



# Victory Housing

# Report

VOL. 13 NO. 2 FALL 2006

[www.victoryhousing.org](http://www.victoryhousing.org)

## A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



*Left: Monsignor Ralph Kuehner delivers remarks at the Bartholomew House dedication ceremony in 1998.*

*Below: Mary's House, Victory Housing's first project.*

Welcome back to your home, office or school, from what I hope was an enjoyable summer season. Of course, no matter how long a break any of us takes, our lives and the organizations that we are affiliated with continue to move forward. Victory Housing is certainly no exception in that regard. Summer 2006 saw our organization begin construction on a new HUD 202 community for low-income seniors in Forestville, Maryland, complete an assisted living residence in Silver Spring, and close on a transaction in which we are a partner to build 89 apartments for moderate-income seniors in Germantown, Maryland.

Although our focus is always on the future, from time-to-time I think it is instructive to see where we have been in the past. In his article on Page 3, Monsignor Ralph Kuehner, our founder, present board member, and friend, has written a wonderful summary of the origins of Victory Housing and the struggles we went through in the early years to develop our first project. Monsignor Kuehner and those initial supporters of Victory Housing set the stage for what the company has evolved into today. The article is great reading – I learned things that even I didn't know about the organization!

I hope you will be able to join us for the Grace House dedication on Tuesday, October 17. For more information, see Page 2 and go to our web site – [www.victoryhousing.org](http://www.victoryhousing.org).

Best wishes,

*Joe Knoll, Chairman*



## VICTORY HOUSING HONOR ROLL

The following individuals, businesses, and groups have generously contributed to Victory Housing, Inc. from April 1, 2006 through August 31, 2006:

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(HAND)

Victory Housing warmly thanks each individual, business, and group for your contribution.

## COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN/ UNITED WAY OF NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA CAMPAIGNS UNDERWAY — DESIGNATE #8892

The 2007 workplace campaigns are now underway. Please consider Victory Housing in your giving plans, either as a renewing contributor or for the first time. Each dollar makes a difference in helping us preserve and provide affordable rental housing for seniors and families in the Washington, D.C. area. Remember our campaign number — **8892**.

## SUPPORT VICTORY HOUSING WHILE YOU SHOP

Next time you shop on-line, start by going to [www.igive.com](http://www.igive.com) first. Register and choose Victory Housing as your charity of choice, do your shopping with the hundreds of retailers that participate, and Victory Housing will receive a percentage of your purchases as donations. For your first purchase, we will receive a special \$5 gift.

## GRACE HOUSE DEDICATION SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 17

Grace House, Victory Housing's newest assisted living residence, located adjacent to Leisure World at 3214 Norbeck Road in Silver Spring, will be celebrating its opening this month with a dedication ceremony on Tuesday, October 17 at 10:00 a.m. Archbishop Donald K. Wuerhl will be joined by local elected officials and Grace House residents at the event. Following the ribbon cutting at about 11:00 a.m., there will be refreshments and tours of the building. For more information, go to [www.victoryhousing.org](http://www.victoryhousing.org).

## COUNT ME IN!

I WANT TO HELP VICTORY HOUSING PROVIDE QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS. ENCLOSED IS MY TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF:

- \$35    \$50    \$75    \$100    \$250    \$500  
 \$1,000    Other \$    Check Enclosed  
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# VICTORY HOUSING — THE BEGINNING AND THE EARLY YEARS, 1979-1985

by Rev. Msgr. Ralph J. Kuehner  
Victory Housing Founder and Board Member



In 2006, Victory Housing marked its 27th anniversary, clearly an appropriate time to consider its beginnings. In 1979, and similar to the recent real estate market, condominium conversions were taking place at a rapid pace. One of my parishioners at Our Lady of Victory parish in the

District of Columbia was being forced out of her apartment as a result of condominium conversion. In the midst of the process she had a heart attack and died. The incident caused me to consider the situation of the elderly in our Church. They support us all their lives. My belief was that we should do more for them.

Concerned persons at our parish and also from the Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament and St. Thomas the Apostle parish joined together and established an organization known as “Catholics Concerned for the Elderly.” We set three goals:

1. Advocacy on behalf of the elderly
2. Construction of housing for the elderly
3. Rehabilitating existing properties.

Jean Brady became the director of this group. We had no land and no money, but great trust in God and the Blessed Virgin Mary. We named the housing component Victory Housing in honor of the Mother of God, Our Lady of Victory.

Victory Housing, Inc. was officially incorporated on July 11, 1979. Cardinal Baum did not want it to be an Archdiocesan corporation, but he did give me a significant piece of Christ the King parish’s land in Silver Spring. There were several attempts to do some building, but some six years with no success. We tried, for example, to get a HUD 202 commitment, but did not win the competition. HUD 202 funding comes with grant funding to build 70 or 80 units of housing for

low-income seniors. The HUD 202 funding also comes with operating subsidies such that residents do not have to pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent. It is a wonderful program for the elderly!

In 1983, I was transferred to St. Ambrose parish in Cheverly, Maryland. The decision was made to maintain our goal of building housing despite our false starts. We were determined to continue the work of Victory Housing.

The board of Victory Housing became aware that the convent at St. Mary’s parish in Rockville, Maryland, was unoccupied. Rev. Msgr. Adam Kostick, the pastor, permitted Jean Brady and me to speak to the parish council about our desire to use the convent as assisted housing for the elderly. The parish council set up a committee to study possible uses of the convent. Finally, the committee recommended that Victory Housing be permitted to use the convent.

Subsequently, we approached the housing department in Montgomery County to seek help in developing this assisted living residence. The County was incredibly supportive. When we met with the County officials, I came with the idea that we needed \$100,000 to do the renovations. Our architect, Ralph Bennett, however, said the price tag was actually \$260,000. My heart sank, as I feared we had reached another false start.

The County graciously offered to give us the necessary \$260,000 with the only condition being that we keep the residence operating for at least 15 years. The renovation work was then completed and 15-unit Mary’s House, our first success, opened its doors in 1985. Interestingly, at that time Maryland state law allowed only 11 residents in an assisted living residence. Since I knew we could accommodate 15 persons, I went to Annapolis, testified before a legislative committee, and was able to get the number raised to 15.

God certainly blessed Victory Housing’s work during those difficult early years, in particular by sending wonderful persons – staff and board, parishioners, and officials from all levels of government – to support the work of Victory Housing. Those struggles helped to set the stage for the next two decades of success that we have since experienced.

## VICTORY HOUSING, INC.

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**VICTORY HOUSING, INC. (VHI)** is a private, non-profit, IRS-approved 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. VHI's mission is to provide affordable housing and related social services to low- and moderate-income senior citizens and families.

## STAFF COMINGS-AND-GOINGS

In May, after 11 years of service, including several as a volunteer, Bonnie Thomson retired as a project developer. During Bonnie's tenure with Victory Housing, utilizing her prior experience with HUD, Victory Housing created a niche in developing and operating HUD 202 apartment communities.

Joining Victory Housing in June as the first Director of Marketing and Management was Jackie Smedley. Jackie has led a distinguished career in the development, marketing, and management of assisted living residences, as well as starting a property management company for a for profit real estate developer. In addition to her own consulting firm, past employers have included Constellation Real Estate Services, Sunrise Assisted Living and First Centrum.

In September, we said goodbye to two staff members – accountant Jenny Hoang, who has been with us since July 1999, and our first asset manager, Ron Soffer, who started back in July 2004. We thank them for their service.

## VICTORY TOWER WINS ANOTHER NATIONAL AWARD

Victory Tower, a substantially renovated high-rise apartment building for low-income seniors in Takoma Park, won its third major award in June. Victory Tower was chosen as the winner in the Seniors Housing category in the 12th annual Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence Awards by the Affordable Housing Tax Credit Coalition ("AHTCC"). The award was presented by Representative Christopher Van Hollen (D - Maryland 8th) at AHTCC's annual meeting on June 7, 2006.

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