

Manito Garden focuses on affordable livability

HUD-subsidized senior housing project turns 40

Karina Elias

April 13th, 2023



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Manito Garden Apartments community manager Betsy Williams, left, and service coordinator Janet Goben say the HUD subsidized facility houses 70 residents.

At Manito Garden Apartments, a facility for low-income seniors located at 500 E. 29th, the staff and property managers work together to provide and maintain an affordable place for residents to live.

Spokane-based commercial real estate brokerage and property management company Kiemle Hagood oversees the operations of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-subsidized facility, which will be 40 years old this year.

Brooke Coumont, regional manager of multifamily properties for Kiemle Hagood, says the company has established a maintenance fund that pays for repairs and upgrades, such a new \$100,000 elevator that will be installed later this month by Otis Elevator Co.

Most recently, the facility's community kitchen, which residents use daily, was renovated with funding through the same account, as was new furniture for the building's main-floor community room, Coumont says.

Betsy Williams, Manito Garden Apartments' on-site community manager, says the four-story, 60-unit building houses 70 residents aged 62 and older and has a staff of four employees.

Two applicants are in the screening process to fill two vacant units, and 48 people are on the facility's waitlist, a figure that's been trending upward due to the need for low-income housing, says Williams.

All units have about 570 square feet of living space with one bedroom, one bathroom, and a full kitchen, says Williams.

Residents must meet HUD age and income guidelines to qualify to live there.

For example, the minimum age is 62, and the upper annual income limit is \$47,000 for a single resident.

Depending on their income level, Manito Garden Apartment residents are charged 30% to 50% of their income up to a maximum rent of \$820 per month, which is below market rate, also a HUD requirement.

For comparison, the average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Spokane is \$899, according to the latest data from Apartment List, an online site that tracks rental market trends.

Most residents use Social Security income, retirement accounts, and savings to make payments, says Williams.

"It's really fortunate to have facilities like ours open to the community," she contends.

Janet Goben, service coordinator for Manito Garden Apartments, focuses on connecting residents to information and resources within the Spokane community, including the Commodity Supplemental Food Program offered here through Spokane-based Second Harvest Inland Northwest, meals delivered through Meals on Wheels, and energy assistance through Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners.

Representatives of the Spokane Public Library visit Manito Garden Apartments on the fourth Wednesday of every month to deliver audiobooks, DVDs, and recorded music. On Monday nights, Manito Presbyterian Church hosts Bible study for the residents, says Goben.

In addition to helping residents sign up for local resources, Goben says she plans educational programs throughout the year that promote independence and wellness, and she coordinates transportation and home health services.

Williams says the heart of the facility centers around the community room, which is located on the ground floor and features a pool table, televisions, games, and entertainment. The community kitchen is set within that space and allows for residents to gather and plan meals and events. The community room opens onto a garden designed with native plants and a water feature.

Manito Garden Apartments is located on the grounds of Manito Presbyterian Church. The complex opened in 1983 as a project of the church, says Gary Guenther, president of the nonprofit board that oversees the facility.



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Reporter Karina Elias covers the banking and finance industry. A California native, she attended the University of California at Santa Barbara. Karina loves salsa dancing, traveling, baking, cuddling with her dog, and writing creative fiction and non-fiction.

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