



# Entry Form 2017 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

**Entry Deadline: Thursday, June 15, 2017, Midnight ET**

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).**

**Entry Title:** Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

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**Category:**

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**Subcategory:**

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**Entry Summary:** A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

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**HFA:**

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**HFA Staff Contact:**

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**Phone:**

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**Email:**

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**Visual Aids:**

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF?    Yes        No

**Payment:**

My HFA is mailing a check to NCSHA.  
My HFA is emailing the credit card authorization form to [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org).

## Overview

The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority's (IHCDA) mission is to provide housing opportunities, promote self-sufficiency and strengthen communities. To accomplish this we: (1) create and preserve housing for Indiana's vulnerable population, (2) enhance self-sufficiency initiatives in existing programs, (3) promote a value-driven culture of continuous improvement and (4) promote place-based initiatives that will allow Hoosiers opportunities to improve their quality of life. As we strive towards our mission and strategic objectives, it is imperative that we communicate these accomplishments. *Portraits of the Human Spirit: A Sense of Place* was an innovative, interactive approach which has been widely successful in telling the true story of affordable housing.

## Background

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is the country's most extensive – and proven – affordable housing program. The program, which was added to Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code in 1986, provides private owners and developers with an incentive to create and maintain affordable housing. Like most states, we found it imperative to demonstrate the effectiveness the tax credit program has had in over 30 years in Indiana.

As an industry, we do a great job of providing facts and figures related to the tax credit program. We can easily recite the number of units the program has created and what type of private investment it creates. However, for us to effectively communicate the importance of the tax credit program to a broader audience, it was imperative that we tell the story of affordable housing through the eyes of the resident.

So, in celebration of the 30-year anniversary of the LIHTC program, we sought to develop innovative strategies to tell these resident stories. From printed publications to audio and video interviews, we had a number of different mediums we considered using. However, it wasn't until our Executive Director Jacob Sipe met with Indiana photographer Tom Casalini did the direction of the project become clear to us.

Jacob was intrigued by the powerful black and white photography used by Tom Casalini. Tom has more than 40 years of experience as a master photographer in Zionsville, Indiana. His work focuses on the *individuality* of the people that he photographs. During his initial conversation with Tom, Jacob discussed the tax credit program but felt it was important for Tom to go into the project with only a basic understanding so that he could later form his own opinion about the program.

After their initial meeting, it was decided that Tom would travel to 18 affordable housing developments in Indiana – two in each of the 9 congressional districts. So in the summer of 2016, Tom traveled the state visiting each of these affordable housing developments. During these meetings, Tom felt it was imperative that he talk with the individuals and families prior to photographing them. In addition to photographing each individual and family in their unit, he used a voice recorder to capture an audio account of their story.

At the 2016 Indiana Housing Conference on August 25-26, Tom Casalini served as the keynote speaker. During his keynote speech he talked about the portrait series and the importance of affordable housing to a group of more than 500 individuals in the industry. His 18-portrait display, titled "*Portraits of the Human Spirit: A Sense of Place*" was on display in the lobby for all to see.

An important component of the portrait series is the Aursma app, which provides viewers with a more interactive experience. Once downloaded, users can scan the portrait with their phone and the individual pictured in the portrait will begin speaking (**see Exhibit D**).

## **Innovative**

Printed publications, infographics and videos have long been a staple of marketing and communications' departments for state housing finance agencies. These mediums, which to some extent can still be innovative, provide steady, measureable results for the intended audience(s). They also provide a convenient and efficient method to update various stakeholder groups.

However, in order for us to break through the over-proliferation of standard communications mediums, and introduce affordable housing to new audiences, we had to do something truly unique and memorable. To do this we needed to ensure a high level of interaction. The combination of 18, breathtaking black and white portraits that you could touch and see firsthand, and the interactive Aursma app, we struck a perfect balance of "low-tech, high-touch" while providing an immersive experience for all to enjoy.

## **Replicable**

One of the best elements of this portrait series is that it can be used both by other states and for other programs to demonstrate the true impact and success. This strategy truly puts a "face" or "faces" to the program which is a great supplement to facts, figures and return on investment. While we were fortunate enough to partner with a world-renowned photographer who both took the photos and produced high quality framed-portraits, this project can be done by partnering with a local photographer, state/local arts commission and others in the art field.

## **Reach Targeted Audiences**

In addition to these portraits being on display at the 2016 Indiana Housing Conference, and being viewed by hundreds in the affordable housing industry in Indiana, they have each traveled throughout the state to various events hosted by developers. Additionally, in partnership with the Indiana Arts Commission, the portrait series has become a traveling art exhibit at several art studios throughout Indiana.

By traveling to art studios, we are attracting a broader audience not typical of the affordable housing industry. By using art effectively we have been able to tell the story of affordable housing through the eyes of the tenant. The hope is that when individuals see these portraits they don't see the residents but themselves, or a family member. They also see the true meaning of affordable housing and how (with stable housing and support services) allows individuals to get on or return to a path of self-sufficiency.

## **Achieve Measureable Results**

The portrait series has been out for almost a year and it continues to gain momentum. In addition to it being featured at the 2016 Indiana Housing Conference, at affordable housing developments and as part of a growing number of art shows throughout Indiana, it has received state and national attention. At the state level, as part of Indiana's Bicentennial Celebration in 2016, *Portraits of the Human: A Sense of Place* was named a [Bicentennial Legacy Project](#) by the Bicentennial Commission.

The portrait series was featured on the cover of the March 2017 *Tax Credit Advisor* magazine (**see Exhibit E**).

When the portraits are not traveling as part of an exhibit, they are displayed at the IHCDA office in Indianapolis. This allows for both staff and visitors to our office to experience the exhibit and be proud of the work our agency is doing to provide affordable housing.

### **Provide Benefits that Outweigh Costs**

As stated previously, while as an industry we do a great job of sharing facts, figures and return on investment, we have struggled to find a way to communicate the effectiveness and importance of our programs to a broader audience (outside of legislators, partners and sub-grantees). So for us to have a world-renowned photographer visit 18 affordable housing developments in Indiana and speak to current residents that have benefited from the LIHTC program, it was a true win for us. Having his unique vantage point and artistic ability used to capture the experience and life-changing testimonials will benefit us for many years to come. While they were created for the 30-year anniversary of the LIHTC program, the black and white medium used allow them to be timeless.

### **Demonstrate Effective Use of Resources**

The total production cost of the 18 portraits was \$50,000. These portraits measure 34” by 34” and feature high quality frames and matting done by Tom Caslini. This investment also included Tom to attend and serve as the keynote speaker at the 2016 Indiana Housing Conference. A majority of this money came from sponsorship proceeds of the 2016 Indiana Housing Conference. Therefore, when you consider the relatively inexpensive cost to produce – and the source of the funding for the portrait series – you would be hard pressed to find a better way to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.

### **Achieve Strategic Objectives**

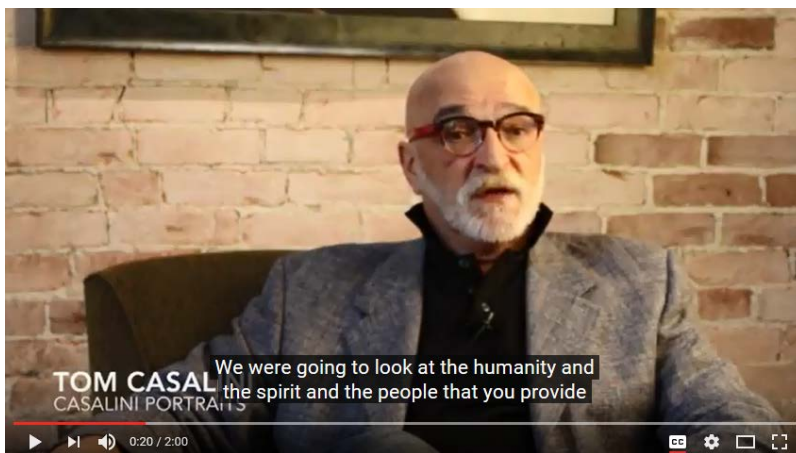
Our agency mission is, “To provide housing opportunities, promote self-sufficiency and strengthen communities.” What these 18 testimonials provide is a clear example of how – through the LIHTC program – we are providing housing opportunities and promoting self-sufficiency. The portrait series also has served as an excellent way to address the broad misconception about individuals living in subsidized housing. Ultimately, these portraits are exposing more and more people to what affordable housing looks like.



## Appendix B

### *Portraits of the Human Spirit: A Sense of Place video*

Click [here](#) to access the video.



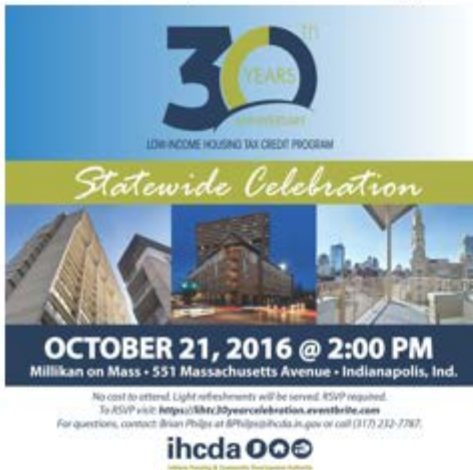
## Appendix C

### Photos of the *Portraits of the Human Spirit: A Sense of Place*

#### 2016 Indiana Housing Conference • JW Marriott • Indianapolis, Indiana • August 25-26, 2017



#### 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the LIHTC Program Event • The Barton Block • Indianapolis, Indiana • October 21, 2016



#### 2017 Fair Housing Symposium • Center for Visual & Performing Arts • Munster, Indiana • April 27, 2017

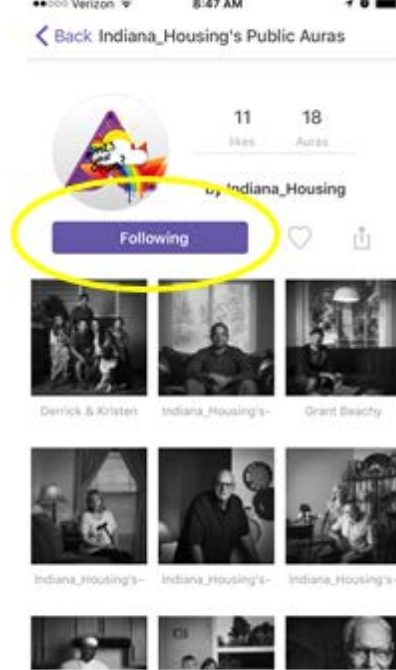


## Appendix D Aursma App

### Step 1: Download the app



### Step 2: Follow 'Indiana\_Housing's Public Auras'



### Step 3: Scan over the portrait



### Step 4: Audio of the individual(s) will begin playing





Appendix E

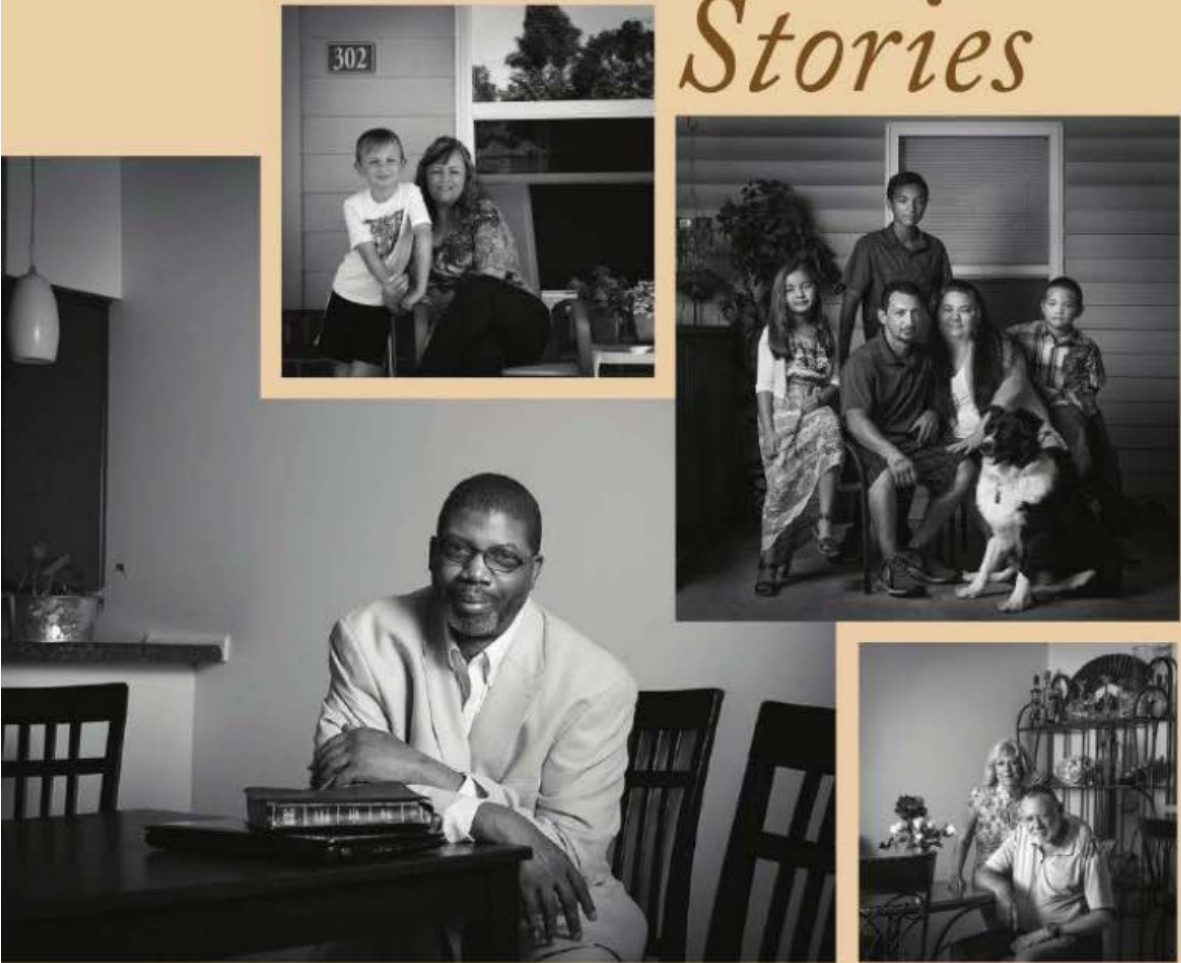
“Our Renters’ Stories” – cover story – March 2017 edition of *Tax Credit Advisor* magazine (subscription req.)

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## Our Renters' Stories



Photos by Tom Casalini

**TRANSITIONS:**  
How HUD adapts to changes  
Ben Carson's life lessons



## Our Renters' Stories

### Indiana Housing Authority's Portraits of the Human Spirit

By Mark Olshaker

Each subsequent presidential administration brings a new and differing set of priorities. With the current one clearly focused on lowering taxes, building infrastructure, fighting terrorism and everything having to do with immigration, affordable housing is not likely to reach the top of the to-do list. Tax credits and housing subsidies are always vulnerable targets, so thoughtful leaders in the field are looking for ways to make the point that what is actually at the center of the industry is not facts and figures, but *people*.

"In this industry, we all struggle to tell our story," states Brad Meadows, marketing and communications director of the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCD). "We're into numbers. We can talk from a bureaucratic standpoint, give all the facts and figures, and explain that each dollar of tax credits will yield so much investment and equity benefit. But what we really need to do is show how housing intersects with jobs, health, roads, business, education and community development. How do we show the human element? How do we show that these are real people, representative of the state as a whole? How do we get you to relate it to yourself and your family?"

Meadows' own organization has figured out one way to do this, with a moving visual and audio exhibition entitled, "Portraits of the Human Spirit: A Sense of Place."

There is a long and proud history of social documentary photojournalism in the United States. In 1890, pioneering journalist and reformer Jacob Riis, himself a Danish immigrant, published his landmark book, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*, which graphically showed through photographs and text the appalling living conditions of the city's working poor. It aroused public awareness as no dry, factual report had and led to demands for bettering those conditions. Riis followed it up two years later with *Children of the Poor*,

another searing social document in book form.

During the Great Depression, Rexford Tugwell, head of the U.S. Farm Security Administration's Federal Emergency Relief Administration, enlisted some of the nation's most accomplished documentary photographers – including Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Carl Mydans, Gordon Parks and Arthur Rothstein – to capture the devastating hardships natural disaster and

economic collapse were wreaking on individual citizens. The aim, according to FSA Information Division's director Roy Stryker, was "introducing America to Americans." What the FSA photographs shared with Riis's earlier series was their ability to portray the poignant and ineffable dignity, sensitivity and even beauty of their subjects. Those images, raised to the level of art, are among the most celebrated in American photography and became the lasting visual heritage of that era.

#### A tradition in reverse

Early last year, Jacob "Jake" Sipe, IHCD's executive director, came up with an idea to follow that documentary photography tradition, but with the opposite purpose: to show not deplorable living

conditions, but the profound positive effect good quality affordable housing can have on people's lives. What the project became, according to Meadows, was "an exercise in empathy and a powerful display that gets the attention of everyone, particularly legislators."

IHCD's mission "is to help communities build upon their assets to create places with ready access to opportunities, goods and services. We also promote, finance, and support a broad range of housing solutions, from temporary shelters to homeownership. . . The activities that we finance help families become more stable, put down roots and climb the economic ladder. In turn, communities grow and prosper, broadening their tax base,

**But what we really need to do is show how housing intersects with jobs, health, roads, business, education and community development. How do we show the human element? How do we show that these are real people, representative of the state as a whole?**



Portraits of the Human Spirit by Tom Casalini.

creating new jobs and maximizing local resources.”

“Every year, the Indiana Affordable Housing Council [IAHC] holds a conference,” says Sipe, “and in 2016 we wanted to find a way to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of Low Income Housing Tax Credits [LIHTC].” In that time, the program has helped develop and preserve more than 50,000 affordable housing units in the state and generated an estimated \$2.22 billion in local income and \$5.64 billion in tax revenue.

“And I was also thinking, ‘Who can we get as a keynote speaker who can really get the point across that what we do is not ultimately about buildings, but about individual people?’

“I came across a series of portraits done of Medal of Honor recipients. What was interesting was that it was the first time I had seen these brave men photographed out of uniform and without their medals. It made you realize that these were average, everyday people who had done extraordinary things and it made them totally relatable. It turned out the photographer was a native Indianan named Tom Casalini, who still lives in the state. He published a book of those photographs entitled

*Ordinary Heroes*. And I found out he’d also done a series of ‘Indiana Artists’ and ‘Famous Hoosiers.’ His pictures were breathtaking, and I decided I had to get in touch with this guy.”

Through intermediaries, Sipe contacted Casalini, who agreed to meet with him. “I said, ‘Hey Tom, I’ve got this idea. What about doing a series of residents of affordable housing?’”

Sipe sat down with the photographer and explained affordable housing and building with tax credits. He said, “We’ve done a good deal sharing affordable housing

*Our Renters’ Stories*, continued on page 23



Our Renters' Stories, continued from page 21

through the built environment, but I want to make the point that it is not the housing, it's the people we want to see." When Casalini showed interest, Sipe continued, "Once you get into this, you'll see what I mean."

So with funding assistance from IAHC and the Indiana Community Development Authority, Casalini, Sipe and his staff conceived the specifics of the project. The photographer would travel to each of the state's nine congressional districts and choose two tax credit-backed affordable housing facilities in each district. In each facility, Casalini would talk to residents and then choose one to photograph and represent that building. He and his assistant would also record commentary from the portrayed subject, and an excerpt from that recording would become part of the exhibition.

Casalini chose black-and-white for his medium. "I've been doing black-and-white now for the past 20 years," he says. "I think the emotion is a little stronger in black-and-white. They become timeless in a sense that we don't have to worry about fashion, we don't have to worry about color. It takes away visual distraction."

"I had no idea what we were doing when we got into this," Sipe confesses. "But it has worked out so well. I told Tom I wanted folks to look happy in the portraits. He said, 'No, it's going to be real! I'm going to talk to the residents for as long as it takes [Each conversation ran from about 30 minutes to an hour], and when something clicks between that person and me, that's when I'll know it's time to take the picture.'

"And when you look at one of these portraits," Sipe adds, "it's like you're looking into a mirror."

"People have preconceived notions of affordable housing," notes Meadows. "We attempted to break that stereotype."

### Grace and dignity

The portraits represent an entire range of humanity, from young artists and single mothers, to veterans, widows, the disabled and the elderly. What they all have in common is that sense of grace and dignity so evident in the Riis and FSA photos, and what the oral commentaries add is an almost unbearably moving sense of gratitude for how affordable housing has improved their lives and let them become emotionally whole.

Among the commentaries:

#### Callie Teal of Millstone Pointe, Greencastle

a divorced mother with a son who had been living with a sister: "It's given us our own space and independence. We have wonderful neighbors. I wanted to stay in town, close to his school and my job."

#### Eric Grinstead of Lincoln Apartments, Indianapolis

a veteran who lost his truck-driving job when he was



diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, became homeless and contemplated suicide: "The turning point was asking God to get rid of my anger. I ended up

here. It's been a blessing to get back on my own. I lost everything, but now I'm gaining so much more. I enjoy the community."

#### Shayla Harrison of Hopewell Pointe, Fort Wayne

a single mother with a young son: "This was just a huge blessing. I wanted my son to be raised in a good environment. He's never played outside before or had a backyard. Here he has neighborhood friends, and kids can come over and play with him. It's just awesome to see. He sees his mom work hard and that work ethic is going to be built into him."



Our Renters' Stories, continued on page 25



Our Renters' Stories, continued from page 23

**Mary McClamrock of Village of Meric, Indianapolis** a young woman with developmental challenges: "I'd been living with my parents and the first day I was a little scared. Now I'm learning to do things on my own, like food and laundry. I'm making friends, and when I hang



out with friends, I have a smile on my face."

**Mary Acton of Stonecutters Place, Bedford** a woman who'd been widowed for 12 years: "I couldn't maintain my property. My son told me about [this place], where you have to be at least 65. I love it. I can maintain my independence, which is very important to me. In this building, we're like family. I'm a lot happier and a lot easier to get along with, I think."



**Linda Chris of Anderson Crossing, Valparaiso** an older woman living alone: "I didn't feel safe where I was before, and too far from the children, I love the people here, I love the office. I can talk to them about anything, good or bad. I love my neighbors."

The overwhelming impression one gets listening to these testimonials is how safe, comfortable affordable housing is integral to every other aspect of life. "It is so encouraging to hear these people are all very appreciative and grateful for these housing opportunities," Sipe comments.

When the "Portraits of the Human Spirit" project was completed and ready to be introduced at the IAHC conference, Sipe asked Casalini to be the keynote speaker. "Tell us how it influenced you and how it changed your perspective," I said to him. And he blew everyone away! These were more than just portraits. We showed what good government and what art can do. We showed real people who had had some bumps in the road and are now assets to the community."

Since the August 2016 conference, the portraits and commentaries have been experienced by many thousands at the Indiana Affordable Housing Association conference, the Midwest Housing Summit and other exhibitions, including prominent positioning in tax credit housing developments. They have a permanent home at IHCD's office building and plans are now underway for museum and art gallery shows. "We want to have a gallery show for six weeks in each of the congressional districts," says Sipe.

"People are starting to pay attention in ways they may not have before," Meadows notes. "And we think this will help show legislators that we need more affordable housing to be able to help more people, and show that we could do so much more with additional tax credit allocations."

"Former governor [now Vice President] Mike Pence was very supportive of the idea of affordable housing as more than just buildings; of positively impacting communities," Sipe adds. "I think this project makes that point through art."

"I also have to say that it took a lot of courage for each of the 18 subjects not only to have their portraits taken, but also to tell their stories. And these are stories of success. This should inspire all of us to do the work we do." **TCA**

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