

# NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

**Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015**

Visit [ncsha.org/awards](http://ncsha.org/awards) to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

**Instructions:** Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact Matt Cunningham at [mcunningham@ncsha.org](mailto:mcunningham@ncsha.org) or 202-624-5424.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

**Entry Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HFA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission Contact:** (Must be HFA Staff Member) \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

\_\_\_\_\_

Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

**HFA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Entry Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.**

<b>Communications</b>	<b>Homeownership</b>	<b>Legislative Advocacy</b>	<b>Management Innovation</b>
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
<b>Rental Housing</b>	<b>Special Needs Housing</b>	<b>Special Achievement</b>	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

**NCSHA Annual Awards of Excellence Nomination**  
**Special Needs Housing: Combating Homelessness**  
*Collaboration Encouraged in QAP Leads to Housing for Homeless Vets*

**Overview**

*“I relocated to Tuscaloosa from northern California after being homeless. I felt desperate and saw no future. Living at Valor Grove has lifted a tremendous weight off of my shoulders. The first time I stepped into my apartment I cried like a baby. I love the peace and quiet, living around other veterans, in a place that I can call my own. This is the first time since returning from Vietnam that I feel honored by my country.” – Vietnam War & Army Veteran*

The selection criteria outlined in Alabama Housing Finance Authority’s Housing Credit Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) encompasses a host of factors that enables AHFA to rank projects competing for Housing Credits.

Over the years, AHFA has placed an emphasis on collaboration. AHFA’s QAP encourages projects that involve multiple collaborators with affordable housing experience and interest, as well as encouraging projects that use additional assistance through federal, state, or local subsidies. AHFA believes these two criteria truly create innovative, successful, and affordable multifamily housing.

Perhaps no other multifamily development in Alabama better fulfills these two criteria than the collaborations that created Valor Grove.

**About Valor Grove**

*“They come to Valor Grove to transition, to get health care they need at the medical center, get back on their feet and whatever they need. We help them with clothing, get them ready for job interviews, help them with résumés, we work with them to get VA benefits and more.”*  
– Tuscaloosa VA Public Affairs Officer Damon Stevenson

Valor Grove, the first development of its kind in the nation, opened in October 2014 on the campus of the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center (TVAMC). The \$11 million development offers affordable housing for homeless veterans who pay rent based on income while they transition back into their communities.

Valor Grove is a 60,000-square-foot, 50-unit, 83-bed development with 25 single units and 25 units with a mix of two and three bedrooms. The development was built using a combination of an existing building and a new three-story building. Although classified as “transitional” housing, residents will likely stay at Valor Grove long term while they receive the services they need to rejoin their communities.

**Why the initiative is meritorious**

*“Before the HUD VASH program, I was flopping house to house, state to state, jail to jail. Since I’ve been in the program, I don’t flop anymore. I haven’t been to jail anymore.”*  
– Alvin Boyd, Marine veteran

**Innovative:** There are two major ways the Valor Grove development is innovative. First, the funding structure, to the best of our knowledge, is the only one of its kind in the country. The combination of a capital contribution from the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) for the renovation of an existing building, LIHTC equity, a City of Tuscaloosa HOME grant, construction and permanent financing by Bank Independent, and equity from both state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits is truly unique. In addition, it was fully subsidized with project-based HUD VASH rental assistance vouchers.

Second, a host of social services are provided on site to veterans living at Valor Grove. Through the VA and social service partners, veterans living at Valor Grove have access to a host of social services on site to help them rejoin their communities. Those services include health care, job readiness training, counseling services and money management training, with parenting and couples classes coming soon.

**Replicable:** According to the VA, approximately 25 VA campuses across the nation will eventually have developments like Valor Grove. Other HFAs across the country can replicate this initiative by placing an emphasis on collaboration and multiple funding sources in their QAP plans.

**Respond to an important state housing need:** Tuscaloosa VA Public Affairs Officer Damon Stevenson said, “Veteran housing is definitely an issue in Tuscaloosa County and surrounding counties...” Research and studies back up that statement for the entire state of Alabama and nation as a whole. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, veterans account for about 23 percent of homeless people in America. A HUD study showed that on a single night in January 2013, there were more than 57,000 homeless veterans. In Alabama alone, that number was over 500.

Among the six primary causes of homelessness among veterans according to a study by Veterans, Inc. are a lack of income due to limited education and lack of transferable skills from military to civilian life, and a lack of services. These are some of the reasons ending veteran homelessness is a primary goal for the VA. Veterans have been trained to be strong, independent survivalists, and many times don’t want to be seen as weak by asking for help. Valor Grove not only provides sorely needed housing for homeless veterans, but also vital social services to help veterans transition back into their communities.

**Demonstrate measurable benefits:** Valor Grove provides a host of benefits to both residents and the community. Instead of homeless veterans bouncing around to temporary or emergency shelters, Valor Grove administers stable housing and supportive, ongoing care to break the cycle of homelessness.

Below are a few testimonials from residents at Valor Grove:

“When I came to Tuscaloosa I felt hopeless with nowhere to go, nowhere that I was able to lay my head and call my own. This was a blessing from the Lord above. I am overwhelmingly grateful for a chance at a brand new life. My whole outlook on life is very positive. Living here at Valor Grove is probably the most rewarding and fulfilling thing that has happened to me in my entire life.” – *Air Force veteran*

“It’s beautiful. I’ve prayed about this a long time...It’s an answer to a prayer for me.” – *Navy veteran*

**Provides benefits that outweigh costs:** There is no way to put a monetary figure on the benefits of providing housing to formerly homeless veterans, but the testimonials above demonstrate the benefits to the recipients. In addition, Valor Grove aides veterans in returning to employment and becoming more productive members of their communities.

**Effectively employs partnerships:** The long list of collaborators on this initiative includes the VA, HUD, Department of the Interior, Hollyhand Realty, MAP Development, Alabama Housing Finance Authority, Tuscaloosa Housing Authority, RHA Housing, City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama Multifamily Loan Consortium, Bank Independent, Volunteers of America Southeast, Tuscaloosa's One Place, and High Socks for Hope.

After receiving a free, private, long-term "enhanced use" land lease, Hollyhand Realty and MAP Development formed a nonprofit, Valor Grove GP, Inc., to develop the project. After receiving a \$4 million grant from the VA and a \$210,000 grant from the city of Tuscaloosa as well as state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, they approached AHFA for funds to help make the development a reality. Taking into account the number of collaborators involved and the innovativeness of the funding structure and delivery of social services, AHFA awarded the project more than \$530,000 in LIHTC funds.

While securing construction costs were a major factor in making a development like Valor Grove a reality, there were also substantial costs associated with furnishing such a development. Luckily, High Socks for Hope (the David and Erin Robertson Foundation) stepped in to provide all new home furnishings for almost every unit. David is from Birmingham, Alabama, and is a pitcher with the Chicago White Sox. He and his wife heard about Valor Grove in September 2014, but had no money budgeted for the project. Additionally, David was in the midst of transitioning from the New York Yankees to the White Sox, which made fundraising from their usual sources in the New York market difficult. However, three months later they had miraculously managed to fully furnish (bedding, linens, kitchen supplies, den/dining furniture) almost all 50 units.

Aside from the collaboration in funding and furnishing the Valor Grove development, a number of collaborations provide important social services for the veterans living at Valor Grove. Obviously, the VA is heavily involved in assisting the tenants with things like healthcare, applying for VA benefits, finding clothing, etc. In addition, Volunteers of America Southeast and a local nonprofit called Tuscaloosa's One Place provide unique services to help veterans transition back into their communities. Both organizations are providing case management services to the veterans, as well as their family members, on-site several times per week. Veterans are obtaining career readiness skills as the organizations help them with setting up emails and writing/editing résumés, finding and securing training classes at community colleges, helping them prepare for interviews, and much more. In the future, the organizations hope to add couples and parenting classes to the list of services they are providing. Veterans and their family members need only walk downstairs to get these important services that will help them get their lives back on track.

As Scott McGee, developer and project manager with MAP Development, said, "The completion of this initiative is a testament to the functionality of a public-private partnership on the local, state, and national levels. One day when we look back at Valor Grove, I truly believe that we will realize that it grew from a dream into a vision into veterans housing, thanks to hard work from the development team, tireless effort from state and federal agencies, and a remarkable amount of divine guidance."

### **Conclusion**

AHFA is proud of its role in bringing Valor Grove to fruition. Its groundbreaking, construction and grand opening ceremony received substantial statewide media attention, demonstrating what every collaborator involved in this initiative already knew – that Valor Grove is a unique, innovative development helping to put an end to veteran homelessness in Alabama.

5/29/2015

www.tuscaloosaneews.com/article/20141110/NEWS/141119961?template=printpicart



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## Homeless veterans have place to stay with opening of Valor Grove complex

By Angel Coker

Staff Writer

Published: Monday, November 10, 2014 at 11:00 p.m.

Homeless veterans in Tuscaloosa now have a home instead of temporary or emergency living arrangements.

Valor Grove, an \$11 million, 50-unit apartment complex for homeless veterans, held its grand opening Monday at the Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center campus.

Homeless veterans can live in the complex and pay rent based on their income until they are able to support themselves in the community.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program set up Valor Grove.

"Before the HUD VASH program, I was flopping house to house, state to state, jail to jail," said Alvin Boyd, a Marine veteran and Valor Grove resident. "Since I've been in the program, I don't flop anymore. I haven't been to jail anymore."

Tuscaloosa VA Public Affairs Officer Lamon Stevenson said the complex is meant to house veterans while they transition into civilian life after the military. He said Boyd and other residents will be housed at the complex to help them get back into the workforce and rejoin the community.

"They come (to Valor Grove) to transition, to get health care they need at the medical center, get back on their feet and whatever they need," he said. "We help them with clothing, get them ready for job interviews, help them with resumes, we work with them to get VA benefits and more."

The vision for Valor Grove — funded by HUD and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and private and public partners — began in 2009 when the Tuscaloosa VA offered Building No. 33 and a baseball field on the campus to private developers through an enhanced use lease agreement.

The agreement is part of a VA initiative to identify and revitalize unused VA land and buildings in support of the VA's goal to end veteran homelessness.

According to HUD's website, almost 50,000 veterans are homeless on any given night.

"Housing is something that is definitely an issue in Tuscaloosa County and surrounding counties," Stevenson said. "Between 60 and 70 percent of homeless people in America are veterans."

Approximately 25 VA campuses across the nation will eventually have apartment complexes like Valor Grove.



Staff photo | Michelle Lepianka Carter  
Maria Andrews, director of the Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center, speaks during the grand opening for Valor Grove at the VA center on Monday. Valor Grove is a 50-unit apartment complex for homeless veterans.

less-veterans Major league pitcher from ...

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# Major league pitcher from Tuscaloosa throwing relief to homeless veterans

Posted: Nov 20, 2014 10:25 PM CST  
Updated: Nov 27, 2014 10:48 PM CST

By Joshua Gauntt CONNECT

TUSCALOOSA, AL (WBRC) - A number of homeless veterans in Tuscaloosa now have places to finally call home thanks to a major league pitcher who is throwing some much needed relief their way.

New York Yankees relief pitcher and former University of Alabama standout David Robertson, his wife Erin, and their High Socks for Hope Foundation furnished 50 apartments at the Valor Grove apartment complex for homeless veterans at Tuscaloosa's VA Medical Center.

Navy Veteran Deborah Fehner has been waiting a long time for this day.

"It's beautiful," Fehner said as she walked inside her new apartment.

The Robertsons told FOX 6 giving back to veterans is the least they can do.

"For them to go and risk their lives and then come back need just a little help getting right back into the community. We want to be able to help them when we can," Robertson said.

"We've done a lot of things with different organizations, so giving back is something that we've always strived to do," Erin Robertson said.

Fehner said it's a blessing to finally have a place to call home.

"I've prayed about this a long time...It's an answer to a prayer for me," Fehner added.

The Robertsons High Socks for Hope Foundation was founded after the April 27, 2011 tornadoes. The foundation has helped furnish hundreds of homes in Alabama and around the country.

You can find more information on the foundation here: <http://www.highsocksforhope.com/>

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**VALOR  GROVE**  
**Grand Opening Agenda**

**Welcome**

Damon Stevenson, Public Affairs Officer

**Invocation**

Ronald Vicars, Chaplain

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Alvin Boyd, Marine Corps Veteran

**Acknowledgement & Remarks from  
Distinguished Guests**

Damon Stevenson

**Remarks**

Maria R. Andrews, Director

**Remarks**

Judy T. Finley  
Chief Nursing Officer, VA Southeast Network

**Remarks**

Scott McGee, Valor Grove Ltd.

**Remarks**

Alvin Boyd

**Ribbon Cutting**

Damon Stevenson

**Refreshments & Tours led by Staff**



### **Acknowledgements**

- ◆ MAP Development, LLC
- ◆ Herrington Architects
- ◆ Bailey Land Group
- ◆ Volunteers of America Southeast, Inc.
- ◆ RHA/Housing, Inc.
- ◆ Alabama Housing Finance Authority
- ◆ Community and Southern Bank
- ◆ Alabama Multifamily Loan Consortium
- ◆ High Socks for Hope, The David and Erin Robertson Foundation
- ◆ Doug Hollyhand Realty, Inc.
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**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**  
Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs Medical Center



**Alabama Housing Finance Authority**  
*Collaboration Encouraged in QAP Leads to Housing for Homeless Vets*



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**Alabama Housing Finance Authority**  
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Homeless Veterans Program | files.haz.raycommmedia.com - ...

**High Socks For Hope, Inc.**

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## HOMELESS VETERANS

High Socks has worked with Tuscaloosa Veterans Affairs to fully furnish all 50 transitional housing units at Valor Grove. The complex opened in November of 2014 and provides a safe place for veterans to live while transitioning from life in the military to civilian life. Additionally, High Socks has committed to furnish 50 more units in and around the Tuscaloosa, AL community for homeless veterans.



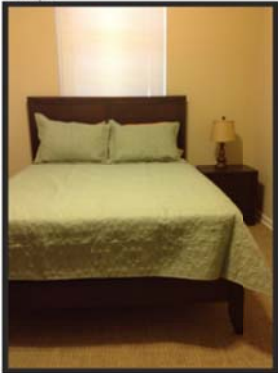
### Living Room

The living room furniture provided for each furnished apartment includes a sofa, chair, end tables, coffee table, throw pillows and lamps.



### Dining Room

The apartments are also furnished with a dining room table and chairs. We also try to add a personal touch to make the veterans feel more at home.



### Bedroom

Each bedroom includes a dresser or chest, side table, bed, mattress, lamp and whenever possible, all bedding.

