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Thomasina Bates of Churchill Area Neighbors welcomed residents of The Oaks at the May 22 dedication ceremony

The Oaks at 14th is Open!

WELCOME HOME!

Our Newest Home Opens Doors to a Brighter Future

Excitement was everywhere as our newest housing complex, The Oaks at 14th, opened in May to welcome residents eager to live in safe housing in a beautiful environment. We are so grateful that you, as a Sponsors partner, helped ensure that more than 50 individuals who successfully completed Sponsors' transitional program can live in new, affordable apartments.



Supporters at The Oaks' dedication ceremony

The majority are seniors, veterans, and individuals with disabilities who struggled to obtain permanent housing. Even with steady income, sobriety, and time served, many were on the verge of homelessness because they were continuously marked – and judged – by mistakes made in a distant past.

Sponsors' Executive Director Paul Solomon remarked at The Oaks' dedication ceremony, "As Henry Ward Beecher once said, 'One's best success comes after their greatest disappointments.' We are here today to support the best success of every person living here."

The Oaks was developed in partnership with the Housing And Community Services Agency of Lane County (HACSA); Lane County Parole and Probation; and with support from county leadership, the neighboring community, and people like you. Because of your tremendous support, some of Lane County's most vulnerable community members now have an opportunity to realize their best success. **Thank you!**

MENTORSHIP CHANGES LIVES

A Snapshot in Sponsors History: The Lifecycle of Mentoring

When Sponsors was founded in 1973 by Sister Janice Jackson, the term “mentoring” was not used as it is today. Instead, the language describing the original agency’s mission was “sponsoring” individuals, not “mentoring.” Hence, the organization became known as “Sponsors, Inc.”



Mentorship Program building July 2017

Sister Janice and other activists “sponsored” men soon to be released from prison. They met with incarcerated men to formulate a release plan and to discuss their goals, fears, and sobriety concerns. On release day, they offered the men a few basic necessities and a lift back to Lane County. Many of the men had nowhere to live and no one who cared.

In 1988, Sponsors shifted its focus from mentoring to addressing the tremendous need for housing. Mentoring services were reinstated in 2010 when Sponsors was awarded The Second Chance Act Mentoring Grant.

The Mentorship Program pairs volunteers with individuals reentering our community and attempting to make positive changes in their life. Mentors begin communicating while their mentees are still in prison and often offer a ride upon release. The program has served over 900 Sponsors participants, and some mentors have volunteered with multiple mentees.

The Sponsors Mentorship Program transforms lives by fostering a sense of purpose and empowerment, as well as creating new hobbies and interests. Fun, recreational events in a supportive environment help participants build healthy relationships as they journey from prison to community. *Mentors are extraordinary people with ordinary lives who have a profound impact* on the wellbeing of others and the safety of our community, fulfilling Sister Janice’s vision so many years ago.

To learn more about becoming a mentor, please call Joel Smith at 541-735-6400.



Mentorship Program participants on a rafting trip

DID YOU KNOW?

Sponsors serves over 400 people per year with 15 buildings on 7 sites. 200 beds provide transitional and permanent housing for people with criminal histories.





FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thanks to your support, summer has been a busy and exciting time at Sponsors, starting with the completion of The Oaks at 14th, Sponsors' 54-unit permanent supported housing project. This cutting-edge project is unique nationally and represents a growing movement to provide quality housing and supportive services for people with criminal histories. I am filled with pride and deep gratitude for this amazing accomplishment.

I am also pleased to announce that Sponsors is launching a Pay for Success (PFS) project in partnership with Third Sector, HACSA and Lane County Parole & Probation. Last year, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) joined together to issue a PFS grant solicitation that would explore the relationship between permanent supported housing and homeless individuals with criminal histories.

We were one of seven awardees nationally to receive a \$1.3 million grant.

Furthermore, HACSA committed 46 housing units on scattered sites in addition to the 54 units at The Oaks in order to meet the 100 unit minimum requirement for the grant. Women and children will be able to live at these 46 additional units.

PFS projects utilize investor resources to demonstrate the effectiveness of promising interventions. In our case, we will evaluate (most likely with a randomized control trial) whether The Oaks at 14th reduces recidivism and homelessness. Participating in this study puts Sponsors on a national stage, creating the opportunity to be evaluated for potential replication. I look forward to sharing more with you about this exceptional project.

Paul Solomon



Interior of an apartment at The Oaks



Reentry Resource Center Director Trish DeJohn (left) and Bookkeeper Velada McElroy serve cake at the dedication for The Oaks on May 22



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EMPLOYMENT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Reentry Resource Center Empowers Participants

For the formerly incarcerated, a job is more than just a way to pay the bills—a job is the difference between feeling like a productive member of society and feeling like an outcast. Employment empowers participants to rebuild a sense of dignity and to support themselves and their loved ones. The Ross Shepard Reentry Resource Center (RRC) is a comprehensive job assistance center open to any Lane County resident with a criminal background.

The RRC program removes barriers to employment and education by preparing people to successfully reenter the workforce and partnering with Second Chance Employers (businesses willing to hire candidates with a criminal history). Critical **material barriers** are removed with assistance in obtaining identification documents, birth certificates, interview clothing, bus passes, and work shoes. Help writing resumes and applying for school and student loans is also available. Teaching effective job search strategies, financial literacy, and the interpersonal skills necessary for interviews helps remove **social barriers**.



Visitors to the Reentry Resource Center have access to computers and the other technologies necessary to conduct a successful job search in the modern economy

The Workforce Readiness Program, a new and unique RRC program, serves individuals incarcerated at the Lane County Jail who are nearing their release date. Partnering with community agencies gives participants the training, skills, and resources necessary to prepare them for a successful job search immediately upon release

For information on becoming a Second Chance Employer, please contact Trish DeJohn at (541) 505-5687.