

Under One Roof, Inc. TM (The Marvin)

For 23 years, the space that now houses this vibrant intergenerational community, was a vacant and under-utilized school building. In 1993, the city of Norwalk, Connecticut conveyed the property for \$1 and through a restrictive covenant recorded on the land records, the property will remain affordable for at least 40 years. The renovation of the building considered the intergenerational plan for the space and considered integrating both age groups as much as possible within the constraints of funding and the existing structure of the building.

The space includes the Marvin's congregate housing program which offers 49 units of affordable congregate housing for frail elderly and the Marvin Children's Center which occupies 2,600 square feet of the building. This program serves forty 3 & 4 year old children in a full year, full day, affordable School Readiness Childcare program and is managed by Bright Horizons Family Solutions, the nation's leading provider of employer-sponsored child care and early education.

The core element in the mission of Under One Roof, Inc. TM is a philosophical commitment to the importance and benefits of intergenerational programming. The intergenerational component is seen as an essential aspect to each program.



The intergenerational program includes a variety of both scheduled activities as well as informal and impromptu interactions. The goals of the program are to fully integrate the intergenerational component and not have it be seen as

one-shot activities or special events. Some of the scheduled programs include: twice weekly circle time in the seniors lounge; weekly activities in the children's center; regular sing-a-longs; semi-monthly lunch with grand-friends; family and holiday celebrations; and many special events. On a less formal basis, several residents reg-



ularly visit the children's center - some to just get some cheering up or hugs, others to help out with reading or other activities.

Some of the intergenerational activities include gardens planted by the children and seniors, pajama parties, and a project making a handprint flag which was sent to U.S. soldiers in Iraq. During warmer months, some residents often sit outside to watch the children on the playground. One resident, who chooses not to participate in intergenerational activities, loves watching the kids from her window, which overlooks the playground.

The intergenerational component is an integral part of everyday activities. The children often make cards or decorations for special events or holidays and make get-well cards when a resident is hospitalized. For very special occasions (such as a 90th Birthday), flowers, cards or a special photo is delivered to the resident's apartment. And, there are unscheduled visits to the office or field trips through the halls or to visit a resident in their apartment.

One senior resident, Arlene was never married or had children. A very frail woman who is wheelchair bound, she just loves the attention the children give her. The kids love being her electric wheelchair pit-crew and



often try to hitch a ride with her. Recently, Arlene was not feeling well. It was also her birthday. The children made a surprise visit to her apartment to wish her a Happy Birthday. Miss Arlene was absolutely thrilled.

Another resident, Betty is an amazing 92 year old, who has more energy than anyone. Betty is a regular visitor and helper with the children. Betty has helped chaperone field trips, climbs up on the reading loft with the kids, helps on neighborhood walks, and has a regular day for reading.

In addition to regular, ongoing intergenerational interactions between the senior residents and the child care program, The Marvin residents also have intergenerational activities with other programs and organizations. In 2006, the senior residents participated in a joint program with one of the local high school's photography class. Over several weeks, the high school students visited The Marvin, met with individual residents to photograph and interview them, and then produced photos that were on display at City Hall.

Because the childcare program was not scheduled to open until a year after the congregate housing opened, it was important to incorporate an intergenerational component from the start. In 1998, The Marvin developed a relationship with the near-by elementary school. Since that time - the 2nd and 4th grade teachers have brought their students to the congregate housing for regular interactions. The program initially began as an experiment - pairing the students with a senior as part of a reading program. It then evolved into approximately 6-8 sessions a year, with the students walking from the school to The Marvin.



Location

Norwalk, Connecticut

Mission

Dedicated to sponsoring, developing and operating quality affordable housing for elderly persons in need of supportive services, which incorporate and promote a strong intergenerational philosophy.

Type of Organization

Under One Roof, Inc.™ is the sponsor, owner and manager of "The Marvin", which offers affordable congregate housing to 49 senior citizens while providing a school readiness, full day child care program to 40 young children.

Primary Function of Facility

The Marvin is located in a rehabilitated former school building. The Marvin's congregate housing component was completed in the spring of 1997 and offers 49 units of affordable congregate housing for frail elderly. The Marvin Children's Center opened in November 1998, occupies 2,600 square feet of the building serves 3 and 4 year old children in a full year, full day, affordable School Readiness Childcare program.

Contact

Mary R. Windt, Executive Director
60 Gregory Boulevard
Norwalk, CT 06855
203-854-4660
mrwindt@underoneroofinc.org

Photos courtesy of Under One Roof, Inc.

Over the past 10 years, the philosophy and details of the program have evolved and were expanded. All marketing efforts, interactions with prospective residents and child care participants, and staff stress that the intergenerational component is integral to the program. There is also a commitment from the Board of Directors and staff that the intergenerational philosophy and program is essential and at the core of the mission statement which was recently revised to emphasize this. This commitment and revised mission also helps institutionalize the intergenerational aspects of the program.

As part of the hiring process, potential candidates are informed of the intergenerational component in the programs. One staff person from each area is designated as the lead "liaison" between the two programs, however regular communication takes place between staff. Relevant information, articles and other information is shared with staff. In an ongoing effort to continually enhance the program and commitment to the integration of intergenerational components into all aspects of the program, a major commitment was made to ensure that all staff were fully trained and acquainted with the benefits and aspects of intergenerational programming. In an effort to both emphasize and excite the staff about ways to enhance the pro-

gram, the entire child care staff and the staff attended a two-day Intergenerational Certificate Training Program led by the Macklin Institute.

The intergenerational program currently operates without any designated funds. However, intergenerational projects are considered part of the essential operating expenses within the budget. While there is no specific funding for staff, the coordination and programming of intergenerational activities is built into the job description of both the Resident Services Coordinator of The Marvin and the Director of The Marvin Children's Center. To support special projects and initiatives the staff have applied for and received grant funding.

While Under One Roof, Inc.™ has not formally evaluated the program or outcomes, staff do regularly solicit feedback - both formally and informally. They also regularly administer satisfaction surveys with both residents and the child care participants. The feedback received and the comments about the impact of the program are used to continue to enhance the program. The feedback on the intergenerational component states it is both a positive aspect of the program, as well as one that adds a unique experience for both age groups.

