MHP’s COVID-19 Response

While the impact of the COVID-19 virus presents many challenges, we also are inspired by demonstrations of great compassion and commitment by our staff and the community at large.

Our staff is complying with directives to limit unnecessary direct interactions and finding creative ways to collaborate and stay connected.

At our properties, we disinfect all common areas several times a day. All community centers are closed for now. Property management staff calls our seniors and other vulnerable residents regularly to check in. They also work with households regarding rental payments, not assessing late fees, and providing information on community resources for residents in need.

In terms of our classroom programs for young students, we are paused to comply with the statewide directives. But our innovative staff has been delivering support through various means, including take-home packets provided while employing social distancing. We also are staying connected with our young students electronically.

Our staff has created and shared resource guides for our residents to help them access food assistance, medical care, unemployment benefits, utility cost relief, and other crucial services. Many of our residents are employed in hourly jobs and are suffering due to cutbacks in hard-hit industries such as the hospitality sector. Take a look at the COVID-19 resource page on our website, which we will keep updated for as long as it is needed.

We are part of other collaborative initiatives to support those struggling with food insecurity and local small businesses working hard to stay afloat. Our Neighborhoods Department, with support from partners including the Cafritz Foundation and Montgomery County, promoted local restaurants in the Long Branch and Bonifant communities in Silver Spring. Many of these businesses are doing their best to survive by selling carry-out meals, which also helps them retain staff.

We are cheered by compassionate Silver Spring restaurant owners who donated dinners to seniors residing at MHP’s The Bonifant apartment building in collaboration with community volunteers. There are other great examples of selflessness,

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Worthington Woods Acquisition Honored As ‘Best Deal’

MHP’s acquisition of Worthington Woods Apartments in D.C.’s Congress Heights community has been selected by the Washington Business Journal as one of the 25 best real estate deals in the region for 2019. MHP and its partners will be recognized at a ceremony later this year.

MHP acquired the property to ensure that Worthington Woods, a 394-unit, garden-style community of 48 buildings built in 1944 on 14.5 acres, remains affordable to residents in an area undergoing redevelopment. The transaction was completed with the support of the D.C. Affordable Housing Preservation Fund, pushing the total number of affordable units in the District preserved under the Fund to more than 1,000.

The deal brought the Worthington Woods community together. Worthington Woods is home to 694 residents, including 81 residents over age 55.

MHP has been meeting with residents to move forward with plans to renovate the property and build a community meeting space. Upgrades include the installation of solar panels.

MHP’s Artie Harris, Vice President of Real Estate, at the celebration of the Worthington Woods acquisition.
Welcome New Staff

MHP welcomes new staff member Jose Aguilar, AmeriCorps Intern with our Community Life department.

Meeting Our Residents

2019-2020
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McClatchy

Wayne Sherwood
Community Volunteer

Finding a New Path: Monique

Monique Fant has been on a journey of self-discovery and she credits her experiences with MHP in guiding her.

Monique grew up at MHP’s Great Hope Homes and still lives there. Originally she wanted to be a fashion designer and study art. As a young student, she would sit in her math class wondering when she would ever need math in her future. That all changed when Monique got involved with MHP’s Community Life programs at Great Hope Homes.

For 14 years, Monique has been volunteering and working for MHP in the Play & Learn, Homework Club, and Summer student enrichment programs. Working with the children in the programs eventually prompted Monique to recognize that she was a teacher at heart and set her sights on becoming an educator. As she was teaching the children, she says she was learning from them as well. "Working with children taught me patience and understanding," she said. “Sometimes kids are going to do things that can get to you but being understanding and having patience will help you reflect why a child is behaving a certain way and you will be able to provide the best help.”

In addition to the reading, writing, and math lessons she taught, Monique made sure to instill life lessons too: “Always keep trying. Never give up even though you may start slow in life,” and, “Always set goals. If you want something, you can do it no matter how long it takes you.”

These lessons proved true with one child who struggled with dyslexia and could not write her name correctly. Monique loved seeing the child’s confidence grow during the school season as they worked together.

Without her MHP experience, Monique would not have set her goal to become a teacher. She is attending Bowie State University and will graduate December 2020 with dual degrees in Early Childhood Education and Special Education. She is grateful to MHP for the experiences that have defined her career path.

“If it wasn’t for MHP, I definitely would not have wanted to be a teacher. My whole path was on fashion and art. Teaching was not on my mind. I want to thank MHP for the opportunity to work with kids.”
Students Explore Nature, Science, Civics

Pre-kindergarten and elementary students in MHP’s Community Life enrichment programs explored science concepts using hands-on kits and experiences provided thanks to a partnership with the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS). Elementary students also learned about civics and democracy through the performing arts.

Students learned about how baleen whales feed and connected that concept to how mechanical sweepers operate. Students also learned about constellations and the role the Earth’s rotation plays in causing day, night and seasons. They even constructed their own robots.

Audubon programs are revealing the hidden world of nature to MHP’s youngest students. They learned about habitats, animals and their diets, and what an omnivore is. The lessons culminated in a field trip to ANS’ outdoor learning facility, Wood End.

Students at Pembridge Square learned about civic participation through exciting performing arts pilot workshops with nonprofit The Civic Circle. MHP students even composed an original song about taking part in representative democracy. The group’s mission is to encourage students to celebrate civil discourse, media literacy, community service, and public leadership. The workshops were held three consecutive Fridays, and featured a performance of the show, “Vote for Me!”

“The Civic Circle was thrilled to collaborate with MHP on our very first after-school music workshops to teach students about voting. We were all very impressed with this group of students, and how engaged and enthusiastic they were,” said Eliza Newlin Carney, founder and president of The Civic Circle. “The original song that they wrote, ‘You Get to Vote,’ was really inspiring, and reflected a great grasp of the voting basics that they had learned in our workshop.”

We are grateful to our partners, including the Maryland State Department of Education and Montgomery County, for enriching our students’ learning experiences.
THANK YOU 2019/2020 DONORS

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We couldn’t have done it without you. Thank you for your partnership!

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www.MHPpartners.org
Long Branch Festival

Discover Long Branch Week was an exciting series of fall festivals, featuring music, food, dancing and demonstrations that solidified a sense of community and helped visitors discover this vibrant neighborhood. Thanks to Montgomery Parks, Montgomery Planning and the Long Branch Business League for supporting the activities, which gave a boost to local businesses affected by the Purple Line construction project.
ADVOCACY

MHP Encourages Support for Affordable Housing Funding

MHP is encouraging Montgomery County to take strong steps to expand funding for affordable housing to meet the needs of residents.

In testimony on the fiscal 2021 capital budget before the Montgomery County Council, Chris Gillis, MHP Director of Policy and Neighborhood Development, said, “MHP’s top priority in the County Executive’s proposed capital budget is additional funding to support the acquisition, development, and renovation of affordable housing, and to grow the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) to $100 million annually by 2022.”

The Urban Institute estimated that Montgomery County needs to create an additional 20,000 units of housing for households with incomes of $55,000 or less by 2030 to meet residents’ needs. This would require producing about 2,000 units a year for low- to moderate-income households. But Gillis noted that at current funding levels, the county is only producing about 600 units a year, making it likely the need will not be fully addressed.

Gillis praised the County Executive’s proposal to create a new Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund. The fund would be capitalized with $10 million in county dollars for each of the next two years with the intention of leveraging additional private capital to make $40 to $50 million available to loan to developers. But he urged caution in how funding is structured and priorities are set.

“All affordable housing projects in Montgomery County require some level of gap financing and we worry that if the HIF doesn’t increase by a commensurate amount or more, it will create a serious bottleneck on the trust fund. It potentially sets up a scenario where the lion’s share of the HIF is being used to support preservation to the detriment of new production, which is no less important.”

Gillis added, “We recommend that the Council increase funding for the HIF by $10 million in FY21. These additional resources will ensure that we don’t repeat past mistakes and put us on the path of getting to $100 million by the end of 2022.”
Resident-Centered Programs Earn Recognition

MHP is proud to have earned a new certification that recognizes and validates the positive impact of our resident-centered programs, including Community Life enrichment programming. MHP is now a Certified Organization for Resident Engagement & Services (CORES) entity. CORES certification is given to organizations that demonstrate a commitment, capacity, and competency in providing resident services coordination in affordable rental homes. These certified organizations are invested in using housing as a platform for opportunity and have a record of providing robust resident services coordination in affordable housing communities. The program is administered by Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future.

MHP’s COVID-19 Response >> continued from page 1

including Bonifant residents making face masks for their neighbors.

Many of you have reached out to ask how you can help. We have set up a resident emergency fund to provide financial assistance to our residents in need. You can use the envelope in this newsletter to donate or go to the MHP website.

In this time of crisis, thank you for being there for MHP and the many people who rely on MHP programs for a safe, affordable place to live. With your support, we remain committed to our essential mission: housing people, empowering families, and strengthening neighborhoods.

Support COVID-19 Resident Emergency Fund | MHPartners.org

El Sapo Restaurant donated meals to residents of The Bonifant.