

BEAVERTON VALLEYTIMES

Beaverton affordable housing opens doors for residents

Disabled, others find a new life as Merlo Station Apartments are dedicated

BY RAY PITZ

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JAIME VALDEZ / BEAVERTON VALLEY TIMES

Kim Forrer (inset), takes a tour of a studio apartment at the Merlo Station Apartments which is similar to the one she will be moving into. The apartments located adjacent to a TriMet light-rail station, are for low-income and disabled residents.

The two things Kim Forrer is looking forward most when she moves into her new one-bedroom unit at Merlo Station Apartments is being with her friends and close to her job at the Beaverton Costco.

And the first thing the developmentally disabled 36-year-old will do once she moves in this weekend?

“Try to get organized and start unpacking,” she said.

On Thursday afternoon, May 29, officials from Tualatin Valley Housing Partners and invited dignitaries including Beaverton Mayor Rob Drake, U.S. Rep. David Wu and Washington County Commissioner Dick Schouten dedicated the 128-unit Merlo Station Apartments, a complex designed for low-income residents in Washington County.

The apartments are on Merlo Road about a block from the Merlo Station MAX light-rail station.

“She’s very excited,” Barbara Forrer, Kim’s mother said about her daughter’s move. “She’s been on her own for awhile and the one thing that’s lacking is peer support and socialization opportunity.”

Those are two things her daughter is expected to receive at the new complex, which contains 20 units for developmentally disabled adults dispersed throughout eight, three-story buildings.

In addition, the facility is designed to accommodate larger families with 88-three-bedroom units and 15 four-bedroom units. As of Thursday, 62 units were pre-leased, including all of the four-bedroom plans.

Rents begin at \$190 a month for a studio apartment with one-bedroom units going for \$215 and two-bedrooms cost \$440.

Karen Voiss, community and resident resource director for Tualatin Valley Housing Partners, said many of the units look onto courtyards where residents can gather.

“Because we also have large families in here we wanted to focus on building community,” said Voiss.

The apartments, which cater to those families earning 60 percent or less of the area median income in Beaverton, all have built-in washers and dryers and free Internet service.

In addition, Voiss said the units contain fans and vents to prevent the buildup of moisture and mildew.

The family focus of the facility is evident in the inclusion of a basketball court and playground equipment that includes a free-standing rock wall all designed to accommodate the anticipated 300 to 400 residents who will be under age 18. Also, a “tot lot” will be constructed soon, said Voiss.

Rhonda Brown, development coordinator for Tualatin Valley Housing Partners, said she’s pleased with the finished product.

“I’m very proud,” said Brown. “I’ve been in on this since day one.”

She said attention to details was important when the apartments were being constructed with each unit containing an interior accent wall and brushed nickel light fixtures.

Also, Brown said her group even found a home for the up to 135 trees that had to be removed to make room for the apartment complex.

The trees, many of which were diseased, were given to a local Boy Scout troop who chopped them up and sold them to elderly residents.

“They were willing to take on the responsibility (of doing something with them),” said Brown.

As a result, the boys raised \$14,000 for Scouting projects.

The 14-year-old Tualatin Valley Housing Partners oversee 540 units throughout Washington County, including 118 units in Tigard and the 14-unit The Bridge facility on Allen Boulevard.

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