

Daniel Romm
daniel.romm@azhousing.gov
(602) 771-1008

Arizona Department of Housing
Special Needs Housing – Apache ASL Trails



Housing for Persons with Special Needs: Deaf Seniors – Apache ASL Trails

Housing for special needs populations requires multiple sources of funding for development, supportive services, and most likely rental assistance. Financial resources are shrinking and in some cases, public policy can be counterproductive. Fortunately, Arizona has some heroes who are willing to step up and tackle these tough issues on behalf of our state's growing special needs population.

Deafness can be a very isolating and lonely disability, especially for seniors that do not live in an area with an active deaf community. Recognizing this demand, Cardinal Capital Management, Inc., out of Wisconsin, partnered with the Arizona Deaf Senior Citizens Coalition to build the award winning Apache ASL Trails which caters to this often neglected population.

Apache ASL Trails is an active, state-of-the-art independent living community for deaf seniors 55 years of age and older. Located along the light rail in Tempe, Apache ASL Trails provides an affordable housing option for seniors at 40, 50, and 60 percent of the area median income for Maricopa County. For this project, Cardinal Capital Management, Inc. hired a well known deaf architect to assist in the designing of this barrier free living environment.

The community offers amenities such as strobe light smoke alarms, fire alarm signalers, DSL for videophones, annunciator light panels, loop system amplification for hearing aid users, and a text and video phone system in the lobby. Apache ASL Trails also features a fitness center and even a beauty salon. This 75 unit complex is currently home to 85 deaf and hard of hearing seniors.

Residents come together and participate in various activities from card games, movie watching parties, and educational lectures, while maintaining their independence, living in their own one or two bedroom apartments with fully equipped kitchens.

To truly understand how successful this project is, you have to talk to the residents. They will tell you that for most of their lives, they have lived in isolation, not being able to communicate with their neighbors. However, at Apache ASL Trails, they can talk to all of their neighbors because most are hearing impaired and know American Sign Language. They have a living environment specifically designed to meet all their needs, for function and safety, and can walk to our region's most effective public transportation system, the light rail.

Living in an apartment complex in a bad section of the West Valley of Phoenix, Kenneth Curtis found himself alone and isolated. When family members stopped visiting, Kenneth turned to alcohol to deal with his depression. Feeling trapped and helpless, Kenneth went looking for a new place to call home. While attending the DeafNation Expo in Las Vegas, Kenneth first

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discovered Apache ASL Trails. Kenneth moved into his new apartment at Apache ASL Trails in August 2011. He claims that moving into Apache ASL Trails has been a life changing experience. When asked to explain his favorite part of his new home, he says that's easy to answer, "all his new friends."

After her husband passed away, Rosemarie Prince was living in an apartment complex for deaf and hard of hearing seniors in Oregon. While Rosemarie found the general facilities to be nice, she felt as if her independence had been stripped away from her as she was often treated like a child by the staff.

Having lived in Arizona once before, she found out about Apache ASL Trails from a friend. After doing some careful research, Rosemarie made what she called, "a simple decision" to return back to Arizona. She moved into her new apartment the day the complex opened on July 15, 2011 and says that she never wants to move again.

When asked if there could be some improvements made to the community, Rosemarie says that she wouldn't change a thing, not even the color of the carpet. She enjoys playing cards with friends, telling jokes, and raves about the entire staff and all the helpful amenities. She says that everyone at Apache ASL Trails is always laughing and having a great time.

Partners for Apache ASL Trails included the Arizona Community Foundation, the City of Tempe, the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, JP Morgan Chase, the Arizona State Compensation Fund, the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and hard of Hearing, the Valley Center of the Deaf, WSM Architects, A-P Residential Southwest, and the Arizona Department of Housing. Funding for the project included money from the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program, Tax Credit Assistance Program Funds, and HOME Investment Partnership Program Funds.

In May, the Washington, D.C. based Affordable Tax Credit Coalition named Apache ASL Trails the winner of the 18th Annual Charles L. Edson Tax Credit Excellence Award for the best new special-needs housing development using tax credits. Arizona Department of Housing Director Michael Traylor was invited to Washington, DC by the Affordable Tax Credit Coalition on June 21st for the presentation of the award.

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Apache ASL Trails

Fully completed in January 2012, Apache ASL Trails is an active, state-of-the-art independent living community for seniors 55 years of age located close to everything in the East Valley. Built next to the light rail line, Apache sits at the heart of the Tempe - Mesa border.



Apache ASL Trails, Tempe, Arizona



Apache ASL Trails resident, Kenneth Curtis



Apache ASL Trails resident, Rosemarie Prince, with Cardinal Capital Management President, Erich Schwenker and Apache ASL Trails Property Manager, Linda Russell



Interior views of an Apache ASL apartment