

Rent or Medicine? Seniors Shouldn't Have To Choose!

By Tonya Young

The lack of affordable housing options already threatens the financial stability of older households and will likely worsen as the population age 50+ grows over the coming decades. As people age, their need for safe and affordable housing grows more critical. Yet today, (according to AARP) approximately 13 million low-income 50+ households in America cannot afford their housing costs and/or live in inadequate housing. Many are paying over 30% of their household income to maintain housing that barely meets their needs. Often they find themselves forced to choose between paying their rent or mortgage and buying groceries or medicine. Even if they live in a home in good physical condition, many housing units may be neither safe nor suitable for older adults due to design issues, such as too many stairs and lack of accessibility features. In general, housing conditions deteriorate with the increasing age of the housing stock. Home maintenance costs

can be substantial and add to an already strained household budget.

Many aging seniors in our community are single or do not have family living nearby. They may feel alone with few resources to draw upon. Death or relocation of friends and relatives can create the need to move to an area where there will again be an emotional or social support network. Given the strong desire of older adults to age in place, it is important to provide homes and services that many individuals need to live independently.

For over 25 years, local nonprofit organization Homeport has focused its efforts on stabilizing communities and making housing more affordable in Central Ohio. Homeport has provided homes and related services for over 27,000 families. In addition to providing families a place to call home, their Community Life Programs and Housing Advisory Center address the underlying social and economic

needs facing individuals and families within our neighborhoods.

Homeport is committed to providing homes that meet seniors' financial capabilities and include features that meet the physical needs of the residents. Since 2008, Homeport has developed 164 senior housing units at Fieldstone Apartments, Elim Manor, and Eastway Village Senior Apartments - with 32 additional homes starting construction at Eastway Village next year. The recently completed Elim Manor senior community consists of 98 accessible apartment homes meeting Universal Design and Visitability standards. They feature an emergency-call system and secured entry for the safety of the residents. Community space was specifically designed with seniors in mind including areas to mingle and recreate in lobbies, community rooms, and space for exercise and additional activities. These apartments were leased immediately, further indicating the need.

Homeport recognizes the importance of aging in place and growing need for affordable senior units as many residents move out of large homes while still living in communities where they raised their families. Homeport's Community Life Programs, which rely heavily on donor support and volunteers, support activities designed to increase residents' ability to live more satisfying and productive lives, providing opportunities for social engagement preventing isolation. Elim Manor resident, Mary L. Brown said "Everybody around here so far that I've met is very friendly. And I enjoy people. I'm right at home." Residents are connected with resources for medical care, transportation, and other social services. Seniors living in Homeport's service-enriched affordable homes have access to the resources vital to their health and wellbeing. We don't want seniors to have to choose between rent and medicine!

About Homeport

Homeport is a private non-profit organization whose mission it is to create and preserve healthy, stable and affordable communities, one neighborhood, one person at a time by:

- Developing quality and energy efficient homes
- Providing consistent and transformative education and services to address each resident's unique barriers to, and opportunities for, success
- Involving and empowering residents
- Focusing on community revitalization
- Creating strong and fruitful collaborations

For more information on renting a Homeport home or volunteer opportunities, please visit: www.homeportohio.org

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Up until July 7th

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