

Formerly homeless Vietnam vet finds new home at Langdon and Anne Simons Senior Apartments

Ex-Marine says goodbye to sleeping in shelters and long days on the street

Neatly dressed, with a military bearing and cheerful, positive energy, 57-year-old Richard Leyda looks every bit the ex-Marine and Vietnam veteran. It's hard to believe that for much of the last two years this dignified man slept in shelters and spent long days on the street.

His homelessness came to an end in January 2008 when Richard became one of the first 92 residents of Plymouth's new *Langdon and Anne Simons Senior Apartments*. Richard arrived to find a furnished studio apartment of his own, one of 22 apartments reserved for homeless veterans, complete with a welcome basket full of necessities.

"There were new towels. A toothbrush. I looked, and there were pots and pans and silverware," he marvels. "When you're just moving around you don't even *think* about those kinds of things."

After his mother died in 2006, Richard tried living in a hotel but it was too expensive, so he slept at homeless shelters while doing odd jobs and saving up to get an apartment. When he got pneumonia, things went downhill fast. Richard mentioned to the doctors at the hospital that his feet were increasingly

numb, making it difficult for him to walk and stand. They quickly diagnosed diabetes, and Richard soon found himself applying for disability.

But without a permanent home to live in, he continued to rely on shelters each night for a place to sleep. Richard began volunteering in the kitchen

at one shelter and the social services staff there realized that the new Simons Apartments would be a good match for Richard.

Today Richard has a clean, comfortable studio apartment and sings its praises.

"There's a laundry on every floor, and 50 cents a load is a good price," he says, noting that he's now looking for an ironing board.

Supportive services at the Simons Apartments include assistance with veteran's



Ex-Marine Richard Leyda is looking forward to cooking meals in his new studio apartment kitchen.

"This is the best place I've ever been in my life."

RICHARD LEYDA

benefits and mental and medical health issues—including an on-site nurse. This means Richard now has help making sure his diabetes is under control. He recently got much-needed dentures and celebrated by cooking a steak in his new kitchen. Cooking is one of the main things he missed while homeless.

Richard says he's looking forward to socializing in the resident lounge. "There's going to be TV, and I want to watch it with somebody else," he says. "This is the best place I've ever been in my life."

Multiple factors send veterans into homelessness

In addition to the economic factors that affect all homeless people, a large number of homeless veterans live with lingering effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and/or substance abuse compounded by a lack of family and social support. Here are some facts about homeless veterans today:

- It is estimated that 1/3 of homeless people in the United States today are veterans.
- Estimates suggest that about 195,000 veterans are homeless on any given night.
- 45% of homeless veterans suffer from mental health issues, 70% are drug or alcohol addicted.
- There are more homeless veterans from the Vietnam era on our streets today than the number of soldiers who died in the Vietnam war.
- In 2006, there were approximately 7,000 homeless veterans in Washington State.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our capital campaign comes to a close, but plans for a new Plymouth residence are already underway

The new year at Plymouth starts on a high note as we celebrate the conclusion of our four-year \$52 million *Building Hope Capital Campaign*. In late December I was notified that Plymouth had received the final campaign gift, a \$500,000 challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation. In January we opened the campaign's final project—the *Langdon and Anne Simons Senior Apartments*. It has been gratifying for me, our board, and our staff to welcome Simons' residents to their new apartments and witness the immediate transformation that having safe, permanent homes brings. One woman who had lived in temporary



Paul Lambros

shelters for 10 years told me that she didn't know what to do with her new bed because she was so used to sleeping on the floor. I'm happy to report that she's now rediscovering the joy a good mattress can bring. Today, Plymouth provides homes for almost 1,000 people in and around the downtown Seattle core, yet we know that almost 8,000 people in our community still need permanent homes. I'm excited to announce that a new Plymouth project is in development. With \$7 million in initial funding from the city of Seattle, we've purchased a lot at the corner of 1st Ave. and Cedar where we'll build a brand new 84-unit building. Due to open in 2010, this new residence will expand Plymouth's ability to serve Seattle's long-term homeless people. Up to half the apartments will be set aside for our new *Begin at Home* program, serving people who are high-utilizers of emer-

gency services and medical care. Plymouth's intense focus on this group is making a real difference in the quality of life for everyone in our community.

I want to thank you again for your ongoing support of Plymouth's mission to end homelessness. We can't do this necessary work without you. Although our recent capital campaign is over, our work is not. We're committed to transforming lives, and we're glad you've joined us.

Warmest regards,

Paul Lambros, Executive Director

Plymouth builds new homes for homeless seniors and veterans

The fourth and final project of Plymouth's successful \$52 million *Building Hope Capital Campaign*, the *Langdon and Anne Simons Senior Apartments* opened its doors on January 17, 2008 and will provide homes for 92 homeless seniors and military service veterans.

Plymouth's model of supportive care will not only give tenants a permanent home, but will also give them access to a full range of supportive services including 24-hour staff. Residents of the apartments receive comprehensive case management and support from specialists in geriatric care, veteran's affairs, mental health, and drug and alcohol issues. An on-site nurse assists residents in managing their health issues. Also, the staff helps residents connect with entitlement programs and financial aid. As with all Plymouth buildings, residents pay 30% of their income as rent.

All apartments are equipped with full kitchens, feature wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, and come fully furnished. In addition, residents can socialize on two outdoor decks and in two lounges, one with a full kitchen and one with a comforting gas fireplace.



Tenants can enjoy watching TV or just socializing together in the new resident lounge. Each studio apartment features large, bright windows, a full kitchen, and is furnished with new, modern furniture.



THE NEW SENIOR APARTMENTS COME FULLY FURNISHED AND AVERAGE 460 SQ. FT.

WILLIAM P. WRIGHT



We've moved our administrative offices. Please note our new address below.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Paul Lambros
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New Plymouth program saves lives, reduces costs

*Decreased visits to emergency rooms and sobering facilities by **Begin at Home** program residents results in improved health status and cost savings of 75% in just one year*

How many times has this happened to you? You're standing on a street corner in downtown Seattle, and suddenly, an ambulance rushes by and pulls to a stop. You look to see what the problem is and you spot two bike cops kneeling by a person crumpled up on the sidewalk. You worry, has he had a heart attack, been attacked or passed out? You see a huddled figure who is dirty, incoherent, in pretty bad shape. You may not know why the ambulance was called, but there's one thing you do suspect—the person on the ground is probably an alcoholic, really sick, or homeless, or all three. And you imagine that if he makes it this time, he'll probably be back on the streets again soon.

Now Plymouth's newest supportive housing program, **Begin at Home**, is making a dramatic difference in the lives of long-term homeless individuals who suffer from multiple medical problems, including alcohol and drug issues. And **Begin at Home** is not only saving lives, it's saving money as well.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Through **Begin at Home**, homeless people with a long history of cycling in and out of emergency treatment and medical facilities become Plymouth residents and quickly receive comprehensive, on-site support services. These include case management, 24-hour crisis management, nursing assessment, and rapid coordination of medical, chemical-dependency, and mental health care. In addition, staff provide community building activities and life skills counseling.

Residents reported high satisfaction with **Begin at Home**, reporting that the program helped them deal more effectively with daily problems, improved their physical health, and helped them stay off drugs and alcohol. Having ready access to chemical dependency counseling and an on-site nurse were cited as key reasons why their health improved so much during the year.

Seventeen of the original twenty **Begin at Home** residents remained in the program 18 months after it began—one left the program and two others died from major health conditions that couldn't be



A study of the first 12 months of the program found that permanent housing, coupled with intensive support services, produced significant change in these residents' troubled lives. The program decreased the first 20 participants' visits to medical facilities, increased their self-reported well-being, and in 12 months saved an estimated \$1.2 million over the previous year's emergency room and medical service costs. **Begin at Home** is part of the experimental "Housing First" initiative funded by the City of Seattle.

"The success of this program is due to our commitment to rapidly helping homeless people others have essentially given up on. By eliminating barriers that keep these people from coming into housing, we've been able to keep them safe and stable," commented Plymouth Policy Director, Tara Connor.

reversed. Plymouth is expanding the program in 2008, and up to half the units in Plymouth's future 1st and Cedar residence are slated for **Begin at Home** residents.

Study shows significant cost savings for the community

Independent researchers hired by King County tracked 20 long-term homeless men and women in Plymouth's **Begin at Home** program for one year between April 2006 and April 2007. All the residents had multiple, recurring medical problems, and many had mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, and/or other disabilities. The results are stunning:

- In the first year, emergency room visits for these residents decreased from 191 to 50 over the previous year when they were homeless.
- Use of sobering facilities fell from 349 visits to 11 visits.
- Short-term nursing and respite care days fell from 1,107 to 0.
- Emergency room and medical costs were reduced from \$1.6 million to \$400,000, a savings of 75% over the previous year.

OUR MISSION

Plymouth Housing Group works to eliminate homelessness and stabilize homeless and very low-income people in housing by preserving, developing and operating safe, decent affordable housing and by providing opportunities for homeless and very low-income people to improve their lives.

Thank you!

Newsletter design contributed by Effective Design.

Save the Date!

Plymouth Housing Group's 5th Annual Luncheon will be held on Thursday, September 25 at the Westin Hotel Ballroom from 12 noon to 1:30 p.m.

If you are interested in being a Table Captain, please call Mary Ann Treder at 206-374-9409, ext. 144 or e-mail: mtreder@plymouthhousing.org.

We hope to see you there!

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Make a gift to Plymouth Housing Group

Your support will help Plymouth transition long-term homeless people from the streets into permanent homes. Visit www.plymouthhousing.org to make a gift. You can also support Plymouth Housing Group by doing the following:

- Advocate for putting an end to homelessness by learning all you can about the plight of Seattle's homeless.
- Prepare a meal and social activity for residents of one of Plymouth's buildings.
- Donate blankets, pillows, sheets, pots, pans and kitchen utensils to Plymouth's Tenant Supply Closet.
- Tell your friends about Plymouth's work and encourage them to get involved.

For more information, please contact Mary Ann Treder at 206-374-9409, ext. 144 or e-mail mtreder@plymouthhousing.org.

Seattle Hotel Association's "Evening of Hope": A spectacular night of fun and fundraising

Featuring everything from high fashion to extravagant travel packages, the Seattle Hotel Association's 11th Annual "Evening of Hope" Gala on February 9th was an enchanted evening held at the Fairmont Olympic Hotel. Over \$530,000 was raised in support of Plymouth Housing Group's supportive services programs.

Community leaders **Jeff and Tricia Raikes** were honored at this year's event for their commitment to improving the quality of life in our community. Jeff and Tricia co-chaired United Way of King County's 2006-07

successful fund raising campaign, and both have taken a personal interest in ending homelessness. Jeff recently accompanied Plymouth Executive Director Paul Lam-

bros on King County's *One Night Count* of homeless people. As Tricia remarked, "Homelessness is actually not a mystery, we know how to solve it...and organizations like Plymouth Housing Group understand that the first step is to provide a safe place."

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Gala a great success including our major sponsors: Presenting Sponsor, Washington Mutual; Platinum Sponsor, Microsoft; and Fashion Sponsor, Max-Mara. Thanks also to other key sponsors: Callison Architecture, Clise Properties, Marpac Construction, National Equity Fund, Skanska USA, SMR Architects, Starbucks, and USA Today, as well as the entire Seattle Hotel Association.



Honorees **Jeff and Tricia Raikes** advocated support for Plymouth Housing Group at the 2008 "Evening of Hope."



Seattle City Councilman Tim Burgess, Plymouth Executive Director Paul Lambros, and Sen. Patty Murray at forum on homeless veterans.

Senator Murray comes to Plymouth Housing Group

Panel discusses issue of homeless veterans in Washington State

"Why the heck are there still so many people on the streets?" asked Sen. Patty Murray. "What are we missing, and what should we be doing better?" On February 21, Senator Murray and five representatives from local non-profits and government agencies, as well as two formerly homeless veterans, came together at Plymouth Housing Group to discuss the urgent need to provide resources for homeless veterans.

During the discussion, moderated by Plymouth Executive Director Paul Lambros, Murray heard the panel strongly recommend that she focus her attention on addressing the lack of coordination among federal agencies providing veteran housing support. "We're very grateful for Senator Murray's support," remarked Lambros. "There's so much more we can do together to create permanent homes for homeless veterans."