



## Section 8 Makes Housing Affordable

"I really like it here" says Paul Hager, a senior citizen, as he passionately shares his story about living in San José's award-winning affordable housing development, Corde Terra Senior Apartments. The development is a 201-unit seniors' apartment complex with 199 units for extremely low-income seniors receiving project-based Section 8 rental subsidies. The project was developed by ROEM Corporation, a housing developer based in Silicon Valley.

Paul is well-travelled, and came to the United States from Holland over 40 years ago. Prior to his retirement, he worked for IBM as a Senior Process Engineer, and later as an employee at Los Gatos Meadows, a senior community with comprehensive care programs.

Before his stay in the Corde Terra Senior complex, Paul could only afford to rent individual rooms in larger apartments and houses. He shared three separate living situations—one in which he shared a home with six other men. In these different living arrangements, Paul's monthly rent ranged from \$700–800. Living on an extremely low-income derived from Social Security and a small pension, paying those rents was extremely difficult as it consumed over half of his monthly income. Now, Paul pays just 30% of his income—less than half of what he paid previously—and can live comfortably in a safe, decent, very attractive living environment.

"I like to volunteer," said Paul, as he beams with joy and shares a letter he received from President Barack Obama commending him for his volunteer work. When Paul first moved into Corde Terra Senior, he discovered a piano in the Corde Terra Village community room. Julie Nguyen, the Resident Services Senior Director, overheard Paul as he elegantly played, and asked if he would be willing to volunteer his services and teach the children in the family apartments. Without hesitation, Paul gladly accepted. "I started out with two or three kids," said Paul. And now, due to the popularity of Paul's class, he is teaching Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The children in his classes showcase their talents during the holiday season, when they perform in a recital during the holiday party for both the Corde Terra Senior and adjacent Corde Terra Village tenants. Paul also provides blood pressure screening to the tenants at Corde Terra Village and Corde Terra Senior and volunteers for the Milpitas Police Department providing finger printing services. Paul's motivation to give back to his community is shown by the many hours he works to make his own corner of San José a better place.

As he smiles, Paul cheerfully shared that living at Corde Terra Senior has given him the opportunity to meet new people and friends, and his life just keeps getting "better and better."

Corde Terra Senior has received awards including the 2009 Redevelopment/Reuse project of the Year in the Silicon Valley Business Journal's Structures Award, and a 2010 National Award of Excellence from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

Corde Terra Senior was made possible by a combination of several financing sources, including a long-term project-based Section 8 contract, private equity derived from an award of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), commercial bank loans, local redevelopment tax-increment funds from San José, a long-term ground lease from the County of Santa Clara, and tax-exempt bond loan proceeds from an issuance by the City of San José. Without any one of these sources, these opportunities for Paul Hager – an extremely low-income senior – would not have been possible.