

CONNECTION

MOVING TOWARD A WORLD FREE OF MS

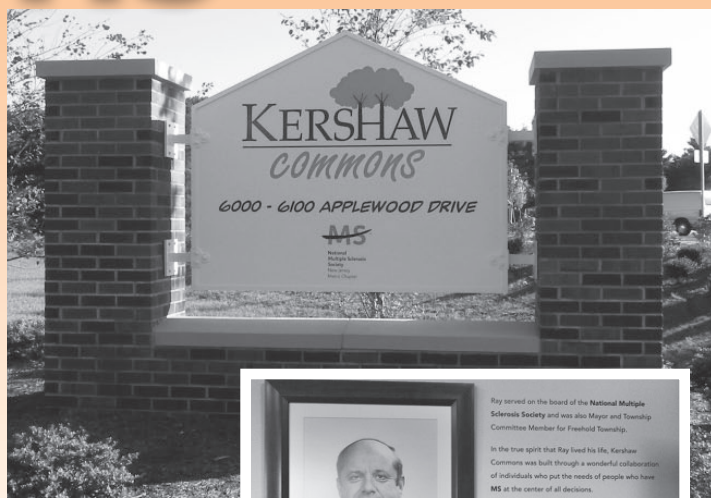
Winter 2012

New Jersey Metro Chapter

Kershaw Commons Opens!

NJ Metro Chapter Partnership Brings First Affordable, Accessible Supportive Housing for People Living with Disabilities to the East Coast

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KERSHAW COMMONS OPENS

NJ METRO CHAPTER PARTNERSHIP BRINGS FIRST AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES TO THE EAST COAST

The much anticipated grand opening of the East Coast's first, brand new supportive housing development for people with disabilities who are in need of multiple sclerosis (MS) support services took place on Thursday, October 27 in Freehold Township. New Jersey has become only the second state in the nation to offer such critical housing opportunities to those in need. Kershaw Commons opened its doors last month to show off its 30 apartments specially designed to provide independent living for people living with disabilities and represents a dream come true for many people.

Kershaw Commons, named for the late Freehold Township Mayor Raymond Kershaw, was recently built next to the campus of Applewood Estates in the Township. This \$11.3 million project created thirty barrier free one and two bedroom apartments built with many accessibility features designed to accommodate everyday living for those with disabilities who require MS support services. Some of those features include low kitchen countertops and pull-out drawers which enable residents to cook their own food; and bars in the shower allow the luxury and dignity of bathing alone. Among many other features, all apartments have spacious "roll-in" closets and wide doors that open automatically to accommodate wheelchairs.

Each apartment comes with rental assistance to allow people of limited income to afford these accessible apartments. Additionally the complex houses a wellness and community space that features

programming and support services provided by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Residents have access to a variety of recreational and social programs such as tai chi and yoga, ongoing educational lectures, self help groups, and easy access to



Residents and officials cut the ribbon to celebrate the Kershaw Commons grand opening!

the nearby MS Center and MS Wellness Center at CentraState Medical Center. Jim Roberts, President of the New Jersey Metro Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society noted the wonderful collaboration the Chapter has with CentraState Medical Center in Freehold, "Led by the passion of Dan Messina, COO, the hospital's staff has truly helped to transform the lives of those living with MS".

"Accessible affordable housing is often a critical element in enabling people with disabilities to preserve their independence and remain engaged in their communities", says Roberts. "The Kershaw Commons facility is the perfect place in which to

do this. Residents are able to maintain their independence by having the necessary tools on hand. We are thrilled to be able to offer this much needed service to those living with MS and other disabilities and are working hard to bring affordable, accessible housing to other parts of New Jersey.”

Kershaw Commons has given new life to many people living locally with multiple sclerosis. Twenty nine year old Marissa Manfredi, now a resident at Kershaw Commons, was forced to leave her studies at Rutgers University before she could finish her Biology degree due to the progression of her MS. She could no longer make it up the stairs to her second-floor apartment in North Brunswick and school and work were out because she could no longer drive with her blurred vision and weakened legs. Shortly after that she was moved to a nursing home. Knowing Marissa’s situation the New Jersey Metro Chapter staff invited Marissa to the ground breaking ceremony of what would become Kershaw Commons a little over a year ago. Coming away from that ceremony she thought it sounded like the perfect place for her, it was exactly what this vibrant 29-year-old needed to live independently. “I never thought it would become a reality,” she said at the grand opening ceremony. “Now I have a new family. We’re comfortable with each other because we all know what we’re going through.”

A TRUE PRIVATE – PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP MAKES KERSHAW COMMONS A REALITY

Kershaw Commons marks the productive teamwork between several public agencies and the private sector, in a successful effort to help people with disabilities. The State of New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, Housing Mortgage Finance Agency(HMFA) and Department of Health and Senior Services have all joined with the private sector to help this population in need. The

HMFA provided both taxable bond financing in the amount of \$1,310,314, a Special Needs Housing Trust Fund Grant in the amount of \$2,562,787 and an allocation of affordable housing tax credits to help make this project successful. In a unique partnership to help people leave nursing homes, the State Department of Health and Senior Services has provided several nursing home residents with Medicaid waiver funding to help their transition to the supportive housing apartments at Kershaw Commons. This nursing home transition program not only saves money for the State, it helps eligible people to move from an institutional setting to this brand new, independent and accessible housing complex. The project was headed by Ken Regan of Regan Development Company and will be used a model as the National MS Society works bring similar housing projects across the country.

Locally, the Township of Freehold has been extremely supportive, expediting approvals and providing tax benefits that help make the rents affordable. Freehold Township Mayor David Salkin states, “From the very beginning, Freehold Township was pleased to be selected as the location for such an important residential facility. Having it named after the our late Mayor Raymond Kershaw was very fitting, since Ray devoted so much of his time to helping the MS cause. I believe I speak for the entire Township Committee when we welcome our new residents of Kershaw Commons to the Township of Freehold, and we are here to serve them.”

Kershaw Commons is currently at 100% occupancy. While applications continue to be accepted, please note there is a waiting list. Interested parties should contact Kershaw Commons at (732) 431-0500 or visit www.kershawcommons.com.