

2021

Annual Report



Collaborating with neighbors as they empower themselves and transform communities.

COMMUNITIES TOGETHER INC.

Executive Summary

2021 was a year of dramatic growth in our ability to serve residents of affordable housing.

Pandemic Mode: In the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, we started the year in **Covid-safe** mode.

- When vaccines became available, we surged to coordinate their delivery to residents.
- When we were able to shift back to **in-person activities** in the summer, we did so quickly.
- After the omicron variant surged last July, we adapted swiftly, converting all activities to Covid-safe.
- Throughout the year, we updated and sustained our activities through **online and safe, outside, and masked** environments, and we required all team members and partners to **maintain vaccination** according to public health authorities' guidelines.

Innovative Workforce Project: In 2021, we won funds from HSBC, Prince George's County Council, and Crescent Cities Charities for a daring experiment: the **Mercaditos Project**. Designed by our own team, the project is finding ways to recruit Spanish-speaking residents to an **entrepreneurship and workforce development** program. Participants will learn how to advance their businesses and careers and offer their goods and service through "little markets" – mercaditos – legally and with expert coaching.

Innovative Web Access Project: In 2021, Communities Together proposed an ambitious web access project to Capital One. We envisioned free WiFi for every member of the new Silver Creek Senior Living community. We hoped to supplement that resource Chromebooks and a team resource – an associate able to train residents in their use of Chromebooks, other devices, and access to all the Internet's resources, from the Web to email to video chats. **Capital One** provided a very generous grant of **\$148,600**, which will provide everything we requested and help ensure that we have an associate available for any questions or challenges residents might have for the next two years.

New Communities:

- **Mills Place, located** in Washington, DC is a new affordable housing community and the outcome of collaboration with residents, property managers, and an **ownership group entirely new to us**. The birth of our partnership with Mills Place marks 20 communities in the CTI portfolio.
- For the first time, **Communities Together sponsored the development** of a new community, **and 2021 saw its final construction!** Silver Creek Senior Living's construction finished at the end of 2021 and opened in Kensington, Maryland in early 2022 – our 21st community.
- In late 2021, we won a contract to begin to serve the residents of **Ashburn Chase** Apartments in Loudoun County, Virginia, working with yet another **new ownership group and property management firm** – our 22nd community.

Organizational Development: We found new partners, raised more funds, hired another team member, improved relationships with our organizational partners, and brought on an interim executive director to help prepare the transition from our Founder, Don Tucker, to a new staff leader. Don remains our Board President. We established new evaluative and communications systems and products even as we developed our capacity as an employer, service provider, and nonprofit organization. (See Organizational Summary below.)

Pandemic Response

In 2021, the Covid-19 pandemic continued to shape our service delivery. Once more, Communities Together responded quickly. Here are our highlights:

After a few weeks of in-person activities over the summer, we transitioned back to **virtual and hybrid programming** by mid-July. From January through May, and again from late July through December, we ran our social events and celebrations, as well as educational and enrichment programs, in an online format.

- Our intrepid team, partners, volunteers, mid-career interns, and other stakeholders remained flexible in the consistent use of **online platforms** for activities.
- The virtual format resulted in significant drops in resident participation in most programs. We believe that the result was worth the cost to protect the health of the residents we serve.
- Led by our Board's active solicitation of funds, we acted in 2021 to ease some of the economic pressure the pandemic generated with **rental assistance** (see below).
- We valued and **followed guidelines** issued by the public health authorities.
- We made **Covid-19 vaccines** accessible to our residents, coordinated the distribution of resources, and promoted reliable health information and data. We ensure that our own practices were also in keeping with those of ResidentialOne, the management firm.
- We **required our own team and all partners** working on-site to maintain Covid-19 vaccinations in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control.



Volunteers at Ft. Washington Manor

Family Communities in 2021

Communities Together serves residents at 7 family communities in Maryland, 5 in the District of Columbia, and 1 in Virginia in 2021. (We added another in Loudoun County, Virginia in early 2022.)

In our family communities, we serve both Youth and Adults. We organize our activities and services under five programs:

- Health and Wellness (including recreation and exercise)
- Education, Enrichment, and Connections (including Web access and lifelong learning)
- Career Development
- Housing Stability (income, financial management, food, and other assistance)
- Community Building (community involvement and voluntarism)

A. Health and Wellness Highlights

Health and wellness are top priorities – and vital to wider community goals. To these ends, in 2021, we organized a number of programs including but not limited to the following:

Covid-19 Resources and Vaccine Clinics for adults
(outdoors and masked)

- 3 first dose clinics,
- 3 first and second dose clinics
- 123 vaccines administered

Food Distribution with many partner organizations
(see Partners list below)

- Over 540 meals or food boxes for families.
- Over 60 families connected to local food resource partners.

Yoga Classes for families in partnership with the Cultural Academy for Excellence (CAFÉ) (online)

Healthy Cooking Classes for families in partnership with CAFÉ (online)



Planting at Metro Village

B. Education, Enrichment, and Connections Highlights

Education and enrichment include a wide variety of experiences for both children and adults. In 2021, family programs featured the following enrichment initiatives:

Tablet Loaner Project: an innovative experiment in which we loaned electronic tablets to 4 families for the duration of a program. Families could access all virtual programs with Communities Together and partners. Programs included the Camp Fire Summer Program, Communities Together weekly kids programming, and CAFÉ Art Classes. Families returned all eight tablets, and only one was damaged. Residents from Queens Manor, Quebec Arms, Langley Gardens, and University Manor participated.



Health + Art at Penn Mar

Kids' Summer Camp in partnership with Camp Fire in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland: we were "in person" for two weeks. We had to pivot to virtual sessions during pandemic constraints in late July. Youth joined the Camp from Penn Mar, Langley Garden, University Manor, Auburn Manor, Queens Manor, Quebec Arms, Mills Place, and Friendly Garden.

Painting Classes in partnership with CAFÉ (65 online participants from 8 communities)

C. Career Development Highlights

The Mercaditos Project is an exciting pilot project our team developed with the strong support of Prince George's County Council Member Deni Taveras in 2021.

- Funded by HSBC, the Prince George's County Council, and Crescent Cities Charities
- Goal: find what it takes to recruit, instruct, coach, and mentor Spanish-speaking residents from four of our Langley Park (MD) communities in an entrepreneurship and workforce development program.
- In time, "graduates" of the program will market their goods and services at little markets – "mercaditos".
- Once we have recruited ten participants, our partners will offer a six-week workforce development program focused on entrepreneurialism, financial management, regulatory compliance, marketing, and related small business requirements.
- We are adapting creatively to the challenges of this project, working in partnership with ResidentialOne, El Poder de Ser Mujer, Prince George's County, and individual instructors and coaches from the financial and business communities.
- Make no mistake: with this project we are taking on intractable challenges related to language, document status, and tax and regulation avoidance. Innovation requires the courage to fail and to persevere. We are committed to trial and error until we succeed.
- The Project illustrates the **value that Communities Together adds**: far beyond traditional resident and community engagement, we are **innovating by leveraging the financial and technical support of our funders and partners**.
- The project is an example of a nonprofit coordinating the support and expertise of public and private partners.
- It may have potential to be scaled up to other communities we serve and beyond.

As in past years, Communities Together continued to offer other traditional online Career Development programs in 2021, via **Adult Education Seminars** and **After-School Programs for Employed Parents and Guardians**.

D. Housing Stability Highlights

While the other focus areas of our programming are also factors in housing stability, we also take critical steps to ensure that our community members can afford a comfortable living space and prepare financially to stay in their living space. Programs and services enacted to help family community members ensure their housing stability in 2021 included:

Communities Together Rental Assistance Program: Communities Together disbursed **\$36,000** directly from our own fund to 11 families in several communities in Washington, DC who had not qualified for governmental rental assistance yet lost much if not all of their income through no fault of their own in 2020 or 2021. We had raised those funds from firms and donors in 2020. The fund remains available to residents in 2022.

Support to Property Management and Residents: We provided support to property managers as requested when residents sought rental assistance through the Maryland Assisted Housing Relief Program and through Prince George’s County Funding to Assist Families with Rent.

E. Community Building Highlights

Our Community Building Program is at the *center* of everything we do. Every activity we coordinate helps residents build community. We consider it our *signature* program – another distinctive difference from traditional residential engagement.

- As we have seen, and as scholars and practitioners have demonstrated again and again, the very act of participating in community discussion is a profoundly transformative moment in the life of any neighbor.
- In our program, neighbors come together to identify and address issues and opportunities for their community.
- In so doing, they are **building their own social and civic community**.
- When neighbors form community bonds, they gain access to more resources as well as the contacts and confidence not only to empower themselves but to build and advance their own careers, their own financial stability, and their own personal aspirations.
- The result is a virtuous spiral upward – an advancement at the individual and community level.
- Thus, community building is both the catalyst for every program and the result of every program.
- Still, the pandemic rendered our plans for in-person network-building and community discussions difficult if not impossible again in 2021. Facing the realities of that challenge, in the spring of 2021 we postponed in-person networking and community issue discussions until mid-2022.



Festivities at Mills Place

In 2021, our most successful opportunities for building community and voluntarism at our family communities were the following:

Resident Volunteer and Leader opportunities: every community has its leaders and volunteers. They supplement the work of the Communities Together teams, and they are beloved by their neighbors!

Mental Health Awareness Month Chalk Art Contest at Auburn Manor, Quebec Arms, Penn Mar, and Friendly Garden (72 participants!)

Holiday celebrations, from Valentine’s Day to spring festivities Global Parents’ Day to Independence Day, National Night Out, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and the celebrations to cap them all before the December holidays.

Back to School/Fall Harvest Events at 11 communities in August and September

Service projects and community clean-up days including “family plantings” at 7 communities in Prince George’s County and the District of Columbia (Langley Gardens, Auburn Manor, University Manor, Queens Manor, Quebec Arms, Penn Mar, and Metro Village)

Family-centered enrichment and entertainment and events (including virtual games and viewings) brought families together for some relaxing fun.

Cultural Celebrations: Cinco de Mayo (at University Manor, Langley Gardens, Quebec Arms, and Queens Manor)



Thanksgiving at Royal Courts

Senior Communities in 2021

In 2021, Communities Together served residents at 3 communities for older adults in Prince George's County, Maryland and 4 communities in northern Virginia. (We added another senior living community in Montgomery County, Maryland in January 2022.)

In our senior communities, we serve Older Adults. We organize our activities and services under four programs:

- Health and Wellness (including recreation and exercise)
- Education, Enrichment, and Connections (including Web access and lifelong learning)
- Housing Stability (income, financial management, food, and other assistance)
- Community Building (community involvement and voluntarism)

A. Health and Wellness Highlights

Caring for our older adults' mental health requires an added emphasis on social interaction in order to overcome the constant challenge of isolation. Isolation is a root cause of mental health issues and, as a consequence, physical deterioration. Our programs seek to fulfill such baseline needs as vaccines and checkups – and then some. By partnering with other organizations, we strive to advocate for holistically healthy lifestyles, not just an appointment here or there. In 2021, programming to support seniors' holistic health and wellness included the following:

Covid-19 vaccine clinics and assistance receiving the vaccine with the help of Pavilion Health and Giant Pharmacies:

- At Clinton Manor, Fort Washington Manor, Laurel Lakes Apartments, Potomac Woods, and Madison House
- Approximately 430 1st and 2nd dose vaccines distributed with partners
- 40 rides provided from Mill Park Terrace (VA) to a vaccine location

Flu vaccine clinics with 111 vaccines administered at all senior communities

Gratitude/Mindfulness practices and essay contests

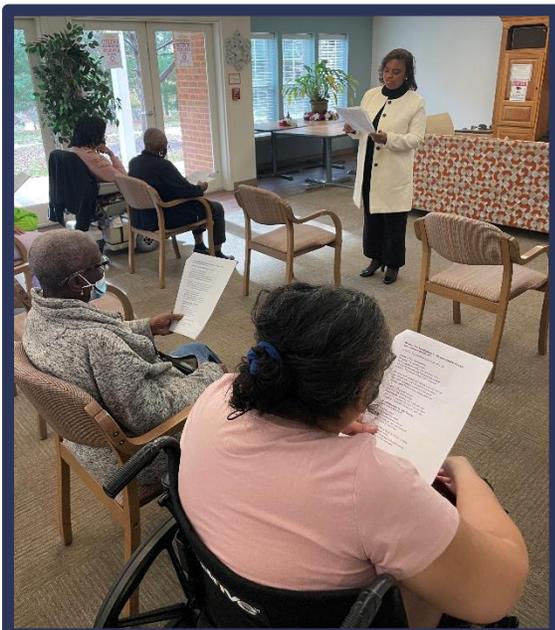
On-site yoga classes (masked, outdoors weather permitting)

Regular walking groups

Puzzles, games, and other activities to combat isolation

Regular social programs, in-person as frequently as Covid restrictions allowed

B. Education, Enrichment, and Connections Highlights



Ecumenical Prayer Service

Meaningful mind-bending entails lifelong learning with the help of our partners, engaging voluntary work within the community, and everything in between to promote regular critical thinking among our senior community members. In 2021, we translated these ideas into action by bringing these and other services and programs to our elders:

Crafting and Games

Volunteer opportunities within their apartment community

Connectivity Program – The Lifeline: in 2021 we proposed to several private and public funders that they join us in installing WiFi for residents of three of our senior communities in Maryland.

- About one-third of our residents cannot afford the cost of an Internet connection. We proposed installing WiFi networks throughout the premises to enable all residents to enjoy free WiFi – and access to the Internet, email, the Web, and every resource that the Web offers. As we mention elsewhere, our efforts to overcome isolation for our older adult residents is our top overriding goal for their emotional and physical well-being.
- **Capital One** responded with a spectacular grant of **\$148,600** for our new senior community then under construction – Silver Creek Senior Living in Kensington, Maryland. With that grant, not only will we make **WiFi free**, we will also provide **Chromebooks** to every resident as well as a staff member able to **train them** in their use of WiFi, their online devices, and the Web – and **remain a resource** available to help them for two full years.

C. Housing Stability Highlights

Being able to stay in the same home – “aging in place” – comes with its own challenges for older adults. This objective is in line with up-to-date research on seniors with strong physical, mental, and social well-being, and we are committed to supporting seniors who wish to age in place.

- To that end, for example, in 2021 we worked with property managers to assist four residents on their plans to gain accessible accommodations and comprehensive aide care as appropriate and feasible.
- Fortunately, our older adult residents are able to live on a guaranteed if fixed income. Those few who required governmental rental assistance were able to obtain it.

D. Community Building Highlights



Merrymaking in Laurel!

In 2021, celebrating holidays and convenings in community rooms strengthened every senior community. Community building occurs in every social interaction, and the following programs brought together the members of each community in a diversity of ways:

Celebrations: Black History Month, Valentine's Day, Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Independence Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and the Winter Holidays

Social Gatherings with refreshments

Resident-led Activities – such as prayer groups, book clubs, and exercise groups

Volunteering, especially within the community, is one of the most fulfilling ways for seniors to be involved with the community and stay in shape both physically and mentally. Community members in our senior complexes are crucial volunteers for our activities. Many senior community members just want to help their neighbors. Two of the most fulfilling ways to interact with neighbors is to lead or assist in programming or to be a helper to a neighbor seeking aid. Community members seeking an active role in their building deliver mail to their neighbors' mailboxes, distribute supplies or food, and/or they help our Communities Together team, led by our coordinator for senior communities, Lili Spain. Our staff is proud of, and grateful for, the voluntary efforts of senior community members in 2021.

Check out Mr. Ed in the accompanying photo. Mr. Ed is a resident of Clinton Manor in Prince George's County and volunteers around the building as often as he can. Behind his mask is an infectious smile - Mr. Ed always has jokes to share and is eager to lend a hand to his neighbors.



PARTNERS

*In 2021, Communities Together coordinated the delivery of many programs, services, and assistance with property management teams at **ResidentialOne** and external organizational partners. We want to thank and commend the following partners for their collaboration.*

2400 Diner	City of Mount Rainier
Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen	Neighborhood Restaurant Group
Audubon Enterprises	Newmark (volunteers)
CAFÉ	Operation Earnie's Plate
Camp Fire Patuxent Council (Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia)	Pavilion Health Care
Capital Area Food Bank	Prince George's County Health Dept. and Dept. of Aging
CASA Maryland	Prince George's County Libraries
Catholic Communities in Langley Park (CCLP)	Prince George's County Police Dept. Community Service Division
Central Kenilworth Central Kenilworth Revitalization (CKAR)	Prince George's County Child Protective Services
Covenant Presbyterian Church of Harrisonburg, Virginia	Prince George's County Council
CVS	Prince George's County Council Member Sydney J. Harrison
Flow Yoga	Prince George's County Council Member Deni Taveras
Giant Pharmacy	Prince George's County Public Schools
Girl Scouts Troop 22023	Pyramid Atlantic Art Studio
GoodWorks	Residential One
Greater Riverdale Thrives	River Jordan
GrindTime Eats	Saint Francis International School
JITA	Safeway
Lock 7 Development	Tomorrow's Caterers
Loudon Volunteer Caregivers	TM Associates (TMA)
Luminis Health	United Healthcare
Maryland Multicultural Youth Center	Women's Voters League of Fredericksburg
Mary's Center	
MedPacks Pharmacy	
Montgomery Co. Emergency Assistance Program	

DONORS and GRANTORS in 2021 & 2022

WE GREATLY APPRECIATE THE STRONG & GROWING SUPPORT OF OUR DONORS & GRANTORS.
 YOU MADE OUR ACHIEVEMENTS POSSIBLE.
 MANY OF YOU PROVIDED RESOURCES AS WELL AS YOUR TIME AND EXPERTISE.

<p><u>Pillars</u> (\$75,000 and up)</p>	<p>Capital One Bank Donald Tucker</p>	
<p><u>Bridge-Builders</u> (\$30,000-74,999)</p>	<p>Maryland Department of Energy Assistance Michael Seltz Camp Fire of Patuxent (<i>in-kind contributions of time</i>)</p>	
<p><u>Partners</u> (\$10,000-29,999)</p>	<p>Newmark Knight</p>	
<p><u>Advocates</u> (\$5,000-9,999)</p>	<p>HSBC Prince George’s County Council (Council Member Deni Taveras)</p>	
<p><u>First Responders</u> (\$35-4,999)</p>	<p>Crescent Cities Charities Anthony Waddell Scott Willis Nemo Hanifan Audrey Moore Kent Neumann Tony Ross Lili Spain</p>	<p>Thomas Vellenga Jordan Bishop Phuc Tran Shavon Bartley Donna Thurmond Molly Jamison Juarez Anastasia Wroblewski</p>

Thank you so much for your generous assistance to our neighbors in affordable housing.

Organizational & Financial Overview

- 501c(3) (charitable) non-profit governed by an independently elected and majority Black board of seven experts in related fields, founded in 2017.
- In 2022, we now serve communities with a total of approximately **7,000 residents** in **22 communities** across Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia.
- In 2021, we added a **new community** with a **new ownership** group in Washington, DC: **Mills Place**. *Residents, managers, and owners tell us that we off to a very good start.*
- In 2021, for the first time Communities Together joined with several individuals to **sponsor and develop a new community**. Construction on **Silver Creek Senior Living** finished by the end of 2021, and residents began to fill the complex in early 2022. Silver Creek is in Kensington, Maryland in Montgomery County.
- In 2022, we have added **another new community** with yet another ownership group in **Virginia: Ashburn Chase**. 9% of its units have people with developmental disabilities.
- Lean Staff: 7 full-time employees, 4 mid-career interns, and 5 specialized contractors.
- Brought on our new executive director in the second half of 2021.
- Introduced new evaluation and reporting systems in 2021. Adopting new evaluation and tracking database in early 2022.
- Financial review and 990 by the SC&H Group. Audit scheduled for 2022 finances.

2021 year-end figures

All Expenses	664,000
All Income	613,000
Net Income	-43,013
Total Assets	376,735
Total Liabilities.....	19,156
Equity	400,592
Total Equity	357,579
Total Equity+Liabilities..	376,735

2022 Budget

Projected 2022 expenses: 686,000

Projected 2022 income: \$1,061,000*

* includes development fee of \$125,000 from Silver Creek Senior Living

Invest in Our Residents

Please consider supporting residents of affordable housing through one of our top programs:

1. **Community-Building:** Our core program facilitates neighbors coming together to address their common challenges and opportunities. As residents “network” with each other, they become stewards of their community and build civic pride. We use activities and events to reinforce neighborly goodwill, developing social and community bonds. Active neighbors create stable, safer, more livable communities, and they develop the tools to improve other facets of their lives as well. We are improving the program, and we adapt the program to each community.

- The cost of one (two-month) community building program would be **\$5,000**. Your investment buys the time of expert trainers who train our own team's trainers, along with the property managers who work with us, in the curriculum and facilitation. Funds also pay for activity costs.

2. Youth Development: We are seeking sponsors to create more programming opportunities for the youth we serve. You can help youth participate with donations to cover the costs of our youth development partners:

- 1 week of out of school time (OST) program or summer camp is an average of **\$370/child**.
- Children and youth affected by the explosion and fire at Friendly Garden Apartments in Silver Spring benefit from the additional funds we are raising to provide transportation and to participate in programs to provide **family support and healing from the trauma** suffered with the explosion and fire of March 3, 2022.
- We estimate a cost of at least **\$10,000 per month** for such programs.
- Moreover, each of our **14 family communities** deserves steady funding throughout the year. Many of our families are headed by single moms would appreciate any program extended to their children afternoons and weekends.

3. Community Connections

Internet access is a **lifeline to residents who cannot afford access** to the Internet, an electronic device, or the training to master those connections.

- Email and Web access have proven to overcome social isolation, particularly for older adults.
- *Capital One has provided us with a total two-year investment of \$148,600 for a comprehensive program* at one of our new communities, Silver Creek Senior Living in Kensington, Maryland.
- To make **WiFi available and free** to all residents of a typical small multi-story apartment building, we would need at least **\$35,000** for the initial installation.
- We estimate that providing our remaining residents with **Chromebook "loaners"** would entail an investment of approximately **\$10,000**. We successfully tested this concept.
- Providing **training and a staff resource** on the Internet, email, the Web, and devices can cost a minimum of **\$10,000** per year per community.

4. Health and Wellness

Your donations can help our neighbors care for themselves through a variety of programs and services, several of which we illustrate below:

- **\$240 = one yoga class** for one community (and one week).
- **\$150 = two gym instruction** classes at one community (in one month).
- **\$300 = one healthy cooking class** for 30 participants.

Communities Together Board of Directors

Donald Tucker, *Board President and Founder*

Mike Seltz, *Treasurer and Vice President*

Donna Thurmond, *Secretary*

Karon Phillips

Tony Ross

Anthony Waddell

Scott Willis

Founding Board Members Emerita

Shavon Bartley

Rosemary Pezzuto

Family Communities (14)

Auburn Manor – Prince George’s County, MD
Langley Gardens – Prince George’s County
Penn Mar – Prince George’s County
Quebec Arms – Prince George’s County
Queens Manor – Prince George’s County
University Manor – Prince George’s County

Friendly Garden – Montgomery County, MD

3 Tree Flats – District of Columbia
Metro Village – DC

**** Mills Place** – DC -- new community, new owners!
Royal Courts – DC
Savannah Heights – DC

Mosby Heights – Harrisonburg, Virginia

**** Ashburn Chase** – Ashburn, VA -- new community, new owners!

Senior Communities (8)

Clinton Manor – Prince George’s County, Maryland
Laurel Lakes – Prince George’s County
Ft. Washington Manor – Prince George’s County

Madison House – Leesburg, Virginia
Mill Park Terrace – Fredericksburg, VA
Potomac Woods I – Woodbridge, VA
Potomac Woods II – Woodbridge, VA

**** Silver Creek Senior Living** – Montgomery County, MD – new + our 1st sponsored development!



Building Community at Mosby Heights