

# Helping to welcome you



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Dear Friends of Housing on Merit,

At Housing on Merit, we develop communities where residents have access to the support services and growth opportunities necessary to maintain safe, stable housing and make positive life changes. We believe that truly affordable homes are the first step on the ladder of economic opportunity. Housing on Merit has continued to build and preserve affordable homes that benefit low-income families and seniors across California and Washington, D.C. We've made it easy for our partners, residents, and community members to follow our work. Keep up with us as we share with you our successes:

- **A**t HOM – summarizes our work in increasing and preserving affordable housing. In addition to housing development, our work **A**t HOM concentrates on our resident services delivery using our *Learning Center Model*.
- **B**eyond HOM – highlights our participation and engagement with the affordable housing community. We raised awareness and advanced the business case for gender diversity, and attended National Housing Conference's national policy convening to learn about tax reform under a new administration.
- **W**elcoming Our Heroes HOM – provides a spotlight on our Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance program, which supports women veterans' transition from homelessness to permanent housing. Read more on one veteran's journey to safe and stable housing through our program.

We could not have accomplished this without your continued commitment and collaboration. Your support has helped Housing on Merit become a leader in creating affordable homes so that people and communities can thrive.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Luke'.

**Patrick Luke**  
President, Housing on Merit  
Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Litwak'.

**Jennifer Litwak, Esq.**  
Executive Director  
Housing on Merit

## At HOM

### Housing on Merit's Resident Services Programming

Housing on Merit wrapped up an eventful and successful fourth quarter of resident services programming in 2017! HOM's *Learning Center Model* puts Learning Centers at the forefront of our resident services delivery. They provide the essential services necessary for resident empowerment based on individual and community needs.

Our Learning Centers focus on **four** key areas:

1. **Center for Academic Excellence:** *Promotes academic achievement for residents of all ages.*

HOM recently partnered with Enjoy Your Life 365, which resulted in a series of youth photography workshops at Fort Chaplin Park Apartments. The workshops were designed to build critical thinking skills and get youth to think about how they can impact their community through photography.

During the first series of workshops, participants learned to use their photographs to break down negative stereotypes about their neighborhood and the perception of youth residing in D.C.'s Ward 7.

The second series of workshops concentrated on connecting youth residents with prominent leaders in the community and our eldest residents at Fort Chaplin. This connection allowed for an exchange of knowledge and information about Ward 7 that is not available to our youth in any other form.

Participants refined their photography skills and learned how to present their work through blogs, videos, and social media platforms.

Through this program, our youth have actively engaged in their community and gained skills that can be used in technology related industries.



The work of our youth will be displayed at the 6<sup>th</sup> District Metropolitan Police Department Outreach office in February 2018. Participants will also be presenting their work during the February Commander Citizen Advisory Committee meeting. The meeting is held the first Monday of the month. If you would like to learn more about how photography can empower our youth, consider joining us at any of these events!

**2. Center for Employment and Financial Stability:** *Tackles issues of unemployment, under employment, and financial instability.*

At our Center for Employment and Financial Stability, we believe that financial education can never start too soon! HOM is proud to announce a new partnership with Junior Achievement (JA), which provides financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship curriculum, and interactive programs to youth from grades K-12. During the summer HOM's staff and Learning Center Assistants completed a JA curriculum series training in order to implement "Career Success" classes at several of our properties.



In September and October, young residents attended a seven week interactive class and learned "the 4 Cs" (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity); employment soft skills; information about STEM and other high-growth industries; how to set work priorities; how to build their personal-brand; how to use job-hunting tools; and how to create resumes, cover letters, and digital profiles. HOM looks forward to seeing the long-term impact that our partnership with JA will have on the economic and educational success of residents at our properties.

**3. Center for Growth and Empowerment:** *Mobilizes residents to create a vibrant community reflective of their communal and personal goals.*

Through our Center for Growth and Empowerment, HOM works with residents to empower them and to give them the tools to begin to advocate for issues that impact their lives on a daily basis. During quarter four, HOM engaged residents to participate in the Hunger Advocacy Network's Annual *Paper Plate Campaign*. The campaign collects paper plates with messages from food insecure residents and anti-hunger advocates to capture lived realities with hunger and shared them with State Representatives in Sacramento.

Sixteen (16) young residents from our Vista La Rosa and Rio Vista Apartment communities wrote messages and drew pictures about their experiences with hunger.



*"We can have a future without hunger by eating healthier foods because the cheap junk food doesn't fill us up."*

HOM has been a proud member of the San Diego Hunger Advocacy Network ("HAN") since its inception in 2014. Facilitated by the San Diego Hunger Coalition, HAN is a collaborative of 21 human service agencies, food banks and advocacy organizations working to shape state and federal policies to end hunger. *The Paper Plate Campaign* gives San Diego County residents the opportunity to advocate for the preservation of and increased funding for much needed government programs such as CalFresh. HOM continues to empower residents to use their voice to advocate for the changes they want to see in their communities.



**4. Center for Health and Wellness:** *Addresses restrictions of access to quality health and wellness services.*

Our Center for Health & Wellness addresses multiple concerns related to health including access to health care, nutrition education, and physical wellness. At Fort Chaplin Park Apartments, residents have access to an onsite mobile health clinic twice a month with staff that examines patients regardless of insurance status. The clinic offers a wide array of services that typically can only be accessed in a traditional doctor's office.

Additionally, residents at Fort Chaplin are offered nutrition education workshops on a quarterly basis to teach them about healthy eating on a budget. Residents also have access to weekly fitness classes in the form of chair exercises and yoga.

HOM's Center for Health & Wellness offers residents access to quality health services in our community at no cost.



## Beyond HOM

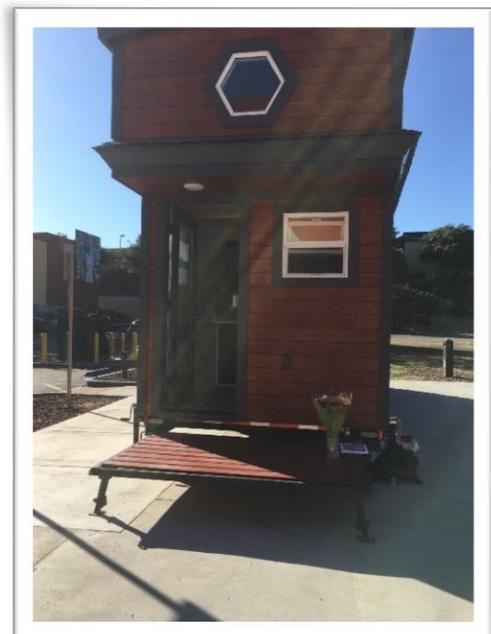
### Alternative Housing Solutions Event

Housing on Merit co-sponsored the Alternative Housing Solutions Event in October. This multi-day event explored how accessory dwelling units, modular construction, and micro units can help address our nation's homelessness and housing affordability crisis.

The event was well attended by elected officials, County leaders, community members, and featured tiny home exhibits open for the public to tour. HOM is eager to continue expanding the dialogue around how innovative housing typologies can help solve the affordable housing crisis.



*Pictured Here: (Left to Right) Gabriela Arias, Housing on Merit, Philip J Bona, American Institute of Architects, Cathryn Nacario, NAMI San Diego, Ellen Stone, Event Coordinator, and Scott Sherman, City of San Diego Councilmember (District 7)*



## CREW Network

The Commercial Real Estate Women's ("CREW") Network exists to influence the success of the commercial real estate industry by advancing the achievements of women.

HOM's Executive Director, Jennifer Litwak, currently serves on CREW San Diego's Board of Directors as the Director of Education + Programs. On a national level, Jennifer serves on CREW Network's Industry Research Committee, which published a White Paper, titled ["Diversity: The Business Advantage"](#) in 2017. The White Paper profiles outstanding gender-inclusive commercial real estate companies and provides action items to improve gender equity, diversity, and inclusion in the commercial real estate field.

In October, Jennifer attended the 2017 Annual CREW Convention, the industry's premier annual business networking event in Houston, Texas. Attendees expanded their network, were inspired, and heard the latest on what's happening in commercial real estate.

In addition to a strong lineup of sessions, speakers, and learning excursions, the convention also served as a platform for 1,000+ commercial real estate professionals from all over the world to network.



*Academy Award Winning Actor Geena Davis presented the keynote address at CREW Convention 2017 and discussed her institute's work on reducing gender stereotypes in media.*

## Welcoming Our Heroes HOM

### A Profile of Courage

We are proud to announce that our Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance recipient, April Adair, moved into her forever home at a newly constructed affordable housing community in September.

April is an Army veteran who served honorably for 23 years. In 2014, health challenges caused her to lose her job. Soon thereafter, she became homeless and found herself living in her car, often in unsafe conditions.

April reached out to the VA and was referred to a homeless shelter operated by the City of San Diego, where she was introduced to and applied for HOM's Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance program. After two years in transitional housing and with no long-term options available, she found herself exiting back into homelessness.

HOM's staff worked closely with April to establish a housing plan and advocated for her throughout a multi-step process to help her secure permanent housing in an affordable housing community. To hear more of April's story in her own words, please [click here](#).

Housing on Merit's Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance program is generously funded by private donors.



*Welcome HOM!  
Pictured above is April Adair in  
her new home.*



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Washington, D.C. 20019

**Your donations go a long way!** Consider supporting our work by making a monetary or in-kind donation. See the various ways to give below.

#### Ways to Give

Online: [housingonmerit.org/donate/](https://housingonmerit.org/donate/)

Checks made payable to:  
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1901 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 395  
Los Angeles, CA 90067

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