

# THE ALLIANCE



An Organization of Minnesota's Manufactured Home Park Residents

## SHADY LANE PARK CLOSING IN BLOOMINGTON GAINS STATEWIDE ATTENTION, REACTIONS

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### UPCOMING EVENTS:

APAC's State Capitol rally and lobby day is Tuesday, March 28, 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) will air a program on manufactured home parks on Sunday, April 23 at 7:30. APAC will host a viewing and panel discussion.

APAC's annual St. Paul Saints Tailgating Fundraiser is Saturday, June 24 at 5:00 p.m.

APAC will hold a 25th anniversary event in summer 2006, watch for more details.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

APAC's board of directors meetings are generally the 4th Saturday of each month.

You can support APAC by becoming a member or giving in the workplace through Community Shares of Minnesota.

Call us at 651-644-5525 or 866-361-APAC for information.



It's a sad spectacle to walk through Shady Lane. What once was a vibrant neighborhood with children running and playing, now resembles a ghost town as children's toys lie on the ground untouched, never to be played

BLOOMINGTON, MN – It was supposed to be a crowning achievement for park residents. It was supposed to make history. It was supposed to be the first park to successfully exercise the right of first refusal. It was supposed to be, but it never was.

Shady Lane Mobile Home Court will be closing on April 1, 2006 effectively ending a campaign that began 10 months ago when residents received their notice of closure as well as their 45-day Right of First Refusal. Although Shady Lane is the most ideal of worst scenarios (the city of Bloomington has a park closing ordinance) their owner Dennis Peterson has made it a struggle until the end. At a time when residents of Shady Lane are trying to cope with their futures and trying to plan ahead, they are again thrown into the role of fighting back as they struggle to receive their relocation compensation as stated in the city ordinance.

According to the city ordinance residents who are tendering their title to the park owner must receive compensation 30 days before the scheduled closure date. As of February 24, 2006 many residents have been told there would be no compensation waiting for them on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

with again. Debris from homes that were demolished sits on an empty lot that once held a family. And many homes are just empty, with only a few pieces of furniture left behind as sad reminders of ways of life lost to redevelopment.

However, Shady Lane has made history in a different way. Manufactured home parks and the issues concerning park residents had for a long time not been acknowledged. Shady Lane opened the door wide as the media became involved. Twin Cities Public Television (TPT) with funding from the Northwest Area Foundation is producing a documentary on manufactured home parks and Shady Lane is highlighted as one of the realities of park closings. Local media outlets, like KSTP Channel 5 and Fox 9 News both did extensive reports on the residents' struggle to purchase the park. And as a result government funded agencies like Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are now paying close attention to manufactured home parks and are seeing the need to be more involved.

Shady Lane by no means turned out like residents wanted it to, but the experience of the residents from Shady Lane will help solidify our efforts and those of many others.

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Foundation Legal Interns**APAC LAUNCHES "COALITION FOR MANUFACTURED HOME PARK PRESERVATION," 2006 LEGISLATIVE PUSH**

ST. PAUL, MN — In 2006, APAC will continue in its role as watchdog for resident interests at the State Capitol and will do so with many new allies.

During the Legislative Session, which runs March 1 to May 22, the organization will raise issues on its own and in coalition with other organizations having to do with park closures, preservation of affordable park housing, and home heating costs.

APAC enters the session with many important new and continuing partnerships. The organization is part of the Housing Minnesota steering committee, appears on the coalition's legislative agenda, and will participate in Housing Minnesota's

State Capitol rally and lobby day on March 28 (9 a.m. to 2 p.m.). APAC is a member of the Minnesota Council of Non-profits Public Policy Cabinet and was recently added to the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and Energy CENTS Coalition boards of directors. In addition, APAC helped to form the Coalition for Manufactured Home Park Preservation.

CMHPP is a coalition of organizations with the common goal of preserving and improving the affordable housing provided through manufactured home parks to over 50,000 families in Minnesota. Members include APAC, Housing Preservation Project, Legal Services Advocacy Project, Minnesota Association of Cooperatives, Minnesota Housing Partnership, and Minnesota Senior Federation.

Ultimately, though, we will count on residents to make their voices heard! To attend the lobby day contact APAC.

**APAC'S FIRST DIRECTOR, BETH NEWKIRK, REFLECTS ON THE ORGANIZATION SHE FOUNDED 25 YEARS AGO**

MINNEAPOLIS, MN – A particular quote that burned into my mind from the fight in Bloomington over Shady Lane is Mayor Gene Winsted's statement that we "have to be realistic" that "some people can't afford to live in Bloomington." APAC was founded to fight that attitude and the systems that institutionalize it, not just to improve mobile home parks.

Mobile home parks are neighborhoods that are structurally and institutionally disadvantaged. They've been set up to isolate and disempower lower income people, to set them apart. Parks exist as neighborhoods that have to negotiate with an industry because of segregation, the lack of affordable housing, and discrimination. The out of whack power of the mobile home industry, zoning requirements that force a certain kind of home into a neighborhood where they have less rights than site built home owners. It's all part of a system that segregates people by how much money they have and, now, also by race.

APAC should continue to fight for the rights of mobile home owners. But you should also see yourselves as standing for and protecting the rights, the voice, the home, the front porch, the right to place of all moderate income working people, particularly in the suburbs. You are one of the few organizations with a constituency of low income people who live in and are fighting for affordable housing in the suburbs. I would argue that the work you do around mobile homes is central to that fight, but not the whole fight.

APAC was and is built on the time, the leadership and the courage of a lot of people who I believe are about not just getting what they need for their families but about a set of values: dignity, voice, opportunity, and respect.

You have some power, a history, and I think a very important role to play in the bigger picture. I don't think it is in your interest as residents or as an organization to stay where the community put you — segregated and set apart.

## Mora park owned by MMHA attorney goes into foreclosure, residents organize for a better future



Edgewood has also had a problem with abandoned homes owned by the park that have not been removed which provided a breeding ground for stray cats that have taken over the park.

MORA, MN – Edgewood residents long felt that the park owners were not doing their job, but had no idea how badly. After seeing an announcement about their park in the local paper, they realized they needed to get organized.

Appearing in the Kanabec Times was a notice that the park was being auctioned off by the county sheriff's office due to the park owner's delinquent mortgage payments. A little more digging revealed that, in addition to the nearly \$800,000 that the park owed the bank, the owners also owed Kanabec County \$80,000 in property taxes and the city of Mora \$40,000 in utilities.

The city of Mora has also been concerned about the park's conditions and even considered buying the park at auction to bring in better management. The city later decided against it.

The residents are currently forming an association and have elected an interim board to begin addressing the situation and creating some positive change. A number of local churches have expressed a willingness to work with the residents to create a better community.

One of the former owners of the park is John Bonner, an attorney for the Minnesota Manufactured Housing Association.

*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

## APAC HIGHLIGHTS RACIAL DISPARITIES IN PARKS AT LATINO HOUSING FORM

MINNEAPOLIS, MN — On January 12, 2006, in a packed room at the Resource Center of the Americas, local and state politicians listened to the concerns of Latino residents, organizers and advocacy groups related to homelessness and affordable housing in the Twin Cities. The program was organized by an alliance of organizations called Home Team or Equipo Viviendas. One of the presenters was Rodrigo Sanchez-Chavarria, APAC's Latino Community Organizer.

Sanchez presented information on the current situation of displacement of Latino residents in Shady Lane Mobile Home Park in Bloomington. The park was sold for redevelopment and, although the residents were able to secure the purchase price, an inability to secure an additional \$500,000 and \$1 million

needed for gap financing and a lack of support from the mayor will still leave over 50 families displaced on April 1st.

This is only one example of mass displacement of residents in manufactured home parks, which falls disproportionately on people of color. This is an alarming and growing trend around the state of Minnesota. As a result of this presentation, APAC has been able to create a dialogue and begin to develop relationships with the Minnesota office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Hennepin County, and others.

APAC has increased its capacity to organize and engage the Latino residents. Three members of APAC's staff are bilingual and two are Latino. With foundation support, APAC is increasing its outreach to parks with significant Latino populations throughout the state.

**Residents in Greater MN!**

**Call the Hotline toll free at:**

**1-866-361-APAC**

APAC board, members and staff would like to thank the following organizations for their support for 2006:

F.R. Bigelow Foundation  
 Otto Bremer Foundation  
 Central Minnesota Community Foundation  
 Headwaters Foundation for Justice  
 Community Solutions Fund  
 Democracy! Fund  
 Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs Initiative Foundation  
 Mardag 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  
 Organizing Apprenticeship Project  
 Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation  
 St. Paul Foundation  
 St. Paul Travelers Foundation

*\* Some support was received in 2005 for use, in part, in 2006.*

## Hot Topics in Manufactured Housing with Valerie Sims



### This Issue: THE POWER OF ONE

Meet Ron Schaff. Ron embodies the hopeful American ideology that one man can make a difference for many. At Cedar Knolls Manufactured Home Community,

he did just that. In my short legal career I have never been so inspired by any other client.

Ron is a disabled Vietnam veteran who raised a family in Cedar Knolls community after ending a career with the Los Angeles police department. When the park's rules changed for sewer and water in 1999, the extra fluctuating cost made his fixed income budget unpredictable. Ron sensed the rule change was unjust. He had kept up his end of the bargain with his landlord over the years; the park should honor its contract and do the same, he thought. Ron spent countless nights searching the Internet for Minnesota statutes, rules, and laws that could be related to the park's unilateral rule change. He discovered the stat-

utes related to manufactured housing and took the brave step of filing an action in conciliation court, also known as "small claims court," against the park.

Ron happened to call APAC before the small claims court hearing. The community organizers at APAC had heard of a similar lawsuit and put Ron in touch with the Lommen Abdo law firm. Instead of proceeding in small claims court alone, Ron became a class representative and the case was certified as a class action. In March 2006, after years of litigation, more than 275 of Ron's current and former neighbors will receive refunds for water and sewer. None of it would have happened if Ron wasn't willing to stand up for his rights as well as the rights of his neighbors.

*After representing thousands of manufactured home park residents over the last five years, I have noticed that many of the same issues affect residents. If you are a resident with a question (that is not time sensitive!), please email your request to [valerie@lommen.com](mailto:valerie@lommen.com). You may see your question and answer posted here! This column is not intended to provide specific legal advice and it only addresses topics in a general manner.*

## PARK UPDATES FROM AROUND THE STATE

CHISAGO CITY, MN — The residents are forming an association and responding to a request by park management to sign new leases; something they are not legally required to do.

HECTOR, GLENCOE, OLIVIA, MN — APAC has completed outreach to a number of parks with significant Latino populations and will begin organizing.

MOORHEAD, MN — Greenwood residents are negotiating a park purchase. They are working with community organizations APAC, People Escaping Poverty Project, and Legal Services, and developers Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund, Mid-Minnesota CDC, and Beyond Shelter, Inc.

MOUNDSVIEW, MN — Moundview Park residents are forming an associa-

tion and dealing with park management and safety issues, such as illegal park towing.

OAKDALE, MN — Washington County HRA, which owns Whispering Oaks, will go before the city about its redevelopment plan in April. Park closure notices could go out in May. APAC and the residents have met about the closure and park management problems.

ST. ANTHONY VILLAGE, MN — Lowry Grove residents have formed an association and elected board members.

STACY, MN — Sunrise Estates residents, who make up two-thirds of the city, are forming an association and want to address issues with both the park and the city.

WYOMING, MN — After contacting APAC, the residents of Birchwood Terrace have formed a resident association.

# MMHA president decides to close Maplewood park, sells to nonprofit developer



MAPLEWOOD, MN — Phil Johnson, the president of the Minnesota Manufactured Housing Association, the park owners association, has decided to close St. Paul Cabins, a 45-unit park in Maplewood. Johnson was also the owner of Paul Revere Community, which he offered to sell to the residents making it the second resident-owned park in Minnesota.

If the park closes, it will displace over 30 homeowners, many of whom have lived in

the park for over a decade. Seventy-eight percent of the homes in the park cannot be moved, and the majority of residents are low income. There is also a high percentage of senior citizens on fixed incomes living in the park.

Central Community Housing Trust, an affordable housing developer has shown an interest in purchasing the property. Ironically however, they are currently planning to close the park, getting rid of one form of affordable housing and replacing it with another.

In response, residents have formed an association and hope that CCHT will be willing to negotiate in order to create a fair resolution to this troubling situation.

The city of Maplewood voted against a park closing ordinance in 2002, and is currently considering a proposal calling for redevelopment of two manufactured home parks in Maplewood's Gladstone neighborhood.

## APAC RECEIVES FUNDING TO SUPPORT VOTER OUTREACH, ELECTION ORGANIZING IN 2006

ST. PAUL, MN — APAC received funding from the Democracy! Fund to support non-partisan voter engagement and electoral organizing around park issues. The fundamental purpose is to provide a powerful and united voice for this underrepresented part of society.

In 2006, the park vote can have a big impact since Minnesota voters will be electing a U.S. Senator, all 8 U.S. Representatives, the Governor & Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, State Auditor, and all 201 members of the Minnesota Legislature.

APAC will create a sustainable regional presence in several Twin Cities metro counties and Greater Minnesota regions. The campaign will identify lead parks in each area to serve as a hub. The project will focus on the three high profile steps in the election process — precinct caucuses

in March, primaries in September, and the general election in November — but will remain active throughout the year.

The project will go through three basic stages — registration, education and mobilization. Some activities will include:

- Voter registration,
- Precinct caucuses and park issue resolutions,
- Candidate questionnaires and voting scorecards,
- Issue and candidate forums, and
- Get-out-the-vote efforts.

APAC will encourage residents to stay involved both through next years city elections as well as by staying in contact with their elected officials, through grassroots lobbying, in-district meetings, accountability sessions, and lobby days .

### 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

**All Parks Alliance for Change**

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**Community  
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## Duluth parks form resident associations, connections with community partners

DULUTH, MN — APAC has increased its outreach and organizing in Duluth manufactured home parks with the assistance of the Northland Foundation and the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

Duluth is experiencing increasing development pressures and with about 1,000 units located in the city, there are many residents who could face park closures.

APAC has conducted initial door-to-door outreach flyering to all of Duluth's park households. The residents of Pleasant View Manufactured Home Park have recently formed an association and another park is finishing the process. Residents are eager to improve their neighborhood and bring their issues to the city.

APAC will work closely with residents and local organization Housing Access Center, Churches United in Minnesota, Minnesota Citizen Federation, and the Duluth Affordable Housing Coalition.



**APAC's 2006  
St. Paul Saints Tailgating  
Fundraiser**

**Saturday,  
June 24 @ 5:00 p.m.**

**Tickets Now Available:  
651-644-5525, or  
Toll free 866-361-APAC**