

# THE ALLIANCE



*An Organization of Minnesota's Manufactured Home Park Residents*

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## PAUL REVERE COMMUNITY CARRIES MESSAGE TO TWIN CITIES: YOU CAN OWN YOUR PARK!



**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

APAC will participate in the Housing Minnesota coalitions State Capitol rally and lobby day during the 2006 Legislative Session.

APAC will hold an event to mark its 25th anniversary in 2006, watch for more details.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

APAC's board of directors meetings are generally the 3rd Saturday of each month.

You can support APAC by becoming a member or giving in the workplace through Community Solutions Fund.

Contact us at 651-644-5525 or [apac@mtn.org](mailto:apac@mtn.org), for more information.

LEXINGTON, MN – In the struggle for resident self determination, it was Paul Revere Community that carried the message to Twin Cities manufactured home parks. With best wishes from Governor Tim Pawlenty, state and local government officials, housing advocates and others joined residents in October to celebrate the second park in Minnesota and the first in the metro area to become resident-owned.

"I am ecstatic about this," said interim president of the cooperative, Betty Bailey. "It's the greatest thing in the world that we as a community will be making decisions in our community and not someone else."

The residents bought the land for \$4.5 million through a collaboration of All Parks Alliance for Change, Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund, and other private and nonprofit organizations, beginning in early 2003.

Paul Revere began as a trailer park in the 1950s. Over the years, the trailers became manufactured homes. There

are now 300 to 400 residents living on 135 of 151 lots. So far, residents of 85 households have paid the one-time \$500 membership fee and are now the owners and voting members of the cooperative.

"Purchasing the land gives its residents the long-term security of controlled rent and pride in ownership," said NCDF's executive director, Margaret Lund.

"Paul Revere was among the first parks that we worked with when APAC began in Anoka County in 1980," said executive director, Dave Anderson. "It is an enormous pleasure to see the residents stepping beyond the limits of the old tenant-landlord relationship and taking collective control of their destinies."

Also on-hand for the celebration were Sen. Mattie Reiter, mayor of Lexington Don Vellenta, mayor of Centerville Mary Kapra, Anoka County commissioner Rhonda Sivrajah, chief of police Bob Makaley, and fire chief Paul Pechan. The conversion was made possible, in part, due to funding from the Minneapolis Foundation and the McKnight Foundation.

**APAC Board of Directors**

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Strategic Planning  
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Foundation Legal Intern**MOORHEAD RESIDENTS FACE BOTH RISK OF PARK CLOSURE AND POSSIBILITY OF PARK OWNERSHIP**

MOORHEAD, MN — Moorhead has become the site for two of the most recent battles for the preservation of manufactured homes in the state. One park may be closing while, in another, residents and others are working diligently to try to purchase the park from an owner that the courts have deemed unfit to operate a manufactured home park or to sell manufactured homes.

The residents of Country Acres Mobile Home Park recently received a park closure notice. This confirmed rumors that several residents had heard. According to the notice, the park is closing because the city found maintenance problems that made the park hazardous to remain open. Clay County's sanitation department confirmed that the park had seepage problems with its sewage pipes. The closure statement reviewed by APAC and the Housing Preservation Project seems clearly insufficient. It is unclear whether the city itself is closing the park

or if the owner has decided to close on his own. APAC and HPP are working with residents to determine the best course of action at this point.

The Greenwood park owner, Jack Hoffner, was sued by the Minnesota Attorney General's office after years of predatory, abusive, and unlawful practices towards his residents. The lawsuit alleged that, among other things, Hoffner engaged in unlawful management practices, overpriced homes, and sold homes without a license. The settlement requires Hoffner to get out of the park business for good.

APAC, North Country Cooperative Development Fund, People Escaping Poverty Project, and Legal Aid are working with the residents to purchase the park from the owner in order to preserve the park and convert it into a resident-owned cooperative.

**APAC BEGINS ITS 25TH YEAR OF RESIDENT ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY, PLANS CELEBRATION**

ST. PAUL, MN – Originally known as the Anoka People's Alliance for Change, APAC was founded in 1980 by a group of park residents from the city of Blaine, who worked to eliminate no-cause evictions, and to create new storm shelter standards. These efforts eventually lead to the establishment of a special section of state law for manufactured home parks (Minnesota Statute 327C), providing numerous other resident rights and protections. APAC expanded its focus to park residents across the Twin Cities metro area, and eventually statewide.

APAC addresses the concerns of these low- and moderate-income home owners through tenant advocacy, community organizing, park housing co-op conversion, and public policy work. As the only organization of its kind in Minnesota, APAC's work is critical to protecting and promoting residents' rights, maintaining their self-sufficiency, and preserving vital units of affordable housing. APAC has

several unique programs for residents:

- A statewide tenant hotline for questions about leases, rule changes, compliance notices, and other issues.
- Educational workshops, community organizing and leadership development to improve the quality of life in park neighborhoods.
- Park closing ordinances passed in 16 cities to guarantee relocation compensation if and when a park closes.
- Conversion of two parks, among hopefully many, to resident ownership since 2004.

APAC has been honored for its work by Gov. Rudy Perpich, the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, the Christian Sharing Fund, and the Otto Bremer Foundation.

APAC board and staff plan to organize a celebration of the organization's work in mid-2006 and to invite residents, community partners, and alumni.

## APAC develops Racial Justice organizing approach, hires first Latino Community Organizer

ST. PAUL, MN – APAC community organizers Ned Moore and Rodrigo Sanchez-Chavarria were selected for the 2005-2006 Organizing Apprenticeship Project training program, focused around racial justice. OAP's mission is to strengthen community organizing in Minnesota by increasing the number, effectiveness and diversity of community organizers, leaders and organizing projects.

The initial training included explicit race-based analysis, practical skills building and organizing support. It also explored new ways to support the work for racial justice, to advance the importance of racial justice organizing and to address issues of race and culture in organizing.

The four-day training gave APAC's organizers new tools to frame issues in terms of race and to incorporate the issue of racial justice into campaigns. These tools are crucial due to the dramatic growth in Latino population.

For example, Shady Lane in Bloomington is now two-thirds people of color. Eighty-seven percent of the Latino

families moved into the park in just the last five years. This is a growing trend in Minnesota, both in rural Minnesota and certain parts of the Twin Cities metro area.

APAC has made strides to keep up with the change. In 2003, the organization required Spanish language skills in the hiring of a community organizer. This helped with outreach, translating and interpreting. In 2005, APAC was fortunate to gain two staff members who are bilingual and bicultural, which helps to more fully engage the Latino residents in all parts of the organization.

APAC has incorporated Latino outreach into its organizing this year with support from the Headwaters Foundation for Justice, Minnesota State Bar Foundation, Phillips Family Foundation, and others. In January 2006, APAC will add its first Latino Community Organizer position full-time with funding from the F.R. Bigelow, Mardag, and St. Paul foundations.

APAC plans to put to use the tools acquired through the OAP training in coming campaigns because at APAC we believe that **Mobile Justice is Racial Justice!**

## APAC begins evaluation, planning for the next three years

ST. PAUL, MN — For nearly 25 years, APAC has had great success in organizing manufactured home owners, providing assistance through our tenant hotline, forming strong resident associations, and changing state law. As the only organization of its kind in Minnesota, its services are constantly in demand.

APAC has reached a point in its development, though, that a long-term strategic look at the organization is necessary. Circumstances both inside and outside of APAC have changed significantly since it began: the geographic focus of the organization has expanded to the entire state; a special section of state law specifically dealing with parks

has been developed; residents have begun purchasing parks; and foundation are more strapped.

With assistance from the Saint Paul Foundation's Management Improvement Fund and strategic planning consultant Stacy Becker, APAC will work through a series of discussions and interviews with board, staff, alumni, and community partners to develop strategies to guide APAC for the next three years.

The planning group will produce a strategic plan by summer. But, more importantly, APAC expects to end the process with a clearer sense of its purpose, the lessons of its past, the environment it is working in, and how to reach its future potential.

*APAC board, members and staff would like to thank the following organizations for their support in 2005:*

Otto Bremer Foundation

Carolyn Foundation

Central Minnesota Community Foundation

Christian Sharing Fund

Headwaters Foundation for Justice

Community Solutions Fund

Initiative Foundation

McKnight Foundation

Minneapolis Foundation / Emma B. Howe

Minnesota Housing Partnership / Corporation for National & Community Service

Minnesota Justice Foundation

Minnesota State Bar Foundation

Northland Foundation

Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation

St. Paul Foundation

St. Paul Travelers

University of Minnesota / Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

*\* Some support was received in 2004 for use, in part, in 2005.*

## APAC expands organizing efforts to Duluth

*Since 1980, APAC has been working to improve the quality of life in park neighborhoods through grassroots organizing, and to protect the rights of park residents, with a philosophy of helping people to help themselves.*

*The only organization of its kind in Minnesota, APAC offers several unique programs to residents:*

- Tenant Hotline
- Resident Handbook
  - Workshops
- Neighborhood Organizing
- Leadership Development
- Resident Associations
- Park Closings / Relocation Compensation
- Park Closing Ordinances
- Park Co-op Conversions
  - Latino Outreach / Translating & Interpreting
- Statewide Policy Advocacy

DULUTH, MN – Residents of Duluth have serious concerns about the future of their manufactured home parks. In the wake of recent park closings and the increasing number of hotline calls coming from the Duluth area, APAC is expanding its efforts to Duluth.

A park closure in the Duluth suburb of Hermantown was a textbook example of the threat that residents face. In June of 2004, residents of Rainbow Mobile Home Park were notified that the park was being sold. This closure was covered extensively in the Duluth media that summer and fall.

State law (Minnesota Statute 327C.095) gave residents nine months notice. At the end of which, they faced the loss of their homes and no where to move within their means. Despite being referred to as “mobile,” their homes most often cannot be moved because of age, moving costs (averaging \$3,500 to \$5,500 statewide for a single wide), shortage of available lots, or parks barring homes over 10 years old (which is 71 percent of homes).

Initial outreach and meetings happened this fall. APAC’s visibility has been limited in this area in the past. With almost 1,000 pads in parks, Duluth has a high concentration of park residents. APAC will have a chance to organize residents that may not be aware of the rights they have as a manufactured home owner

An important part of APAC’s work will involve building strong community partnerships. APAC is working to form alliances with residents, low-income and housing advocates, faith-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, government agencies, and elected officials.

APAC is now working with local organizations, such as Housing Access Center, Churches United in Ministry, Minnesota Citizens Federation, and the Duluth Affordable Housing Coalition. APAC has also secured funding from both the Center for Regional and Urban Affairs and the Northland Foundation in order to conduct resident workshops and organizing efforts.

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### PARK UPDATES FROM AROUND THE STATE

CHISAGO CITY, MN — APAC is responding to concerns of residents in Croix Estates by investigating their interest in forming a resident association.

HECTOR, MN — The Latino residents of Sunset Mobile Home Park have been in contact with APAC about establishing a resident association.

LINO LAKES, MN — Baldwin Lake Estates residents are interested in restarting their resident association meetings and will kick things off with an outreach workshop in January.

MONTGOMERY, MN — APAC held an educational workshop in Monty Mobile Home Park on resident rights and responsibilities.

MORA, MN — APAC held an educa-

tion workshop for residents of the Edgewood and Mora Regency parks. Edgewood is in foreclosure and is up for auction.

OAKDALE, MN — The Washington County HRA, which owns the Whispering Oaks park, is working with the city to redevelop the park. APAC is working with the Housing Preservation Project to ensure full compensation under the Uniform Relocation Act.

OGILVIE, MN — APAC worked with Tower park residents to form a resident association and to investigate passing a park closing ordinance.

ST. ANTHONY VILLAGE, MN — APAC held a legal rights workshop for Lowry Grove residents and continued work to establish a resident association. *After representing thousands of manufactured*

# COURT UPHOLDS ‘RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL’, BUT SHADY LANE RESIDENTS UNABLE TO PURCHASE PARK

BLOOMINGTON, MN – Hennepin County District Court Judge Heidi Schellhas upheld as constitutional the “right of first refusal” granted to residents under state law (Minnesota Statute 327C.095) when a park is being sold for redevelopment. The judge ordered a settlement conference and an agreement was arrived at between the Shady Lane Resident Association and park owner, Dennis Peterson, in late September that allowed the resident purchase of the Bloomington park to move forward.

A resident authorized non-profit organization, the Community Health and Education Corporation (CHEC) had been allowed to purchase the park in order to keep it open. Residents and CHEC, with assistance from APAC and the Housing Preservation Project, filed a lawsuit against Peterson after he refused to accept the residents' purchase offer in accordance with the state statute. The settlement agreement was beneficial in establishing a right to purchase, however, CHEC and resi-

dents were given a short timeframe to bring financing together: November 25, the day after Thanksgiving.

Working with CHDC, residents were able to match the \$2 million offered by a developer, but not the additional \$1 million to defray the costs of the mortgage and infrastructure upgrades. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, residents, CHEC, APAC and HPP approached the Bloomington City Council to ask for the city’s cooperation in saving the park. The city’s response was noncommittal. In November, a meeting was held with Mayor Gene Winstead who showed little enthusiasm for offering even moral support.

In their struggle to save Shady Lane, residents overcome many seemingly insurmountable obstacles to make it so far. The Shady Lane story was covered widely in the media and may fuel changes in public financing for future park purchases.

## Membership

By becoming an APAC member, you strengthen the manufactured home owner community in your park and throughout Minnesota.

### **Benefits:**

- APAC’s staff support and advice, the only such resource in the state.
- The Alliance, APAC’s quarterly newsletter.
- Manufactured Home Owners’ Handbook.

### **Join:**

- Member
- Associate (non-resident) Member
- Group Member

### **Membership Dues:**

- \$10
- \$20
- \$30
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Or, Volunteer Options:**

- Office Work
- Leafleting
- Fundraising

### **Extra Contribution:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

### **Program Interests:**

- Workshop
- Resident Association
- Park Closing Ordinance
- Co-op Conversion

## Hot Topics in Manufactured Housing with Valerie Sims

*home park residents over the last five years. I have noticed that many of the same issues affect residents living in different communities. If you are a resident with a question (that is not time sensitive!), please email your issue to [valerie@lommen.com](mailto:valerie@lommen.com). This column is not intended to provide legal advice. If you need specific advice, you should seek legal counsel.*

### **The Topic: Obstacles to In-Park Sales**

Park rules regarding in-park sales have been shifting lately. I have received a number of phone calls from residents who are required to make substantial changes to the home and property before the park will approve a sale. Some of the demands from parks include: replacing good condition skirting from aluminum to vinyl; repainting the home with park approved color; removing landscaping, including paver stones, bushes and trees; removing storage sheds; and installing shutters on all windows

Often these upgrades and improvements can cost hundreds, if not thousands of dollars. Residents should be aware that Minnesota law permits park owners to inspect the lot and exterior of the home to see whether they comply with **reasonable and preexisting** rules relating to **maintenance**. Whether any of the above examples relate to mainte-

nance is an open question. But if the rule is unreasonable or the park only recently adopted the rule it is unenforceable. The park may not require compliance with a new rule if the improvements would involve a significant new expense to the resident or buyer.

By way of example, I represented a client with a newer home in good condition. The client purchased the home from the park only a few years before. At the time, the home had white aluminum skirting. When my client was ready to sell the home, the skirting was still in excellent condition. There was no rust visible and was well maintained. The park imposed a new rule requiring my client to replace the skirting to a vinyl material. The appearance would be the same. Both skirting materials were white. Vinyl, however, does not rust over time and therefore replacing the skirting at the resident’s cost is a long-term benefit to the park owner. As many of you know, replacing skirting can be very expensive. This is a perfect example of an unreasonable and unenforceable rule and, in my opinion, not related to maintenance. Ultimately, the park waived the requirement and my client was able to sell the home.

**All Parks Alliance for Change**

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**We're on the web!**  
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*An organization of Minnesota's  
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**Address corrections requested**

*APAC Salutes Lommen Nelson for its Hard Work  
on behalf of Park Residents!*

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