

# Where Are They Now?

Tina Riley

The members of the Greenfield Manor Resident Council nicknamed the “The Greenfield 100” are now referred to as “12 The Hard Way.” The 420 unit, suburban Newark apartment complex was formerly home to 100 families through the project-based section 8 program. After more than two years of opposition and numerous attempts from the landlord to end the tenancy there are 12 families remaining.

There were about a third of the original tenants residing at Greenfield in 2003 when residents won what they hoped would be their last battle in the war to save their homes. Having won their right to remain in their units with enhanced vouchers, they were assured by the regulations that they were free to live at Greenfield as long as the property remained rental housing. In spite of the definitive language of the enhanced voucher regulations the landlord tried again to displace the tenants. In July of 2003 the remaining residents were threatened with lease termination. The landlord contended that upcoming renovations were justification for terminating the leases.

With the help of Community Legal Aid Society, National Housing Law Project, Morris Nicholls Arsh & Tunnel and others, the residents once again won their right to remain in their homes. Renovations require tenants to move from their current units into un-renovated ones within the complex and then to renovated ones. The population of elderly and disabled residents could ill afford to move once not to mention two times. Also, most of the residents do not have the support to physically manage multiple moves.

Housing Development Funds were made available to assist the Greenfield residents with the required

relocations. West End Neighborhood House (WENH) agreed to administer the funds. Barbara Reed, program director for WENH has been facilitating the process.

This relocation experience is far from over, but it’s off to a great start. Residents testify that working with Barbara is like having a new family member. Reed contacted the residents and set up visits to each home. She was thoughtful and anticipated the additional costs and concerns that tenants may face moving into a new unit. The moves were scheduled within a week of the home visits so anxieties were running high.

Residents were comforted when they had the opportunity to meet the owner of the moving company and one of the movers. “They were some of the nicest and most pleasant people to work with...I’ve seen people with a lot more [resources] be a lot less grateful...” said Jim Fultz, owner of A-1 Moving and Hauling. The residents mirror the same sentiment about Barbara and Jim. “They went above what was expected or required... It was nice to be treated like I was a **person** and not just a *poor* person...Their companies should be very proud of them.” said one resident.

After the relocations of the first group of tenants Barbara conducted intake interviews with the families. She was able to assess the diverse needs that existed in each household. She said of her experience at Greenfield, “It was like a forgotten place where residents were left to fend for themselves...I have never seen such a gap in services...” Barbara was able to inform residents of programs that could help to improve their quality of life.

The service provided by West End has been very comprehensive and personal. Recognizing that several of

the tenants were elderly, disabled or without transportation application and registration forms for several programs were brought directly to the tenants. There *are* services that exist, but not many in the Bear/Glasgow area. With a little guidance residents are now plugged into a system of support. The services include food, clothing, financial counseling, support groups, counseling, transportation, companionship, furniture, medical equipment, home health care and more. Barbara, Jim and his employees have even given of their personal time and resources: delivering Thanksgiving dinners, helping to pack, providing packing supplies and just listening.

Every resident council dreams of a time when they can abandon fighting for basic tenant rights and so-called management issues and focus on an agenda that will develop the community. Just informing residents about existing programs is a major step toward this type of effort. There have been many bittersweet victories under the Greenfield Manor resident council. They are small in number, but large in determination.

The next group of tenants will be relocated as renovations are completed. WENH has been contracted to see the project through to completion. The second group of residents is anticipating the same good experience had by the first group. Back in 2001 printed on bright neon green flyers that decked the halls of the apartment buildings the residents were told “STOP Packing! We’re staying at Greenfield.” Now after packing and unpacking many times the residents *will* be staying.

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