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One of the main goals when managing a MHP should be creating a community where residents feel taken care of and can form meaningful neighborhood relationships. Hames Homes Communities initiatives to implement a Food Pantry and Community Garden are perfect examples of how important and rewarding these efforts can be --and it's doable with the help of local non-profit partnerships and dedicated staff members.

The idea for an on-site food pantry at the Summit View Village came after the 2020 Derecho storm temporarily left many residents without power, phone service, or food. Both this natural disaster and the COVID-19 pandemic showed the Hames family that their residents needed extra help. With the support of the non-profits HACAP (Hawkeye Area Community Action Program) and United We March Forward, Summit View turned part of their office space into a Food Pantry. Hames has relied on these non-profits for knowledge and resources to get the Food Pantry up and running and keep it operating successfully. Since then, Hames has opened the pantry each week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, to serve Summit View Village, Grand View Village, and

surrounding neighborhoods. Up to three thousand people are helped every month.

Kelly Hitchman, Hames Community Coordinator, enjoys times spent with residents each week as they visit the pantry. Modeling the top-notch customer service that the Hames family is known for, Kelly makes an effort to remember the names of residents who frequent the food pantry, greeting them with a smile each time they come, and ensure they feel no judgement for utilizing this community resource. There are no eligibility requirements for accessing the Food Pantry. All are welcome.

For this amazing project, Hames was recognized with the Small Business Partnership Award "Connect for a Cause" by the Corridor Business Journal.



Troy, Barbara, and Cynthia Hames

The Food Pantry stocked with all types of dry goods, store-bought foods, and personal care items, and also offers a selection of fresh produce grown on site at the Summit View Village Community Garden. Organized by Summit View resident Leo Broughton, this garden is a wonderful space for community volunteers to come together to support a worthy cause while spending time outside and contributing to the park landscape. Their plot is chemical-free and uses sustainable techniques such as no-till gardening and irrigation from rain barrel collected water. Operating mainly on volunteer help and donated tools, their impressive garden is a testament to what is possible with support from MHP managers. Both the Food Pantry and Community Garden show the benefits of encouraging community engagement, and how quickly residents and community staff help each other out in times of need.



In addition to these initiatives, the Hames family and their staff foster community connections and lend a helping hand in a multitude of other ways, including:

- Weekly, free senior breakfast on Friday mornings
- Providing space for the free lunch program organized through the school district during summer
- CPR training four times year for residents through the Health Department and American Heart Association
- Health Department clinic four times a year, open to anyone and including services like free STI testing
- Back-to-school backpack giveaway through the Westdale Area Neighborhood Association
- Kids candy day every Monday in the office
- Senior bingo once a month (with prize money donated by Hames)
- Hands-on training twice a year to show residents how to make repairs on their homes, such as installing skirting or checking heat tape
- Community tree planting event
- And so many more!



These efforts meet genuine community needs and empower a relationship of trust between residents and the Hames staff/ management, improving the safety and wellbeing of everyone.

To further this aim of community safety, Hames has also seen major success by integrating local police into their communities. They accomplish this by increasing police presence by hiring off-duty officers to patrol the park and inviting officers to community events like their Friday senior breakfasts. Community management says that this has made a huge difference, and residents feel that they can trust the police and the office staff when they have a problem. Issues like speeding in the park have decreased significantly.



When speaking to Kelly Hitchman, she credited her ability to dedicate herself to these projects to the generous support of the owners: “Barbara, Troy, and Cynthia Hames provide the funding and encouragement to sustain this daily work.”

It’s no surprise that Hames Homes management prioritizes the safety and quality of life of their residents-- they are following in the footsteps of their parents, manufactured housing industry legends Curt and Norma Hames who founded the MH business over 50 years ago. Curt and Norma Hames – The Homes People® consistently prioritized customer satisfaction, from matching buyers with the right home to protect them from Iowa winters, to maintaining safe, attractive neighborhoods. The Hames family has always seen the need for affordable housing in society, and met that need with quality, highly regarded manufactured homes in well-managed communities.

While the Hames family is truly going ‘above and beyond’ to foster this type of enrichment, it can be a reality for any MHP, on a small or large scale. Projects like the Food Pantry and Community Garden are beneficial in the improvement of community health and wellbeing, the longevity of the community, and resident retention levels. Troy Hames, VP and General Manager of Hames Homes says, “We’ve seen an overwhelming positive response from residents. We regularly receive thank-you notes and in-person gratitude for these unique benefits.” Barbara Hames-Bryant, Hames Homes President adds, “Not only are we helping our residents, the public has taken notice of our outreach and we’ve received positive press for our company and for manufactured housing.”

As for Kelly’s advice to other parks who would like to start a food pantry, garden, or similar project, “The key to success is listening to the residents and identifying their needs.” She recommends setting up a suggestion box in the park office and developing rapport with residents so they feel comfortable coming to you when facing a problem or needing support.

2023 UPDATED MHP RENT SURVEYS:

Want access to up-to-date rent information for mobile home parks in your area? Contact me to see the 2023 rent surveys for Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Iowa City, and Davenport.

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SAVE THE DATE:

2023 MHI Annual Meeting

10/2-4/2023

Palm Springs, CA

Learn more and register: <https://www.manufacturedhousing.org/annual-meeting-registration/>

Wisconsin Housing Alliance Annual Conference

11/8-9/2023

Wisconsin Dells, WI

Learn more and register: <https://housingalliance.us/events-education/calendar/#id=168&cid=1202&wid=901>

Nebraska MHA Convention 2023

10/25-26/2023

Omaha East/ Council Bluffs

Learn more and register: <https://nemanufacturedhomes.com/wp-content/uploads/NMHA-2023-Convention-Flyer-V2-Frank.pdf>

2023 MHI NCC Fall Leadership Forum

11/1-3/2023

Chicago, IL

Learn more and register: <https://www.manufacturedhousing.org/ncc/>

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I am always happy to do a FREE, NO OBLIGATION, Real Estate Review for your park(s). You ought to know today's market value of your real estate investments.

If this is something you would like, simply give me a call at 319-378-6786, email me at joannestevens@iowarealty.com, or visit <http://joannemstevens.com/>

Joanne Stevens is a specialist in listing and selling mobile home parks & manufactured housing communities throughout the U.S. With her 20 plus years of experience in developing, zoning, owning, retailing, managing, turning around and brokering parks, she can maximize your sale price.

Past Newsletters, Park Sale Comparables, & so much more, are available on my website:

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