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Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living showcases accessible housing pilot projects

Waterbury, Vt. – On December 6, 2024, the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living hosted a showcase of Accessible Housing Pilot Projects at the State Office Complex in Waterbury. The participants in the showcase are recipients of an Accessible Pilot Planning Grant created by Act 186 of 2022. The Champlain Housing Trust, Upper Valley Services, and Riverflow Community Inc. presented their housing initiatives to create innovative housing options for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Dr. Jill Bowen, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living stated “These planning grants have set the stage for the success of this innovative collaborative effort. This has the potential to improve the quality of life for many Vermonters, and to set a new standard for independence, inclusivity and the opportunity for all to live their lives to the fullest.”

Over 100 attendees gathered for the event that provided a unique opportunity to connect directly with grant recipients involved in various housing initiatives designed to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants explored each project and its strategies, gaining a better understanding of the challenges and successes experienced by the grant recipients during the planning process. The housing presentations facilitated valuable collaboration and knowledge sharing among community members, housing professionals, government officials, parents, and self-advocates.

“This open house was both a celebration and sharing of information by the three Act 186 housing grant recipients,” said Gloria Quinn, Executive Director, Upper Valley Services (UVS). “The achievements made by each of the Act 186 grant recipients was no less than impressive. The Riverflow initiative is complete, and people are now moving in, The Champlain Housing Trust initiative is fully designed and seeking funding and our UVS initiatives in partnership with Downstreet Housing are now fully funded and underway. We are so fortunate to have the support of State leadership and our legislature. I am equally grateful to the dedicated families and individuals with disabilities that have partnered with our agency and inspired our momentum forward.

I believe that in Vermont, we will be able sustain this progress through continued State investments and expanded partnerships that have been catalyzed through this process.”

Elizabeth Campbell, parent of a young adult with a developmental disability and founder of the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI), the driving force behind the initiation and passage of Act 186, said “Parents like me live with chronic worry about what will happen to our lifelong vulnerable adult children once we can no longer care for them. Act 186 and the service-supported housing it is helping to get off the ground means that parents throughout Vermont can rest a bit easier knowing they are not alone in their efforts to secure a safe future for their developmentally disabled adult children. The need for stable housing for people like my son, who has a particularly disabling form of Down syndrome, is something that really does take a village to solve, and in a sense, the Open House seemed like the start of such a village.”

Julie Abrahamson, the Residential Program Developer at the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, emphasizes that "Act 186 (2022) created a valuable opportunity to build on existing momentum by bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders. Through innovative housing plans and initiatives, we can tackle the significant challenges faced by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. By finding common ground and establishing shared goals, we can continue to nurture the important partnerships that have been formed and promote further collaboration. This cooperative approach will lead to more meaningful, purposeful, and person-centered housing solutions."

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About the Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living (DAIL):

Our mission is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or to live with a disability - with dignity, respect, and independence.

<http://dail.vermont.gov/>

<https://www.facebook.com/DAILVT>

Video presented by Upper Valley Services at the event: <https://www.uvs-vt.org/housing>