



JoAnn Fuller, Access Sacramento, September 10, 2015

Welcome to Because People Matter, bringing you interesting people doing important work in our community on KUBU, 96.5 FM in Sacramento, courtesy of Access Sacramento.

I am proud to claim responsibility for this program because today, we're focusing on Mutual Housing, an affordable housing developer that been in our community for a long time. Today we have with us...

Vanessa Guerra is a project manager on the housing development staff, rehabilitating multifamily housing developments and putting in place green building practices for housing.

And also Anne-Marie Flynn who is the director of resource development. She maintains relationships with corporate and community sponsors and has more than 20 years in development in the Sacramento region.

We are talking about the nonprofit's new developments in Yolo County. Vanessa?

Vanessa: We're really excited. We recently completed our latest development, first farmworkers' development in city of Woodland and the first ZNE in region. We've very excited to be part of this.

JoAnn: What is Zero Net Energy?

Vanessa: Zero Net Energy (ZNE) means it's a type of building or complex where the property generates as much energy as it consumes, so it is netting out all the energy it consumes to zero.

JoAnn: Vanessa is a grad of Sac State with a bachelor's degree in Engineering Construction Management. She is also bilingual.

I wanted to say how much I appreciate all the work you doing and you did to go through a program like engineering construction management. That is unusual for women.

I'm also proud of you for being bi-lingual, an asset that really helps our community. Can you tell us about the Mutual Housing communities?

Vanessa: Our latest is located in the southeast section of the city of Woodland. It's a multifamily complex with 62 apartments and townhomes, built specifically for farm laborers in the area, which is very rare in the region because it's actually permanent housing.

It's permanent so that families don't have to move migrantly when the season is over like many in the region do.

JoAnn: ZNE that must really help with utilities.

Vanessa: That was one of our main priorities before we started building.

We did outreach with farm workers in the area in fields and processing plants, using a survey and asked them what their priorities were when it came to housing.

Lower rent was No. 1, something we do in all our developments. But second was utility costs, they needed them to come down. We found the solution thru ZNE.

JoAnn: Have you been essential to dev green vision?

Vanessa: The staff has put me in forefront in training to incorporate materials and systems that would help the longevity of our buildings and community.

JoAnn: We do need people doing extra training in our community. This new dev sounds terrific. Is it open now?

Vanessa: We had folks moving in since March. We are 100 percent occupied now with folks getting to know and understand their new homes. We are teaching residents how to maintain these innovative homes that we have.

JoAnn: This is new territory for all of us, in terms of what we need to do. One of the hallmarks of Mutual Housing is that you don't just build these facilities and then walk away.

Vanessa: We do NOT do that. We invest in the properties and in the families, we build, operate and maintain for the long run.

JoAnn: I heard you had solar panels, but you also thought about water usage.

Vanessa: We have water saving types of plumbing that helps reduce

the need for water, given the drought for the past couple years. It's important to train residents in using low levels of water, what are best practices in their everyday life for these low-flow fixtures.

JoAnn: What is the name?

Mutual Housing at Spring Lake, located in Spring Lake subdivision.

JoAnn: This is really exciting. Congratulations!

Vanessa: It's been a long time coming, but we're proud to have it in place now.

JoAnn: Mutual Housing builds and operates affordable places for people to live, where you are looking at the total cost of living, not just the rent but the utilities. And also making other resources available to people.

Let's turn to Anne Marie for that.

You're someone who puts these developments together, but not everyone in our area understands the need for them. We have people who can't afford the housing that's for rent.

Anne-Marie: It's really why it's such a big part of our mission to develop rental housing that people can afford. Nearly half cannot afford the rent in our area right now.

JoAnn: Half the people that keep our community going?

Anne-Marie: People in retail jobs, food service, veterans, seniors who have lived and worked in our community for many years and find themselves in a lower income bracket.

The high cost of rent in our area and all across Sacramento is contributing to poverty in the region. As a foundation, making housing affordable and then moving on to a better place in their lives overall, the green building is part of that,

but we offer other services to our communities.

We have a whole program about becoming green leaders that is put on residents in our community.....

One of the pieces is our community organizers who are associated with each of our communities work in each development.

JoAnn: You really do provide services and opportunities to take leadership.

Anne-Marie: A big piece of our missions is to create leaders. Our residents are part of that process, building themselves as leader.

More than half of our residents are children, so we are looking at ways to reach out to families so they can create a better path for themselves going forward.

JoAnn: Kids are our future....

Anne-Marie: One of the things we're creating now is a culture of college. We have 19 different communities throughout Sacramento and Yolo counties that Mutual Housing has built or rehabbed and is now managing. Each of those developments has a community organizer who works with the residents.

For the culture of college, we are trying to start from time child is born. We want to make sure that that child, that family and the community around them believe that college is not only necessary, but possible. A culture of believing in college for everyone and putting in programs and supports that can make that happen.

JoAnn: Can't happen without housing. That is basic.

Anne-Marie: It's not the only thing, but it is a primary piece of the puzzle. Without stable housing, kids are moving from place to place, from

school to school, losing touch with teachers and friends and the things that help them be successful in school.

Expensive housing means families can't have healthy meals for children or transportation to get kids to school, even the healthcare they need to be healthy. All of these things contribute.

JoAnn: Thank you for listening. You're tuned into KUBU.

Today we've talking to Mutual Housing California.... We're talking about the ZNE community they just opened in woodland, one of 19 communities they have developed.

Anne-Marie: We have tours of many of our properties. We have a tour coming up next week. This one is in North Sacramento at Victor Townhomes Mutual Housing Community.

You can sign up for tours by going to our website, www.mutualhousing.com.

We'll also have more tours at our new property in Woodland coming up as well.

JoAnn: Vanessa, give us a virtual tour for the next time the Woodland community comes up.

Vanessa: You'll learn a history of how the community came to be, meet some of the residents, see the systems we installed to meet the zero-net energy goal for property.

JoAnn: Such vital, desperate work when I think of half the families who can't afford housing in the area. How are you funded?

Vanessa: We have a lot of support through local government and jurisdictions, which is very critical. The counties and cities are key players in partnering with us to develop housing.

Also, the state and with Mutual

Housing at Spring Lake, we had federal support through the US Dept. of Agriculture.

We have to partner with local agencies to make it happen.

JoAnn: A lot of times we lose sight that we really are a rich country and yet we have these issues—that people don't have affordable places to live. Seems like a way we can impact an issue that is huge.

How can people support MH?

Anne-Marie: There are two ways that we pay for things, one is local partnerships to pay for building housing, but we don't just do housing. We work with residents.

That piece of funding is sometimes hard to pull together. We're can always have people connect with us and learn about us through coming to one of the tours to become an individual donor.

We're also doing a backpack and school supplies drive, that's another way to contribute.

In November, we'll be having our annual fund drive, one hour in the morning to hear resident stories, see a video of things we are doing across the region and learn more specific ways to support the work we're doing.

JoAnn: Check out website at www.MutualHousing.com for all that information.

Can you talk more about back pack and school supplies. If I had school supplies, where would be bring them?

Anne-Marie: Volunteers of America does a big back-pack drive in Sacramento and they shared some with us.

Another way to contribute is by dropping them off at our office, 8001 Fruitridge Road, in Sacramento. Give us a call at the office if you want to

put together a mini-drive.... Call our office 916-453-8400.

JoAnn: What's the website again? www.mutualhousing.com. Tell me a success story. Having 19 developments is a huge achievement.

Vanessa: Mutual Housing at Spring Lake is a success story. It was the first in the nation to receive certification ZNE from the Dept. of Energy. Most people hear about sustainability and solar, but it's usually for home owners and middle income people.

It's a great achievement for Mutual Housing to provide it to lower-income folks like ours.

JoAnn: Do they have an opportunity to become part of the staff?

Anne-Marie: We do have some residents who have become staff—property managers who started out living in community with husband and children. She is a great success story.

They started because her husband had gotten hurt on the job and they didn't have enough income. While there, he went back to college, she got involved in resident council and other activities, which built up her self-confidence. Eventually she applied to become the assistant manager.

They've since bought their own home. Three of the four children have gone to college.

It is a whole family success story, how Mutual Housing can help people stabilize families, build up their confidence and leaderships skills, really help the family grow in ways that can help all of us in the future.

JoAnn: Goose-bumps raising story.

The culture of college, that we can contribute school supplies and back-packs to, will bring forth many success stories. Housing is the basis

to build up the community. I really appreciate Mutual Housing California's work, what you're doing in community now, but long-term sustainability and developing our community.

Thank you for being with us today, Vanessa and Anne-Marie.

That's www.mutualhousing.com.

Thanks for listening to us today because people matter. I'm JoAnn Fuller, your host.