

# COMMUNITIES TOGETHER INC



**What happens when you don't just design programs for residents, but build them with residents from the very beginning?**

This month, we're spotlighting the launch of our newly improved All-Resident Survey. At Communities Together, the survey isn't just a checkbox—*it's a commitment*. A commitment to making sure residents' voices shape everything we do.

**This year, we've taken that commitment even further.** Our Program Manager, Manpreet Bhogal, won a tremendous voluntary donation of expertise and time to aid our surveys of residents.

With guidance from a leading expert at the Pew Research Center, one of the world's foremost survey research institutions, we have now refined the survey to make it more accessible and meaningful—paying close attention to reading level, length, and clarity so more residents can fully participate. Because if a survey isn't accessible, it isn't truly resident-centered.

**But collecting residents' thoughts is no small task.**

Reaching our goal takes weeks of outreach, relationship-building, and creativity. Staff members navigate language and literacy barriers, busy schedules, and survey fatigue. They host events, bring music, create moments of joy, and offer small incentives—because participation should feel engaging, not burdensome.

It's hard work. *And it matters.* We want to harvest every voice possible.

**Because once the responses come in, they become something powerful.**

Through our Resident Opportunities and Priorities Assessment (ROPA), we analyze what residents are telling us and turn it into action.

**We see patterns:**

- Seniors have been prioritizing meals, community gatherings, and health and wellness
- Families call for education, employment, and career development opportunities
- Across communities, we see a shared desire for connection and activities that bring people together

We also look at what's changed—comparing results year over year to understand evolving needs and respond meaningfully.

The survey is just one way to help ensure that we are truly listening. Implementing the survey results brings energy, innovation, and pride to each community. **Most importantly, residents don't just participate in programs—they help design them.**

When residents lead, communities thrive.

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## **By the Numbers: 2 Communities We Now Support!**

 **Portner Flats | Washington, DC (Somerset Development Company)**

- 149 residents
- 96 homes
- 36 children & youth
- 35 older adults
- 1 Communities Together Coordinator

 **Govans Manor | Baltimore, MD (PIRHL)**

- 203 residents

- 191 homes
- 80% living with disabilities
- 20% seniors
- 1 Communities Together Coordinator

These numbers represent more than growth. They reflect expanded opportunities for residents to lead, connect, and shape the future of their communities.

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## Partnership Spotlight: Full Circle Farm



**Through our partnership with Full Circle Farm in Maryland, residents are getting access to fresh, locally grown produce—straight from the farm.**

Farmer Danny, the owner of Full Circle Farm, delivers half- and full-share boxes filled with seasonal fruits and vegetables. We first piloted these boxes during a November food distribution across several communities, and the response was immediately very positive.

The produce was fresh, abundant, and something residents could actually cook with—unlike the non-perishable items often found in food banks. Many shared how meaningful it was to bring home nourishing, high-quality food.

Based on those comments, we partnered again in March—expanding distributions to include fresh eggs alongside the produce boxes.

**This partnership is more than food access—*it's a core part of our Healthy Living work.***

By connecting residents directly to flavorful, unprocessed, nutrient-rich food, we're supporting healthier choices while also creating opportunities for learning. Through workshops and conversations, residents explore how to source affordable fresh food and incorporate it into their daily lives.



**When residents have access to the best food nature has to offer—and the knowledge to use it—they're better equipped to support their own health and well-being.**

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## **Teammate Highlight: Manpreet (Preet) K. Bhogal**

**Since joining Communities Together in early 2023, Preet has quickly become a key part of our growth and impact.** Starting as a full-time coordinator, she was promoted to Program Manager within just six months—and has helped guide our expansion to new communities while continuing to stay closely connected to residents in community.

Preet's background spans community engagement, youth development, and public service—from supporting children with autism as an ABA therapist to managing redevelopment initiatives and nonprofit funding at a city level. She is also a certified Human Rights Consultant with experience supporting international grantmaking efforts for 71 countries.



She holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Master's in Public Administration (with Honors) from Rutgers University.

“Preet holds our record for reducing rental debt. In one community of fewer than 100 homes, working with residents and community resources, she was responsible for reducing rental debt by more than \$20,000 in just a few months. She's one of the most efficient and industrious human beings I have ever had the honor of working with.”

- Tom Vellenga, Executive Director

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## Upcoming Opportunity

## May 13 | Housing & Annual Conference & Awards (Washington, DC)

We'll be "tabling" at the region's largest gathering of affordable housing leaders —connecting with owners, developers, and partners to grow our impact. At the awards luncheon, a young resident our team supports will receive an award for her "Children's Essay."

If you'll be there, stop by our table and say hello!

### The Communities Together Team

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