

## The Cascades Phase 1 Opens for Business

The Cascades Phase 1 is officially open for business. Residents have started to move into eight new rentals, located on Herman Street. An open house celebration was held in late July, with the first lease signed on August 1. The \$2.2 million project will house older adults aged 60+ (or 55+ with a qualifying special need) starting at just \$610 a month with Home, Inc. paying water, sewer, and trash. Over 65 applications were submitted, and a random number generator drawing was used to ensure fair housing compliance. Home, Inc. is working with Nelson and Associates, a Black and women-owned property management company, now that its rental portfolio has grown to 22 total units. Home, Inc. remains involved in tenant advocacy, support service coordination, and asset management, but day-to-day management and maintenance will be through Nelson—an exciting new partnership.

Phase 2 funding is well underway, with more than \$800,000 committed by the Federal Home Loan Bank, Wright-Patt Credit Union, Enterprise Community Partners, Finance Fund, Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities, and CenterPoint Energy Foundation, with land being donated by the Morgan Family Foundation. Final guidelines for the Ohio Housing Finance Agency Housing Development Gap Financing program, which accounts for the largest portion of funds, have been released. With Home, Inc.

planning to submit an application in February, construction on the next six units could begin in late 2026. From there, the remainder of the project consists of eight more Phase 3 rentals and 10 for-sale townhomes. All units will be part of the community land trust for lasting affordability and service to the community.



Photo by Karl Yost Photography

The Yellow Springs community has been supportive of The Cascades, but the project has also received accolades from around the state, including the Access 2 Justice Awards Patricia Rousseau Community Advocacy Award, the Ohio CDC Association's Project of the Year Award, and a congratulatory letter from Ohio's state Senate! Read more under "Recent News" at [yshome.org](http://yshome.org).

## Home, Inc. Snags Third Round of Grants For Villagers Needing Home Repairs

For the third time, Home, Inc. has secured a competitive USDA Housing Preservation Grant. The \$50,000 award will benefit income-qualified homeowners in Yellow Springs who need home repairs and/or accessibility improvements.

The award comes on the heels of a 2024 award, which is currently being implemented.

Previous awards have served 11 Yellow Springs homeowners and included new HVAC, roof replacement, electrical and plumbing repairs, and accessibility modifications.

Unlike similar programs, the award does not include age restrictions or project caps, which

makes this a unique opportunity to take on larger projects and benefit a wider range of homeowners.

With a signed funding agreement in place, Home, Inc. is excited to move forward implementing the award, which will begin by accepting client applications in late 2025. To be added to the interest list and receive updates on this, and other home repair grant opportunities, please complete the short interest form by scanning the QR code to the right or using the link below:

[www.yshome.org/homeowner-rehab-grant-interest-form](http://www.yshome.org/homeowner-rehab-grant-interest-form)



## Celebrating Brittany's 10 Years

At the Home, Inc. Annual Meeting on August 26, 2025, the organization celebrated a truly special milestone: Development Coordinator Brittany Keller's 10th Anniversary with the organization.

Clearly, just a plaque would not have been adequate. In true Yellow Springs Home, Inc. fashion, the occasion had to be celebrated with a wink and a nod to Brittany's humor and creativity as well as her love of community. Inspired by the iconic Parks and Recreation "anniversary gift" sketch, a gift bag was prepared that was part heartfelt and part hilarious, a cheerful reflection of Brittany.

Inside her gift bag, Brittany found:

- A bouquet of hand-crocheted flower pens (because ordinary bouquets simply wouldn't do)
- A mosaic puzzle made from a photo of her mailing her very first major grant proposal

(a full-circle tribute to a decade of impact, and a play on the "mosaic portrait made from crushed bottles of your favorite diet soda")

- A personalized 5,000-word essay filled with stories and love from colleagues, clients, friends, and community members
- And, of course, a book of "terrible maps" and a large, framed map of historical Yellow Springs for her office, in honor of her geography roots.

The result was equal parts touching and laugh-out-loud, a reflection of Brittany's impact on those around her. Her humor and heart have touched so many lives. For 10 years, she has helped Home, Inc. grow, dream, and deliver, all while putting smiles on faces. Here's to the next chapter of adventures with Brittany advancing affordable housing development!

## New and Returning Faces Join the Home, Inc. Board

At the August 26, 2025 Annual Meeting, three new board members were elected: Adam Abraham, Basim Blunt, and Eric Oberg. Kineta Sanford, who had been an interim board member for much of 2025, was also officially elected to her board seat.

Malte Von Matthiessen, whose board term ended in 2024, returned to the board as an emeritus member. Dr. Kevin McGruder, whose final term ended at the meeting, will also continue with the Home, Inc. board as an emeritus member.

Thank you to our amazing Board of Trustees.



Adam Abraham



Basim Blunt



Eric Oberg



Kineta Sanford



Malte Von Matthiessen



Dr. Kevin McGruder

## Residents Settle into The Cascades Apartments

Meet two of the new residents—Sharon Mohler and Byron Benning—at The Cascades apartments.

### Sharon Mohler

For most of her life, Sharon has made at least part of her living as an artist with many talents, sculpture, woodworking, and sewing among them. Some years ago, she also organized a



Sharon Mohler speaking at the 2025 Annual Meeting

house-cleaning business to supplement her income. Sharon grew up in Akron and came to Yellow Springs in 1993 at the urging of her daughter who lives in New Carlisle. "She kept telling me that everyone there is 'like you.' And, sure

enough, I finally found where I fit," she says.

Sharon was one of Home, Inc.'s earliest renters 16 years ago. She lived in a renovated two-bedroom apartment with a basement, which housed her washer and dryer. The basement door, however, was outside. To do her laundry or to retrieve stored art or cleaning supplies meant leaving the house, going down the front steps, and then down a small hill on uneven ground, often carrying large bags or boxes in bad weather. Now in her late eighties, she worried about her safety.

For Sharon, who has had increasing difficulty getting around, moving to a one-story apartment with a new washer and dryer just steps from her kitchen has been a joy. Or, at least it will be once she gets all her stuff organized into a smaller space, she says. "I'm not really a packrat...but I might have some squirreling tendencies. I just gave eight loads of art supplies to Sister Trillium."

Not that she's slowing down much. As an avid gardener, Sharon has started planting flowerbeds in front of her new home and plans a small herb garden along the side. And, she cannot give up the rather large table in her new living/dining area because she needs it to cut out curtains she plans to make for the seven-by-seven-foot windows that bring bright light into every room in her new apartment.

### Byron Benning

When Byron Benning moved in to his Cascades apartment, he was coming back home to the town in which he and generations of his forebears grew up. Until recently, Byron had spent most of his adult life elsewhere, moving back to Xenia from Atlanta about two years ago. It was his late wife, Sharon, however, who was insistent that they move back to Yellow Springs. Raised in Des Moines, she had long since fallen in love with the village from her many visits here, Byron says.

The story is a sad one. Having been deemed qualified applicants for a Cascades apartment, the couple came



Byron Benning

over from Xenia almost every weekend to check on the progress of the building. Sharon, however, became ill and, in July, she passed away. "But this is where she wanted me to be," says Byron. "So here I am...and she's here with me," he says with a smile. He sits on one of two rocking chairs on his porch every morning, surveys the skies, and talks to her.

Byron still goes to work in Xenia four days a week as a part-time dispatcher for the Greene County Transit Company. And he doesn't lack for company when he's home. While many members of his family are spread around the country, one of his four daughters has been here from her home in Toledo since his wife's passing. "She thinks she has to look after me," he says lovingly. His stepson, who lives in Xenia, is also around frequently to help out and keep him company, as are other friends and relatives.

Byron originally left home to go into the US Army—in a way, following in the footsteps of his dad, who had served in the US Airforce. Byron was born at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. "I unexpectedly began my way into this world a little early," he relates, so his mother was rushed to Wright-Patt hospital by ambulance. On the way, she realized she hadn't settled on a name for a little boy. "A good one occurred to her while racing through Byron" he says. "So, I'm 'home' in more ways than one."

## More to the Story: Home, Inc. Residents and



You've all seen, sprinkled throughout town, the brightly colored front doors on Home, Inc. homes. If you read the newsletter, you have even been introduced to many of those who dwell behind those colorful doors. Dig a little deeper, and you'll find that that is only the beginning of the story.

Home, Inc. homeowners and renters are an essential part of our village, strengthening the fabric of our community, our region, and even our world. Many even hold a singular, unique position that warrants a deeper look.

Such is the case of Home, Inc. homeowner Tanya Maus, who serves as the Director of the Quaker Heritage Center and Peace Resource Center on the campus of Wilmington College. The Peace Resource Center, one of relatively few such centers in the world, works "toward non-violence, social justice, and global peace," according to its website. It is also, more specifically, an organization that serves as a living reminder of the horrors of nuclear weapons.

As such, it makes perfect sense that the Peace Resource Center was chosen as the permanent home for the Peace Mask Project that was created and displayed in Yellow Springs in August.

The Peace Mask Project was an effort by artists Pierre Nagley and Myong Hee Kim to preserve the legacy of the Hibakusha ("explosion-affected persons") and involved the creation of 50 life masks



## the Making of Community

of Yellow Springs volunteers. The completed installation was on display for a limited time in Antioch College's Herndon Gallery, but if you'd like to take another look at the Hibakusha collection, you now know where to find it.

Another Home, Inc. homeowner who serves a vital function in our community is Caleab Wyant, manager of the Little Art Theater. From the implementation of "throwback Thursdays" to the funding and installation of the new Little Art marquee, Caleab has made his mark on a cherished village institution.

As testimonial to how important the Little Art is to the village, the recent marquee unveiling party drew approximately 300 attendees.

"It was incredibly heartwarming to see that many people come to show their support of the theater," Wyant says.

Not incidentally, Caleab is also a stalwart in the Greater Dayton music community, recording music and performing at many venues in the Miami Valley.

Of course, there are others. Tanya and Caleab are but two of the many Home, Inc. homeowners and renters with an important story to tell. Look beyond the front door and you won't fail to find friends, neighbors, and integral pieces of our village.

*Peace Mask photos by Emily Seibel*



Myong Hee Kim, artist and founder of the Peace Mask Project, at work



A crowd gathers at the unveiling of the Little Art Theatre's new marquee.  
*Photo by Village of Yellow Springs*

# Conditions for Black Achievement in 20th Century Yellow Springs, Ohio

By Kevin McGruder, M.B.A., Ph.D.  
Home, Inc. Emeritus Board Member

Black people have lived in the Yellow Springs area since at least the 1830s. As discussed in Part 1 and Part 2 of this series, when some of the surrounding communities such as Fairfield (now Fairborn) were hostile, Yellow Springs was relatively welcoming to Black residents. Their numbers reached a high point in the mid-20th century when three major employers, Antioch Bookplate, Vernay Laboratories, and Yellow Springs Instrument (YSI) were led by community-minded men (Ernest Morgan, Sergius Vernet, and Hardy Trolander respectively) who, in addition to striving to make money, were committed to providing a diverse group of men and women, including African Americans, with good employment opportunities at a time when most comparable employers refused to hire Black people for anything but menial jobs. At Vernay Laboratories, by the 1950s and 1960s, approximately 10% of these employees were Black skilled tradespeople, administrators, and researchers. Antioch Publishing and Yellow Springs Instrument had similarly strong representations of Black employees.

The result of having access to good employment opportunities can be seen in the second half of the twentieth century, when Black residents comprised over 25% of the population of Yellow Springs, and were well-represented in all aspects of village

and professional life. Many of their children were able to use this firm social and economic foundation to embark on careers of significant achievement. Black children in Yellow Springs grew up seeing examples of Black achievement both from their parents and among their neighbors: Paul Graham, head of research at Vernay Laboratories; his wife Jewel Graham, Professor of Social Work at Antioch; Naomi McKee, Director of Human Resources at Yellow Springs Instrument; Isabel Newman, manager of printing at Antioch Bookplate; and Jonas Bender, Administrator of Personnel Services for General Motors in Dayton. Many Black children have followed this pattern of achievement in adulthood: Robert Grahamjones, son of Jewel and Paul Graham is a film editor for Pixar. His brother Nathan recently retired from a senior position at Adobe. Cindy Blackman Santana is the drummer in the band of her husband, Carlos Santana. Michael Bender, the son of Jonas and Ethel Bender is Interim CEO for Kohl's stores. Comedian Dave Chappelle, whose parents moved to Yellow Springs in 1967 where his father Bill Chappelle was on the Cooperative Education faculty at Antioch, and his mother was on the faculty at Wilberforce, returned to live in Yellow Springs several years ago.

The legacy of the mid-twentieth century racial equity initiatives in employment continues to be felt in Yellow Springs today, but in many ways, in terms of the Black presence, contemporary Yellow Springs is in a period of visible decline. Civil Rights victories of the 1960s had, by the 1980s, opened up once inhospitable surrounding communities to Black residents, leading to a decade-by-decade decline in Yellow Springs' Black population. Paired with rising housing costs, the result of local policies that both limited new housing construction, and, in the early 2000s promoted tourism, today the Black population of Yellow Springs is less than 10%.



Clockwise from top left: Jewel Graham, Naomi McKee, Jonas Bender, Isabelle Newman



Clockwise from top left: Robert Grahamjones (at left), Cindy Blackman Santana, Dave Chappelle, Michael Bender

# Annual Meeting Celebrates Home, Inc. Members, Awards, and Achievements

Yellow Springs Home, Inc.'s 2025 Annual Meeting, *Rooted in Resilience*, took place on

Bongorno (Board President at the time), Stephen McQueen II, and Dr. Kevin McGruder for each serving nine years on the Board of Trustees and being such an important part of the organizational and board culture. In their honor, August 26, 2025 was commemorated as "Celebrating Exemplary Nonprofit Board Leadership Day" in the village of Yellow Springs. The three were also awarded with plaques from Home, Inc. for their stellar service.



Tuesday, August 26, 2025 at the Yellow Springs Brewery Barrel Room. Executive Director Emily Seibel presented an honorific proclamation by the Ohio Senate General Assembly Honoring Yellow Springs Home, Inc. on its Ribbon Cutting for The Cascades Phase 1, and the event included a celebration of Development Coordinator Brittany Keller's 10th Anniversary with the organization.

In addition to a report on the events of the past year and visions for the future, event highlights included a Mayoral Proclamation by Mayor Pam Conine (see above), honoring outgoing Yellow Springs Home, Inc. Board Members Christopher

If you weren't able to attend but want to catch up, please visit our website for a link to watch the event in its entirety on Youtube. Thank you to Steven Bognar for recording and for being a part of this wonderful event!



## Tony Bent Award

The Annual Tony Bent Award Ceremony honored the founding members of the Senior Housing Working Group, Suzanne Patterson, Helen Eier, and Andrée Bognár, for their decades of hard work that ultimately resulted in the commencement of The Cascades project. Thank you Suzanne, Helen, and Andrée!



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“Yellow Springs is a vibrant community worth investing in. I am amazed and humbled by the number of people willing to give their time, resources, and expertise for a mission that strengthens our community as a whole. We are all in this together—making strides to build for generations.”

Emily Seibel, Executive Director, Yellow Springs Home, Inc.  
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