

WHEDA: Wins national HUD Secretary's Award for Healthy Homes

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Thurgood Marshall Apartments in Milwaukee recognized for excellence in healthy housing innovation

Madison –The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) is one of only four applicants in the country to receive a Secretary's Award for Healthy Homes. This year the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in partnership with the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) held its annual Secretary's Award for Healthy Homes. The awards highlight some of the nation's most significant work on the relationship between living environments and resident health.

WHEDA won in the Public Housing/Multifamily Housing category for Thurgood Marshall Apartments in Milwaukee that consists of 24 one-bedroom units of permanent supporting housing for very low-income adults who are chronically homeless and who suffer from alcoholism. The residents have failed previous support programs due to their substance abuse and other factors. Services offered on site are voluntary and focus on reducing harm caused by alcohol abuse.

WHEDA allocated \$273,060 in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits in April 2015 to help finance the apartments, developed by Cardinal Capital Management of Wisconsin.

"I am extremely honored and delighted that WHEDA has won this distinguished national award," said WHEDA Executive Director Wyman Winston. "This gratifying award serves as great motivation for all of us at WHEDA to continue our dedication to special needs housing, including encouraging all developers to add supportive

housing units whenever they, like Thurgood Marshall Apartments, are awarded Low-Income Housing Tax Credits for their projects.”

Thurgood Marshall Apartments takes an innovative approach to the seemingly hopeless dilemma of chronic homelessness. The project is unique in that it does not require residents to achieve sobriety before or during housing. Instead, the Housing First model is employed at Thurgood Marshall Apartments to reach some of the most vulnerable people in the community and offer them stable housing and services so that they can begin to improve their lives. Thurgood Marshall Apartments is the first development of its kind in the state of Wisconsin.

“We are thrilled that Thurgood Marshall Apartments have been recognized for this prestigious award,” said James Mathy, Housing Administrator for Milwaukee County. “This was Milwaukee County’s signature project in our plan to end chronic homelessness using the Housing First model. By providing permanent housing and a very flexible service model that embraces harm reduction, we have seen a major increase in housing retention rates as well as a substantial decrease in emergency services usage, including Medicaid costs.”

“Cardinal Capital Management is very proud to join WHEDA in accepting this award for Thurgood Marshall Apartments. We strive to make all of our developments healthy and offer amenities to enhance the lives of our residents,” said Erich Schwenker, President of Cardinal Capital Management. “We are particularly proud to have worked alongside Milwaukee County in the initiative to end chronic homelessness and to serve Milwaukee’s most vulnerable residents at this property. In addition to WHEDA and Milwaukee County, the following partners were critical to the success of this project: Wisconsin Community Services, PNC, the city of Milwaukee, the Halyard Park Neighborhood Association and First Business Bank.”

HUD defines chronically homeless as an individual with a disabling condition (physical, mental or alcohol/drug abuse) who is continuously homeless for one year or more – OR – has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. Nationally, this group represents less than 15 percent of the entire homeless population. However, they are the highest utilizers of emergency services and other tax funded services. The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness reports that allowing a person to remain chronically homeless costs taxpayers \$30,000 to \$50,000 per year.

Using the Housing First model costs Milwaukee County less than \$20 per day for

housing that will help end a resident's cycle of chronic homelessness. That is less than \$7,000 per year. Providing individualized case management services to address the issues that lead to their homelessness brings the average total cost to less than \$10,000 per year for each Housing First resident. These costs are minimal compared to the costs associated with cycling through jail and prison, and encountering law enforcement or utilizing emergency rooms and other crisis services.

WHEDA's award was presented at the National Environmental Health Association's Annual Education Conference on June 27, 2018, in Anaheim, CA. WHEDA also won the Secretary's Award for Healthy Homes in 2015, the first year of the awards program. WHEDA won for its financing of Highland Commons in West Allis, a 50-unit multifamily development designed to meet the special needs of tenants recovering from mental illness. Highland Commons, also developed by Cardinal Capital Management, was the model for Thurgood Marshall Apartments.

For over 45 years, WHEDA, as an independent state authority, has provided low-cost financing for housing and small business development in Wisconsin. Since 1972, WHEDA has financed more than 73,000 affordable rental units, helped more than 125,800 families purchase a home and made more than 29,000 small business and agricultural loan guarantees. For more information on WHEDA programs, visit wheda.com or call 800-334-6873.