

Sheltering Tree is consumer controlled apartments for adults with developmental disabilities that has amenities that are attractive to them. And so adult, any adult age 19 or above that has a diagnosis of developmental disability can apply to live in a Sheltering Tree apartment. They are safe, affordable, community centered and consumer controlled. Well, what we do is provide the opportunity for housing. So all of our apartments are full market value. So in the apartment units, the tenant has a full kitchen, full living room, nice, large bedroom, a large bathroom. All of them are designed to age in place. So if any of our tenants should at any time need any kind of assisted devices, those can be easily accommodated in their apartment units. Our accommodations that we offer, or excuse me, not accommodations, our amenities that we offer are things such as an activities program where our adults can choose to participate in a variety of things from gardening to, you know, hitting golf balls to going to events and activities around town, concerts, sporting events. We have partnerships with other local organizations such as YArts where local artists come in and work on a variety of different art related activities, painting, clay, floral design, dance, music, other things in that nature. Just a wide variety of activity opportunities. Sometimes they're things like Thirsty Thursdays, which allow for our tenants to have a reason to gather. And really that's really important. That's the main piece of our activities calendars. Yes, the enrichment piece, but also the providing opportunities for connections and belonging. We know that loneliness can be as significant of a harm as smoking, heart disease. And so we want to make sure that our tenants have the opportunity to belong, to have a place where they find other folks they can connect with and have meaningful relationships. Well, I am a mother of an adult who is 27 who has Down syndrome. And I've worked in the disability field for many, many years. And so I previously worked in an organization that provided programming for adults with developmental disabilities. I did parent education and training, very involved with a lot of support groups as well. And so when the opportunity came up to expand what Sheltering True is doing, I was approached and we really, I really wanted to jump in. Our founder is a visionary. She worked for HUD and her husband was a real estate attorney. So they had the knowledge in the background to come up with this concept of living independently, but not alone. And how do we make this something that it's affordable, that our tenants can actually have a life doing. And so they looked at the possibilities that they knew from their work and came up with a concept. So our first location was built about almost nine years ago in Bellevue. And we had 10 apartment units, we have 10 apartment units at that location. And the organization started to expand to our second location, which is in Benson, that has 22 units available for our tenants with developmental disabilities. All locations have TAs who function similar to a college dorm RA. They're there to help mitigate any type of maintenance requests between the property management and the tenants. They're there to make sure that the building is safe. They make sure that no one's coming into the building that doesn't have a purpose to be there. And then they also facilitate community activities, communication and connections as well within the community space. And so when the organization started to grow and more families started to hear about this wonderful opportunity, and it's really something that a lot of folks are looking for, and that's because so many of our adults or people with developmental disabilities are now seen as people with potential. And so they're being educated to their full potential. They're exiting the high schools with the ability to be deployed. And so they are also looking for opportunities to live independently. And so the organization started to grow and it was at that time that it moved from a very grassroots effort to a more formal nonprofit organization. And so at that point, I just looked at it as an area of need. We know across the country, there's a significant crisis in housing, affordable housing for adults with developmental disabilities. And so it really spoke to my passions. And so that's what drew me to Sheltering Tree. And since then we have, we're almost complete on construction on our third location in which we'll have 44 units available. And we have begun the process for our fourth location. They'll have an additional 44 units. You bet. So there's lots of things. I could speak to the

generosity of the Omaha Metro area and the philanthropic community who we couldn't do this without them. There's so many wonderful partner agencies that we're able to partner with, the families that help support. But the most rewarding part is seeing our tenants have, create and stay in and maintain those meaningful connections. The one thing we know is that when people with developmental disabilities exit the school system, it's often referred to as falling off the cliff. And that's for several reasons. But one of the main things is, is they're very isolated at that point. And they tend to live a life that's very parent centric. And I'm sure you as being a young adult really love your parents dearly, but don't want to go everywhere with them, be with them constantly. And you really wanna expand your relationships and your connections to folks other than just your parents. And so most of our tenants have that desire. So the thing that is really the most rewarding is seeing our tenants thrive, seeing them rise to the level of expectation, seeing them explore other opportunities where they can be independent and gaining confidence and really just overall very happy with their lives. They have their own space, they have that autonomy, they have meaningful connections and relationships and really seeing them just very content and happy and fulfilled. You know, in our tech world, I would tell you to start off with our website. We've just updated it recently, so it's got some really great information. There, you can find an apartment tour. You can see one of our tenants providing a tour of her apartment so you can see what the units look like. It does have a list of the amenities that we offer, shares a little bit more about the concept of living independently, but not alone. And you can get a lot of information, hopefully from our website. But we also offer open houses. So many people wanna be onsite and see things. And we try not to be disrupted within people's homes. So we don't take folks on random tours, you know, on a, I don't know, a random Tuesday on the week. We typically ask folks to wait until we have an open house. And we generally have our open houses. We have one during our Founders Week in June, and we always have one around the holidays. This year with our Shadow Lake location opening up by the end of the summer, which is quickly approaching, we'll likely have a grand opening or a large open house there sometime in the fall. And so that's when we encourage folks to stop by. We do advertise that on social media. And anyone that wants to visit our website can get on our mailing list, where we update information for open houses and also just some of the happenings and goings-on at Shell Shrinktree, the idea. And it really does sometimes take stepping into our building to see just really how the having that agency over your life, being able to make your own decisions, having that dignity of risk, being able to learn things on your own, make mistakes that you always learn great lessons from, just really seeing how that impacts the tenants that we serve. It's just something that's hard to put into words. And so, you know, I hope folks are able to stop by when we have open houses so they can experience that as well. But I do believe that this is a really wonderful approach to supported independence. In terms of having agency over your lives, having choices, not in, do we need help to do some things? Because all of us, regardless of our skill levels or our abilities, need help with something. And so really someone needing some assistance for activities of daily living or assistance to budget, we don't consider that a lack of independence. Really independence is being able to have those choices and really have that agency over your lives. And so that's something that we put in the forefront of all we do.