

come to represent hope and independence for our neighbors with disabilities and low incomes. Jimmy and his story have created a legacy which allows all of us an opportunity to demonstrate our gratitude for our lives.

We are grateful to Mabel Rush and those who worked with her to lead the groundbreaking work of creating what has become Rush Homes. We're certain of three things: Their goal was to provide the best living opportunities for their children and the children of others; they didn't have any way of knowing how their work would impact the community and the lives of so many over the next quarter century; and they would be (and are) thrilled to see how Rush Homes has evolved.

Mabel Rush and her son Jimmy are no longer physically with us, but their legacy lives on. We are honored to carry on the work that began so long ago with the commitment and dedication to mission about which she cared so deeply. Jimmy's story, our founding story, will always be relevant and we celebrate his life and legacy as we move to new places because of Jimmy.

Jimmy and his family have inspired generosity and transformed the way our community looks at affordable housing for people with disabilities. He and his small group of thoughtful, dedicated people have changed the world.

If you'd like to make a gift to honor the memory and legacy of Jimmy and his mother, please visit our website at www.rushhomes.org, or use the enclosed envelope.



Welcome!

We've welcomed **Hannah Yarosh** as our new Operations Support Coordinator. Hannah moved from Tennessee in June. They worked at Interfaith Outreach Association with emergency assistance and are excited to continue serving the Lynchburg community with long-term housing solutions. In their free time, they enjoy hiking with their dog, crocheting and trying new recipes. We're glad to have them and invite you to stop by and meet Hannah soon.



connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF RUSH HOMES • SPRING 2023



Looking to the Future

Never doubt that a thoughtful, dedicated group of people can change the world; indeed, that is all that ever has.

—Margaret Mead

Most of us are familiar with this quote attributed to the great anthropologist, Margaret Mead. While there is some question as to whether the attribution is correct, there is no question that the sentiment resonates with and inspires many. The founding board of The Mabel W. Rush Foundation, later to become Rush Homes, was no exception. A copy of the quote can be found in the minutes of an early board meeting of The Mabel W. Rush Foundation board. **THEY** were the thoughtful, dedicated group of people who changed the world for Jimmy Rush.

We are mourning the death of Jimmy Rush who passed away in December, 2022. He is the reason Rush Homes exists—the reason 99 and soon to be 131 families and individuals with disabilities have a place to live that meets their needs. It all started with Jimmy.

Jimmy was born an only child to The Reverend James and Mabel Rush. Soon after birth it became apparent that they and their beautiful baby were to face many challenges if Jimmy was to have a life of happiness.

With the family's love and the best in educational and treatment opportunities, Jimmy thrived.

In 1982, at age twenty-five, Jimmy was admitted to Central Virginia Training Center. As his parents had aged and he became an adult in size, he was physically more than they could manage. His anxiety and behaviors increased at the institution and his health declined significantly as well due to the living conditions (dormitory style with no privacy). Also contributing to his decline was the fact he was housed with



individuals who were less functioning and non-verbal. His situation worsened when his father died. Eventually, Jimmy was moved to a vacant ward where he could live alone under twenty-four hour supervision, with services provided at great cost.

That was the situation that led Mabel Rush to house Jimmy in an apartment with Larry, a friend who had also been at CVTC, as she began looking for a better way. Jimmy immediately began to thrive in a home-like environment. With the heart and determination of a mother who wanted happiness for her child, Mabel gathered a group of parents whose children had challenges such as Jimmy's to research and study the possibilities. In 1996, with the help of Lynchburg Covenant Fellowship, they purchased a home for Jimmy. By this time, Mabel's health had declined and she was in the hospital, gravely ill. Pictures of Jimmy smiling and laughing in his new home were taken to Mabel. Although she could barely communicate, she understood that Jimmy would be safe and happy. She died two days later.

Jimmy's story is significant. And it isn't just his. Jimmy has

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In Memoriam

Since the publication of our last issue of *connection*, Rush Homes has mourned the passing of **Ray Dyke**.



Many of you might have known Ray, or "Sugar Ray" as he liked to be called. Ray was a member of the Rush Homes family for many years. He was well known for his love of ani-

mals and he enjoyed nothing more than sharing his vast knowledge of snakes, bearded dragons, iguanas, and the like with everyone. Ray was never without a kind and encouraging word. He was a proud supporter of Rush Homes and generously volunteered his time to speak on behalf of our mission. We are better for having known him.

Director's Corner

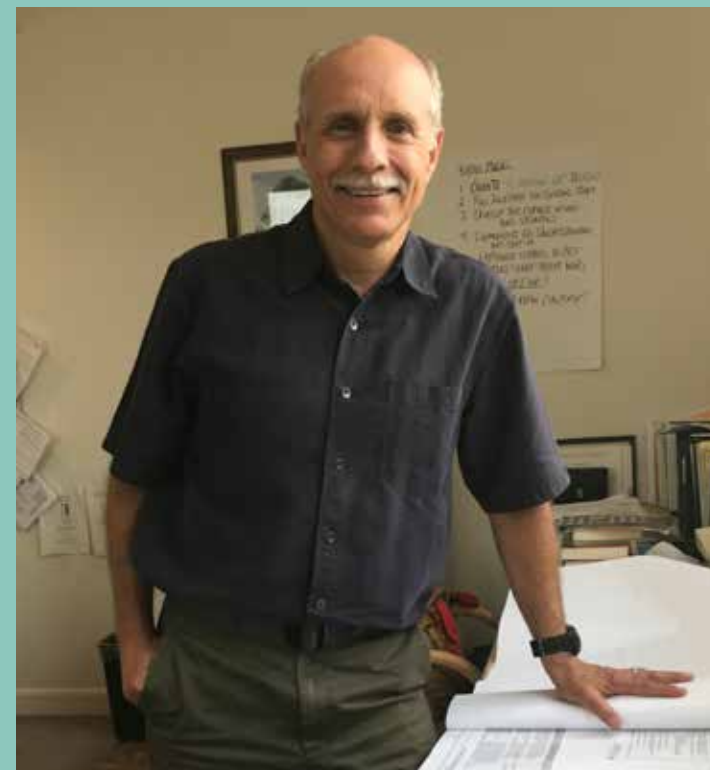
"I'm going on an adventure."

—Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien

Over eighteen years ago, I began an adventure with Rush Homes. At the end of March, I will leave Rush Homes as Executive Director to start a new adventure—retirement, plus the possibility of consulting work.

Eight years prior to my arrival, a dedicated, committed group of volunteers and stakeholders, many the family members of persons with disabilities, created an adventurous vision, the **Mabel Rush Housing Foundation**. Without an endowment or founding contribution, the group motivation was their guiding concern, "What will happen to our loved ones?" When I arrived in late 2004, **Rush Lifetime Homes** was providing homes for twelve tenant families which included the sons and daughters of some of those founding members. Out of seemingly nothing and nowhere, a concept born of love came to life, a testament to the vision and tenacity of the early community that has become **Rush Homes**.

Rush Homes today manages 99 apartments and houses, all developed because we wanted to insure we meet the specific needs of people with a wide range of disabilities. We also have 31 units under construction and another eight in the planning stage. In affordable housing development work, we often casually refer to apartments and houses as "units." The tenant families who live in them call them **homes**, and that's what we do—build and support homes.



This growth did not happen by magic. It took hard work carried out by dedicated staff. When I arrived there were five of us. Now there are eight (soon to be nine) skilled, dedicated staff. Because of our hard work together, we gained increased support of housing funders and organization contributors. We prioritized residential support for tenant families before residential support was cool. We successfully added three multifamily, fully accessible developments. Rush Homes continues to seek new housing opportunities because there simply isn't enough affordable housing for anyone with low income, much less families with disabilities. We are dedicated to easing, reducing, and eliminating the immense housing need for families with disabilities. Everyone deserves the dignity, stability, and opportunity that comes with quality housing that is affordable and accessible.

So many people have offered their time, talent, and treasure to what I call, the "community of Rush Homes." The community includes our tenant families, individual contributors, housing funders, granting organizations, our volunteers who behind the scenes serve Rush Homes so faithfully, and our steadfast business partners. I needed all of you to make Rush Homes happen, and I thank you. Of special importance to me are the many Rush Home Board members who made my work here possible. Lastly, I salute all of the staff, current and past, who are the true heroes of Rush Homes. You know who you are; I can see your faces. My gratitude for your service is endless.

I've learned that relationships and commitment blended with vision, planning, and persistence (a lot of persistence) lead to vastly improved lives of families with disabilities who have almost no housing alternatives. When I think of the privilege Rush Homes gave me to offer service in the simple form of decent, affordable housing for families who have often experienced the ruts and washouts of life's road, I feel deeply honored.

At the time of this writing, the Board Succession Planning Committee is interviewing final candidates for the next Executive Director. I am certain that Rush Homes will advance the vision of its founders, and increase the number of families served. I can't wait to learn of the coming new successes.

In leaving, I know I can count on your increased support of Rush Homes. Your support is the catalyst for the successes, for positive change in the lives that enrich our entire community.

I will take away far more than I have given. The adventure continues....

With gratitude,

Rush Homes Staff Attends the Governor's Housing Conference

In November, Rush Homes' Executive Director, **Jeff Smith**, Residential Support Coordinator, **Morgan Holt**, and Housing Development Specialist, **Leslie Loucks** attended the Virginia Governor's Housing Conference in Arlington. There, staff had the opportunity to network with government housing program representatives, affordable housing developers, and service providers from around the state to share experiences and learn about programs and partnerships that are effectively working to meet Virginia's affordable housing need. Staff also attended workshops and trainings to gain new ideas to further the ways in which we serve our tenants and community. Governor Youngkin offered closing remarks in which he addressed the importance of affordable housing for economic development. Despite Rush Homes' small but

expanding size relative to other housing developers and our unique mission to meet the housing needs of individuals with disabilities and low incomes, the high regard expressed by numerous state partners made clear the outsized influence of our work as a model for other organizations throughout the Commonwealth. Our staff returned with reaffirmed commitment and fresh approaches to serving our mission in Central Virginia.



In The Know: Leslie Loucks & Florida Terrace

Florida Terrace, our current development project, is well underway and we look forward to welcoming 31 new families to Rush Homes upon construction completion later this year. I have had the privilege of working on Florida Terrace as my first Rush Homes project. I began working with Rush Homes in August of 2020 and joined the team full-time as the Housing Development Specialist in January of 2022. My role as Housing Development Specialist encompasses identifying potential new projects, locating properties, securing funding, and seeing projects through the construction process in furtherance of our mission.

I have a bachelor's degree in Political Science from North Carolina State University and a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to moving to Virginia in 2008 with my husband and two daughters, I practiced law in North Carolina with a concentration in litigating construction cases. For the past fourteen years, I have had the pleasure of working with many community organizations and schools in our area. I am thrilled to now apply my background to working with housing partners in Lynchburg and across the commonwealth in order to develop much needed affordable and accessible housing. The last two years presented a number of challenges for housing development. The pandemic and rapidly escalating construction and material costs required diligence, creative problem-solving, and collaboration with multiple housing partners in order to bring Florida Terrace to its August, 2022 ground-breaking. Being able to meaningfully serve our community as part of the Rush Homes team is a privilege, and I look forward to serving our mission and our tenants for many years to come.



Leslie Loucks
Rush Homes' Housing
Development Specialist

Donor Advised Funds

A donor-advised fund (DAF) is a centralized charitable account. It allows individuals, families and businesses to make tax-deductible charitable donations to a charity like Rush Homes. If you already have a DAF, simply request a grant distribution through your DAF sponsor.

Be sure to use Rush Homes' Tax Id 31-1519694.

Need more information? Call us at 434-455-2120.

Please consider donating today using your credit card, stock, or your DAF.



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*Deceased

Rush Homes makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of these listings.

If you are not listed correctly, or as you would prefer, please contact us at 434-455-2120 or email info@rushhomes.org. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

A Word From a Community Partner...

*Rush Homes is proud to offer our services to community partners as we work to create the best possible affordable and accessible housing opportunities for our neighbors with disabilities and low incomes. We offer thanks to **Alison Hardy of Miriam's House** for sharing the story of her work with a woman who became a Rush Homes resident in 2022.*

Affordable housing in today's rental market is scarce. Not only that, but many affordable options lack adequate safety and cleanliness. This isn't the case with Rush Homes! Rush Homes provides affordable and accessible housing with **dignity**. Rush Homes has partnered with the Central Virginia Continuum of Care and Miriam's House, allowing us to move men and women who are unsheltered directly from the street into a home. When one of our clients can move into a Rush unit, I know it's more than a roof over their head; they will have a beautiful space that is well maintained and where they will be accepted.

Last spring, I met Hannah* who was living outside after being evicted from her home. Hannah was chronically homeless. She lived on a fixed income and had several evictions on her records, which meant many landlords were unwilling to rent to her. After several months of searching, a unit with Rush Homes opened up and Hannah moved into her new home in August 2022. She now has a home where she can feel safe and work on putting the pieces back together in her life. Her apartment has a wooded backyard where her cat, Teddy Bear, can roll around in the grass and chase bugs. In November, Hannah was able to host her family for Thanksgiving! Now that she is housed she is working on some of her long-term goals like home ownership and volunteering in her community. As a mother herself, Hannah was inspired by Mabel Rush and hopes to give back to her community in a meaningful way like Mabel.

I am forever grateful for Rush Homes and their commitment to opening doors and removing barriers to affordable housing!

**For the sake of privacy, we've changed the resident's name for the purpose of this article.*