

Grand Reopening Celebration at Sunset Gardens



It truly was a “beautiful day in the neighborhood” at Sunset Gardens Apartments in Hillsboro when approximately 75 partners, funders, residents, board members, friends and donors gathered to celebrate the Grand Reopening and New Beginnings for Bienestar.

The celebration marked the completion of extensive reconstruction and Grand Reopening of three new properties in our portfolio: Sunset Gardens, 101 units; Sierra West, 57 units in Hillsboro, and Willow Park, 46 units in Forest Grove. The party also was a celebration of new beginnings for Housing Development Corporation. In the 27th year of operation as the state’s oldest and largest farmworker housing corporation, the organization celebrated a new name – Bienestar, its 7 new board members, its new Executive Director Karen Shawcross, a new strategic plan and new resident services programs.

Board treasurer John McMeekan opened the program following a trumpet fanfare from Azteca de Oro mariachi band leaders. He was joined by partner Steve Seabold of Seabold Construction, the sponsor of the event in greetings. Mayor Tom Hughes of Hillsboro spoke of the transformation of the neighborhoods and the leadership of HDC/Bienestar in the community.



Representative David Edwards of the Oregon State Legislature told the crowd the history of the properties: “The opportunity to succeed in life starts with a safe, affordable place to call home. I am pleased to announce that today is a milestone event in extending that opportunity to more hardworking families. For years, Sunset Gardens and Sierra West apartments comprised an area that many avoided. Neighbors complained regularly about gang activity, drug dealing and prostitution. The

area was patently unsafe for children and families. Early in 2005, the chief of police and I, together with other concerned public officials, asked HDC under the leadership of co-directors Doug Longhurst and Linda Netherton, to get involved. Negotiations to enter into a partnership agreement for these properties, along with Willow Park in Forest Grove, began with PNC Multifamily Capital. In May 2007, the partnership agreement was finalized and reconstruction began. While negotiations were still underway, HDC engaged Princeton Property Management to oversee the properties. Working with the Hillsboro Police, a very different community gradually took shape. The chief of police installed plainclothes officers as residents to help identify those who should be evicted or arrested. The extensive renovation of all three properties is now complete, and working families have started moving in, creating communities of positive change. Without exaggeration, what this group of partners accomplished is a complete transformation.”

Lt. Mike Rouches of the Hillsboro Police Department spoke about their involvement with HDC and Princeton Property Management to turn the properties around, and mentioned their donation of the computer lab at Sunset Gardens.

Victor Merced, Director of the Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services, presented Executive Director Shawcross with an award in recognition of the work on the three properties.

Board members John McMeekan and GaSandra Carlson then presented awards to the following partners for their work on the projects:

Bienestar’s Housing Director Robin Smith who supervised the project following the departure of Doug Longhurst at HDC.

PNC Multifamily Capital: Adam Perna and Rob Parker were recognized for their role as the Limited Partners and tax credit investors.

Princeton Property Management: In particular, Allison Brown, portfolio manager for HDC/Bienestar properties for 21 years, was recognized for her critical role in the transformation of the properties and the resident profile. Property managers Ana Alcantar (Willow Park), Roxy and Dallas Brock (Sierra West), and Veronica Mejia (Sunset Gardens) were presented awards for their excellent stewardship of the properties during construction and lease-up. Angela Tait received an award for her tax credit compliance work on the project, and Manuel Aparicio, Fernando



Miranda, Victoria Ramirez, and Delphina Salgado de Rebolledo for their steadfast work in maintenance and lease-up.

HOME program: Peggy Linden of Washington County's Office of Community Development accepted awards for herself and Ben Sturtz for their investment in the project.

Seabold Construction: Tim Perdue was recognized for his excellent work as project manager on the reconstruction. Also receiving an award was Christa Griffiths of Seabold.

Vickers & Nelson: Doug Nelson and Laura Brook were on vacation and unable to attend, but were recognized for their work on project management oversight of the construction efforts.

Community Housing Fund's director Ramsay Weit was honored for the contribution of predevelopment funds for the project.

Oregon Dept. of Housing and Community Services' Vince Chiotti and Bob Gillespie were recognized for their commitment to the project and to the allocation of Low Income Housing Tax Credits that made it possible.

HDC's former director Doug Longhurst was recognized although unable to attend. It was his initiative and determination that brought this partnership together.



The final award was presented to Sharon Nielson of The Nielson Group, who worked with Doug Longhurst and then on her own to bring the partnership to conclusion. She was simply determined that the partners would come together to provide safe, quality, affordable housing for 204 families, and was recognized for her tireless efforts.

The program was followed by a ribbon cutting arranged by the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce. Mayor Tom Hughes and Executive Director Shawcross were surrounded by Bienestar board members and residents to make the Grand Reopening official.

Guests at the event enjoyed homemade Mexican food prepared by Bienestar staff Gracie Garcia and Maria Moreno, toured the computer lab and four apartments, and got a preview of the mural project

designed by Bienestar resident Isaac Alonzo and the children of Sunset Gardens and Reedville apartments.

