers and staff live by this philosophy every day.

There are many issues we must face, but we cannot forget that while the housing crisis for seniors is not front page news every day, it is no less important than Medicare or Social Security. We owe it to "America's Greatest Generation" to provide affordable housing to all who need it and to move this crisis to the forefront of every political discussion.





Elderly Housing Development  
& Operations Corporation

### Mission Statement

EHDOC develops and manages safe, secure and affordable housing for senior citizens across the United States. EHDOC advocates for the highest quality of life for the seniors of today and tomorrow.

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## Executive Director's Views

By Steve Protulis

# Looking Into the Face of the Senior Housing Crisis



February marks the opening of EHDOC's newest property, Palermo Lakes in Miami, Fla. While the opening of a new property is always exciting and fulfilling, this opening only reinforces the fact that 109 new units will not put a dent in the need.

Last October we handed out applications for housing at Palermo Lakes. Over 1,000 seniors stood in line in the hot mid-day sun in Florida, some even sleeping in line overnight, just to be able to pick up an application. These seniors knew that only about one in ten would be lucky enough to get an apartment at Palermo Lakes.

The stories varied: some lost the part-time jobs they needed to get by and could no longer afford the high rents; some were immigrants; some had lost a spouse; many were living with family because of financial reasons; some skimped on food or medicine to pay rent; but all wanted the same thing, a safe and affordable place to live. To a person, the pride of being able to maintain their own "home" is so important.

Currently there are about 300,000 units for low-income seniors across the country. According to the Senior Housing Commissioners Report we need an additional 450,000 units to meet the immediate need. Those 1,000 seniors from Palermo Lakes and every other one of the 449,000 seniors across the country who need housing

today cannot be ignored. I wish everyone could have seen those seniors waiting in line with such hope. Perhaps then the need for affordable housing would be understood. It is one thing to talk about numbers, and quite another to see the human side of this housing crisis.

To demonstrate the need, in Florida alone, there are over 4,000 people on the waiting list for the EHDOC properties. So while we celebrate 109 new units, we have a long way to go to fill the need. In Chicago, we have over

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1,000 people on the waiting list for our three properties. We are very pleased that we were just awarded a new HUD 202 grant to build 31 units in Chicago, which obviously does not even come remotely close to meeting the need.

EHDOC has long been an advocate for affordable senior housing. With a new administration and renewed hope, we must make our voices heard so that the housing crisis is given the full attention and action it deserves. We cannot tolerate continued cuts in housing dollars and must work hard to get this housing crisis under control.

Ignoring these problems will not make them go away. It is time for all of us to take action and work to provide quality affordable housing for our nation's seniors. The crisis is real; the time for action is now.

**President's Comments**

By Morton Bahr



## *Affordable Housing for Seniors: An Urgent National Need*

**T**he desperate need our nation has for affordable housing for seniors, particularly low-income seniors, was dramatically demonstrated in Miami last November. In advance of the opening of Palermo Lakes, EHDOC's new 109-apartment facility, we announced to the community that applications would be distributed. For days before the distribution date, dozens of determined seniors camped outside the building to have a chance to find affordable housing. Ultimately, more than 1,000 applications were handed out to seniors seeking to live in these 109 apartments.

The press was alerted, and a film is being made of the event. My introduction to the video will put the entire situation in perspective. We intend to make the video available to all interested parties. We also will have the opportunity to share the video with the members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council at their March meeting.

I have had the opportunity to discuss the work of EHDOC and the dire need for funding for housing for low-income seniors with John Podesta, chair of President Obama's transition team. I stressed the importance of including funds for senior

housing as an integral part of the financial package that is being put together.

Money spent for this purpose creates jobs – both for the actual construction and the material that goes into the building as well as for those who manufacture the furnishings. And there could be no better end product than seeing needy seniors have a decent place to spend the rest of their years.

*America must enact the sort of affordable housing legislation that one would expect from the wealthiest nation on this planet.*

Last fall, EHDOC Executive Vice President Steve Protulis and I met with U.S. Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.), Barney Frank (D-Mass.) and Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) and with Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.). All of them play crucial roles in passage of legislation dealing with affordable housing. Representatives Frank and Rangel both were very straightforward. They told us that in order to pass strong housing legislation, it will take the AFL-CIO and the Change To Win unions to put affordable housing on their top priority list. Furthermore, they must let the representatives and senators know they will be held accountable for their

votes. We delivered this message to the leaders of both labor federations and they continue keeping the issue at the forefront. The president of the AFL-CIO Building Trades Department was particularly interested and enthusiastic; he could see – since EHDOC uses only union labor to build its facilities – how such legislation would result in many jobs for workers in the construction trades.

It is the intention of the EHDOC board to continue to keep this extraordinarily important issue on the front burner for all who care about the well-being of those who have spent their lives working and raising families and now need some help. From the very beginning, the founders of the American labor movement and succeeding generations of labor leaders believed that people who have worked their entire lives are entitled to live their "golden years" with dignity. Clearly, there can be no dignity for anyone who has no roof over their head.

Funding for affordable housing for low-income seniors is an issue that must be talked about loudly and often so that we can mobilize grassroots support to enact the sort of legislation that one would expect from the wealthiest nation on this planet.



## In the News

### Sweet Swap

Stonington Arms, Pawkatuck, Conn.



*Cookies were aplenty at Stonington Arms where residents organized a sweet swap.*

Stonington Arms residents had a sweet treat recently in the form of a cookie swap. Residents made cookies and wrapped

them in packages of one dozen. They swapped with each person, and voila! Residents agreed that the activity was a delight.

### A Wedding Reception 50 Years Later Leisure Lane, Rayne, La.



*Juanita and Hervin Leger, who eloped in 1958, finally got the wedding cake they never had at their 50th wedding anniversary.*

Juanita and Hervin Leger had their 50th wedding anniversary at Leisure Lane Apartments – with a surprise twist. Residents and staff found it difficult to plan a surprise party for the Legers. Family members couldn't find any old pictures or information about their wedding day in 1958. The surprised honorees had a confession. They eloped and never had a wedding reception.

The bride and groom finally got their wedding cake and toasts, and the bride got to wear a white wedding veil for their 50th anniversary. All the best for the next 50 years!

### Holiday Cheer

Chateau Cushnoc / John Marvin Towers  
Augusta, Maine



*Residents sent holiday cards to counterpart residents in Florida. Back row (from left): Paul Boutin, Nina Conklin, Gloria Farrell, Lorette Gagne, and Rita Laliberte. Front row (from left): Debbie Phillips and June Dupont.*

Staff and residents from Chateau Cushnoc and John Marvin Tower "adopted" sister property First Christian Towers, a new EHDOP facility in Winter Haven, Fla., for the holidays. They gathered together in the community room at John Marvin Towers in early December to sign and address greeting cards to all of First Christian's residents.

### Foiling the Flu

Robert Sharp Towers I and II, Miami, Fla.



*Terri Brodes receives her flu shot from Health Department nurse Jackie Jeudy.*

Preventing winter flu is a must for older people, and Robert Sharp residents were on the ball. The Miami-Dade County Health Department administered free flu and pneumonia shots to residents. With help from County Commissioner Barbara Jordan, the towers serve as a center for residents and community members.

Commissioner Jordan talked with residents and joined them for her own flu shot.