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Bremerton Housing Authority Secures \$6.5 Million Grant for Evergreen Bright Start Project, Providing Supportive Housing for Vulnerable Young Adults

BREMERTON, WASHINGTON – On January 18, 2024, Bremerton Housing Authority (BHA) received notice from the Washington State Department of Commerce that their Housing Trust Fund grant application was fully funded to receive \$6.5 million to acquire a new multifamily property in downtown Bremerton, Washington. With initial combined awards of \$4 million from Kitsap County and the City of Bremerton, this award officially closed the funding gap that BHA and its partnering organizations needed to move forward with providing permanent supportive housing to vulnerable young adults, ages 18-24.

The project, called Evergreen Bright Start, is a 30-unit apartment complex that will house young adults (ages 18-24) who may be homeless, are exiting foster care, or have experienced a combination of traumatic life events such as sexual exploitation, domestic violence, mental health issues, substance abuse, and extreme poverty. The property will have on-site case management and access to services and resources specific to the needs of the resident young adults and their children.

"It's this partnership that made this happen," said BHA Executive Director Jill Stanton. "Evergreen Bright Start represents a unique collaboration between BHA, Kitsap Mental Health Services, Coffee Oasis, Scarlet Road, Olive Crest, the Olympic Educational Service District, and other organizations, addressing the critical needs of an underserved population in Kitsap County. Without dedicated partners and a developer committed to our mission, this project would not have been possible. We came together because we saw a need and wanted to make a difference. Now, we have the opportunity to ensure our future generations can thrive."

In 2021, Bremerton Housing Authority began working closely with organizations serving young adults to support the administration of rental assistance vouchers to youth aging out of foster care in Kitsap County. The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) voucher program is a federally funded program that requires case management in addition to rental assistance to support young adults living independently in private market housing. Because the program requires additional funding outside of rental assistance, BHA contracted with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Kitsap County Housing and Homelessness Division to find innovative solutions to make this program successful. They were able to locate funding to support Olive Crest, the county's Independent Living Services provider serving foster youth, to provide housing navigation and case management for FYI program participants. Within two years, the Kitsap working group created one of the most successful FYI programs in Washington State, a testament to how partners can work together and leverage their strengths to best serve the unique needs of their communities.

The challenges faced by FYI program participants underscored gaps in specialized services for vulnerable young adults. Through collaborative efforts like the Affordable Housing Task Force, BHA identified key partners such as Kitsap Mental Health Services, Scarlet Road, and Coffee Oasis, all struggling to adequately support young adults facing housing instability. Recognizing their shared mission, core



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partners began meeting regularly. These discussions attracted attention from a private developer who approached BHA's Executive Director, Jill Stanton, seeking ways to collaborate on affordable housing initiatives. This led to the opportunity to purchase a 30-unit complex ideally located near essential services, transportation, and educational facilities. Finding money to buy the property was challenging as grant funding was the only viable option. BHA applied and received funding from both Kitsap County and the City of Bremerton which showed a huge acknowledgement and commitment from our community. This allowed BHA to leverage state funding through the Washington Department of Commerce.

"We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the community for their unwavering support of this unique effort," Stanton shared. "The positive feedback from Kitsap Sun's announcement about Evergreen Bright Start demonstrates our community's solidarity in supporting our young adults. By working together and fostering innovation, we are better equipped to meet the unique needs of our community."

About Evergreen Bright Start:

Evergreen Bright Start is intended to be an apartment complex located at 811 Warren Avenue in Bremerton, Washington. It will have 24 studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units, four units set aside for on-site services, and two units set aside for live-in property managers. It will provide foundational community support for young people, ages 18-24, helping them to thrive and putting them on a pathway for lifetime positive outcomes. Services will include healthcare, educational guidance, work training opportunities, case management, and individual treatment as necessary. Evergreen Bright Start is poised to begin occupancy by summer 2024.

For more information about Evergreen Bright Start and Bremerton Housing Authority, visit www.bremertonhousing.org.

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