



Annual Review
2016

Lives changed.

Every day, since 1977.

Having a safe and stable home is the foundation upon which lives are built. Jobs, economic stimulation, overall health and well-being, and school outcomes are all impacted by the stability of an individual's living environment.

At Belmont, we are dedicated to expanding affordable housing opportunities to the residents of Western New York.

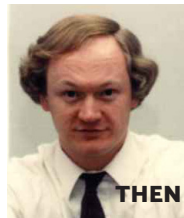
Thank you, to our community partners and supporters for helping us to fulfill our mission every day, and change lives in our community.

President's message

Since our founding back in 1977, Belmont's purpose has been to promote expanded housing opportunity and improve the housing stock throughout Western New York. We're proud to have demonstrated our ability to rise to that challenge this past year by helping more than 15,000 households improve their living situations. It has not always been easy - creating affordable housing opportunities is inherently subject to unexpected and uncontrollable changes - not to mention competition and risk.



Human Service agencies in Western New York and across the nation face the same challenge: how to serve the ever-increasing need when faced with ever-decreasing resources. Recent studies show that low income households in Buffalo are more rent-burdened than ever before - over 75% of these households are paying more than 30% of their income for housing. Contributing to this problem are fast-rising rents combined with very slow-rising incomes.



Despite the many challenges, we were able to provide assistance to those with housing needs in many ways, which we are proud to share with you in our 2016 Annual Review.

Looking back on 2016, sincere thanks go to Belmont's staff for the high standard of service they consistently maintain and to our many partners for the invaluable contributions they make to the success of our mission. In 2017, we will continue our commitment to that mission as we strive to expand our service to the community... implementing new programs for preventing homelessness; addressing the aging of the housing stock; and utilizing more resources and improved technology to increase housing opportunity throughout WNY.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Riegel".

Mike Riegel
President



This year marks our 40th Anniversary of advocating for affordable housing here in Western New York. We were founded in 1977 to address the growing need for affordable housing opportunities in our community.

A lot has changed over these past 40 years!

Starting out with just a handful of staff members and clients, we have grown to employ over 100 employees and assist over 15,000 clients annually.





WHAT WE DO.

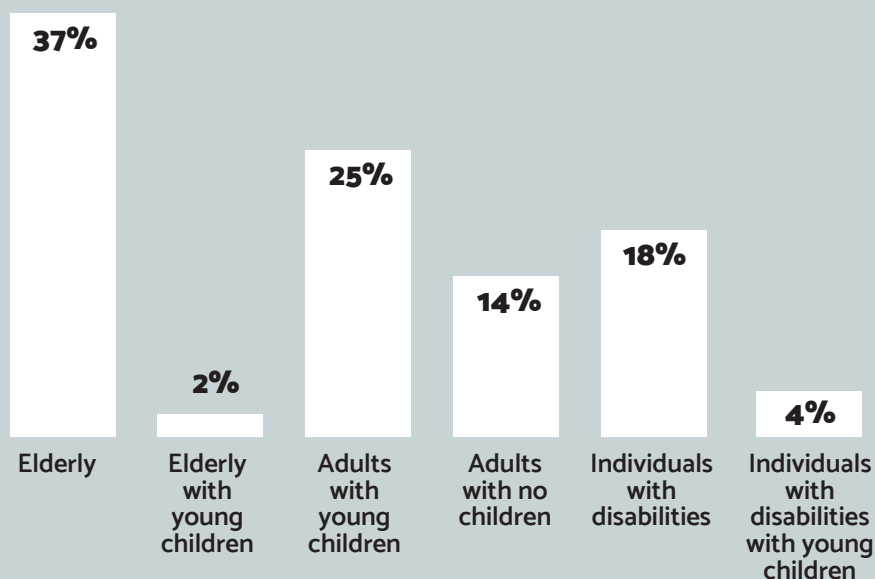
We expand rental opportunities for those in need.

Through our Housing Choice Voucher Program and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program, we are able to help families, seniors, and veterans find and secure affordable rental housing.

In addition to our voucher programs, we manage 19 rental properties for seniors, families, and individuals with disabilities throughout Western New York. Service Coordination is available to all residents, helping to link them with various community resources.



In 2016, our Section 8 voucher program made over **\$27 million in rental assistance payments** providing assistance to over **6,000 families** each month.



Voucher programs support low-wage working families.

In 2016 in New York State, 84% of voucher recipients who were non-elderly and non-disabled were working or had worked recently.

Not only do vouchers reduce homelessness, they also help to boost the local economy. In 2016, we made over \$27 million in rental assistance payments.

We help families and individuals find and maintain affordable homes.

Through our homebuyer workshops, we educate and help prepare first-time homebuyers for the entire process of buying a home from improving credit and getting mortgage approval, to closing on their very first home.



Our housing redevelopment projects are focused on providing safe and affordable opportunities to first-time homebuyers. In 2016, we rehabbed and sold 5 homes in Buffalo, Amherst, Cheektowaga, and West Seneca.

We continue to partner with the City of Buffalo, where we successfully rehabbed over 165 owner-occupied homes in 2016.

We make homes healthy and safe.

Did you know that Erie County is home to eight of the zip codes flagged as the highest for lead poisoning in New York State? In order to help combat this, we are partnering with Erie County to implement the Lead Hazard Control Program, a low cost initiative available to qualifying families, property owners, and day care providers.



Through our participation in the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative in Buffalo, we have been able to provide a no-cost resident education program to low-income households. The Green and Healthy Homes Initiative is a public-private partnership between the federal government, national and local philanthropy, the National Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, and local WNY partners.

We empower through education & counseling.

Belmont is proud to be the Buffalo-Niagara Region's largest HUD-certified housing counseling agency advising over 2,500 households annually.



Our educational programs include finding affordable rental opportunities, buying a home, financial management, foreclosure prevention, reverse mortgages, home maintenance, energy efficiency, and green and healthy behaviors.

We also offer a Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which is designed to help people who receive rental assistance achieve their goals of financial independence.

Celebrating Diversity in Financial & Rental Education



Belmont was recently featured nationally in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) newsletter, "The Bridge" for our unique work with the local refugee community.

The article featured one of our "rock star" housing counselors, Mel Marchese, and focused on our partnership with the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, in which we provide housing counseling and basic financial education, as well as housing stability counseling to the growing refugee community we have here in Western New York.

Counseling and workshops are provided by Belmont staff at five designated "hubs" throughout the area. The families and individuals in need of financial coaching and counseling are participants in the United Way Works Workforce Training Program and come from a wide variety of war-torn countries such as Burma, Iraq, Burundi, Nepal, Sudan, Somali, and Yemen.

Recognizing the great need to adapt our existing programming to meet the needs of this unique group of clients, our staff found ways to utilize role playing, visual props, field trips, and unique group experiences to help teach important concepts. Working with center staff and translators, students are taught basic concepts of banking, as well as how to identify and avoid scams and predatory services, something that many refugees have little or no experience with.



Belmont housing counselor, Mel Marchese

In addition to Financial Education workshops, the clients also meet with Belmont's Housing Counseling staff and coaches, who assist each individual with identifying financial and housing needs and working with them to create, and obtain their goals.

We look forward to continuing to serve those with the highest needs in WNY, celebrating the diverse backgrounds that make us unique, and making our programs and services accessible to everyone in our community.

We are very thankful to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for sharing the uniqueness and passion that Belmont has to offer with the rest of our Nation.

View the entire article by visiting:

https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=OHC_BRIDGEo42517.pdf



DID YOU KNOW?

Buffalo has become one of the top resettlement locations in the country. Approximately 10,000 refugees have resettled here since 2003.

Starting Her Dream Business



Among family and friends Mallory Mendolera has always been known for her tasty desserts. "I would put pictures of my desserts on Social Media and people always asked if I had a business and if they could place an order."

Mallory had each component to begin her business- she perfected her baking skills, she has a Bachelors Degree in Business with a concentration in Marketing, and her life experience growing up as she watched her father run his own business. The last piece she needed was the start-up funds to get her business up and running.

It was in June 2015, while finishing up her shift at a local cleaning company, when she came across a flyer for a Small Business Fair and linked up with Belmont Housing Resources For WNY's Individual Development Account program (IDA). "After speaking with Belmont and learning about the IDA Program, it was at that point I realized I wanted to take my passion and make it a business."


The Assets for Independence IDA program is a matched savings program where families with a dream of owning a business can make it a reality through education and savings deposit matches. Mallory met with Westminster Economic Development Initiative to develop a detailed Business Plan and attended the Financial Education Program at Belmont. "The series helped me develop a budget to assist me in making the monthly deposits." Through the IDA program she was able to purchase signage, supplies, and begin making her monthly rent payments for her business.



Mallory, owner of Incredible Edibles by Mallory

One year later "Incredible Edibles by Mallory" has blossomed into a thriving business in the Masten District. Besides offering up tasty treats the business is also making an impact in the neighborhood. "Our storefront was vacant for many years. This past Easter season we hosted a Community Day for our neighbors- it was a great way for the neighborhood to be introduced to my business."

She has since been able to make her business her full-time passion, thanks in part to the Belmont/CASH Buffalo co-sponsored matched savings program funded by First Niagara Bank, M&T Bank, Lakeshore Savings Bank, the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, and The Department of Health and Human Service's Assets for Independence Act – putting in place one of the key pieces of a brighter future for her family.



“After speaking with Belmont and learning about the IDA Program, it was at that point I realized I wanted to take my passion and make it a business.”



**Mallory Mendolera,
Owner of Incredible Edibles by Mallory**

Transformation on Buffalo's East Side: Bellamy Commons



2016 marked the opening of our newest family housing project in WNY, Bellamy Commons. The project helped to completely transform a once-vacant, 100-year old warehouse on Jefferson Avenue in Buffalo's East Side.

An integral part of the project team was Herbert L. Bellamy, Jr., a son of late former City Council Member Herbert L. Bellamy, for whom the development is named. Engaged in community revitalization efforts, he has worked to carry on his father's legacy through local initiatives and efforts.

In addition to Herb Bellamy and 1490 Enterprises, we partnered with Creative Structure Services and Silvestri Architects to complete the transformation, which includes 30 units of affordable family housing, along with mixed-use retail space.

There are 20 one-bedroom and 10 two-bedroom apartments, including five for individuals with mobility issues and hearing or vision impairments. The building has an elevator, community room with kitchen for residents, separate bulk storage units, laundry facilities, onsite parking and a playground. The commercial space also includes the new Buffalo Black Achievers Museum.

The Bellamy Commons project received funding from the Better Buffalo Fund, New York State Homes and Community Renewal's Housing Trust Fund Corporation, The National Equity Fund, and Empire State Development.




Happy faces at our Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening of Bellamy Commons this past Fall.



Linda Murray giving Herb Bellamy and Mayor Byron Brown a tour of her new apartment.

Photo Credit: Avery Schneider, WBFO News



“It’s different from any apartment I’ve ever lived in - all of them, the walls have always been white - I came in here and these were different colors - I just fell in love. I come in here, and every day it seems different. It’s like, I want to come home now. It makes a big difference when you live in something that you really love.”



**Linda Murray,
Bellamy Commons resident**



**“I wanted a stepping stone;
I wanted to establish
myself as a homeowner.”**

”

**Tracie
First Time Homebuyer
Program participant**

Achieving the Ultimate Goal of Homeownership



Bound and determined to break out of the cycle of renting, Tracie knew she wanted to own her own home, but didn't know where to begin.

She enrolled in the homebuyer education program, initially through another local housing organization, and then through Belmont, and started to get a feel for what was involved in the home buying process. During the program, Tracie learned how to understand and improve her credit score, and even took on a second job just to pay down some of her debt. Within a few months, her score went up significantly.

Through Belmont partner, M&T Bank, she set up a savings account through the First Time Homebuyer Program and began the process of saving for and searching for the perfect home.

With patience and determination, Tracie kept her eye on the prize. With the support of her family and friends, along with the guidance from the staff at Belmont, she stayed focused on her dream of being a homeowner, despite wanting to give up on several occasions.

Although it took around 3 years from setting her goal to closing on her home, every little bump and turn in the road was in place to eventually lead Tracie to her forever home in Cheektowaga. The home had recently undergone a total rehabilitation through Belmont and was part of our rehab and resale program in partnership with the Town of Cheektowaga.



Tracie standing in front of her new home.

Having worked with both our housing counseling staff and development team, Tracie had this to say: "The staff at Belmont were amazing to work with, Tracy, Dan, Judy, and Eric, they were all amazing."

From the minute Tracie set foot inside, she knew it felt like home. Located in a quaint neighborhood, Tracie fell in love with the updated kitchen, warmth, and open floor plan. Closing just in time for the holidays this past year, Tracie feels extremely grateful to have accomplished her dream of being a homeowner.

Tracie's home was one of five homes that were part of our Rehab and Resale program in 2016.

2015 - 2016

What's changed in a year.

Belmont Housing assists over 15,000 families each year. In 2016, we were able to change lives through our numerous housing assistance and rental programs, healthy home initiatives, and our educational services. It's been an incredible year and we are proud to share our accomplishments.



We've expanded rental opportunities for those in need.



We've helped families and individuals find and maintain affordable homes.



824

new households given rental opportunities through our Housing Choice Voucher Program.



114

households remained in their homes through reverse mortgage counseling.



30

units of affordable family housing broke ground.



210

homeowners avoided foreclosure thanks to loan modifications facilitated by our staff.

3,000

rental property owners participated in our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program.



5

homes were rehabbed and resold throughout WNY.



178

clients graduated from our renter's edge program.



578

clients went through our homebuyer education program.



\$160,000

disbursed in temporary financial assistance for veteran families.



We've made homes healthy and safe.



We've empowered through education and counseling.



10,000

households are safe because of our inspection process.



15,000

visitors to our Housing Resource Center this past year.



165

owner-occupied homes have been rehabilitated in Buffalo.



327

clients went through our financial education workshops.



70

households live in lead-free housing thanks to our lead hazard control program.



500

Clients attended post-purchase homeownership classes



42

one-on-one landlord education sessions for new homeowners who purchased multi-family homes.



211

English as a Second Language clients were assisted through our financial education classes or one-on-one counseling.



2

landlord seminars to promote professional and effective property management



300

individuals participated in our Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

Lives changed through the work and dedication of many.

Thank you to our amazing team of volunteers and interns.

- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Alexis Ortiz | Joseph Vokes | Mia McCollum |
| Andrea Zengerski | Judy Lubick | Michelle Poudy |
| Cali Ortiz | Justine Playford | Mike Hasenfuss |
| Carol Heavern | Kaitlyn Simmons | Phoebe Gillis Buscaglia |
| Debra Zwetsch | Katrina Swarthout | Rachel Overall |
| Elisha Hu | Kevin Serrano- | Tiffany Flores |
| Haley Wallace | Vazquez | Wei Lin |
| Ianna Javier | Marie Harrell | Yin Khaing |
| Jackie Valazza | Mary Zielinski | |

Thank you to our generous donors.

The work we do would not be possible without our incredible partners and generous donors. We thank you so much for your ongoing support.
Thank you for helping us change the lives of families we serve on a daily basis!

Government

- US Department of Health and Human Services
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Veterans Affairs

New York State

- Attorney General
- Empire State Development Corporation
- Homes and Community Renewal

County/Municipal

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| City of Buffalo | Town of Hamburg |
| City of North Tonawanda | Town of Tonawanda |
| County of Erie | Town of Amherst |
| Town of Cheektowaga | |

Foundations/Corporations

- Bank of America Charitable Foundation
- Citizens Bank Foundation
- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- Empire Innovation Group, LLC
- Federal Home Loan Bank of New York
- First Niagara Bank Foundation
- John R. Oishei Foundation
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- M&T Bank Charitable Foundation
- Siemer Institute for Family Stability
- Sentz Carlson Agency, Inc.
- United Way of Buffalo and Erie County
- The Western New York Foundation

Partners

- 1490 Enterprises, Inc.
- Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled
- Elim Christian Fellowship
- Heart of the City Neighborhoods
- True Community Development Corp.
- Westminster Foundation
- Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

Individual Donors

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
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| Theresa Fraser | Yasarah Razor |
| Aaron Godert | David Resetartis |
| Aaron Hejmowski | Rodney Richardson |
| Scott Hewlett | Michael Riegel |
| Kelly Houseman | Akeed Tiernan |
| Elizabeth Huckabone | Jeffrey P. Travers |
| Rudy Kristich | Thomas Ulbrich |
| Sydney MacDougall | Bruce Zeftel |

WHO WE ARE

Our staff are truly the heart of our organization here at Belmont! Without them, we could never impact the 15,000 households that we do annually.

Thank you to each and every one of you for your commitment, hard work, and for helping us to carry out our mission on a daily basis. You are making a difference in so many lives here in Western New York.

Thank you!

Belmont Executive Staff

Michael Riegel
President

Pamela Berger,
Vice President/Property Operations

Kathy O'Brien,
Vice-President/Housing Programs

Aaron Hejmowski,
Chief Financial Officer

2015 Board of Directors

Kelly L. Patterson, Board Chair

Bruce C. Baird

James T. Clark

Elizabeth Huckabone

Ed Negron

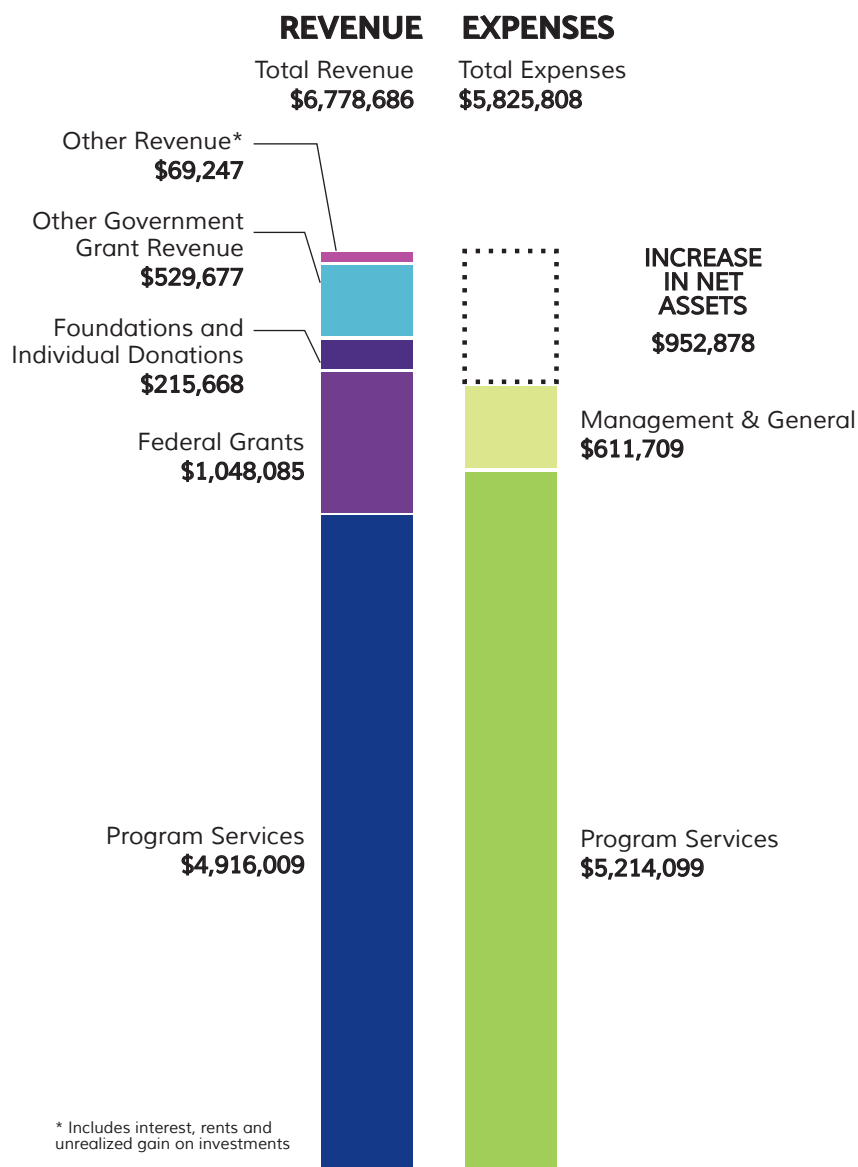
Brad A. Packard

Rodney Richardson

Thomas Ulbrich

Bruce S. Zefitel

FINANCIAL REVIEW



Donate!

What we can do with your support!

We could plant a community garden for residents at our senior housing sites.



We can update our Housing Voucher Administration software to more efficiently and effectively serve our clients.



We can reach an additional 25 local residents with our Renter's Edge Program.



We could provide an additional 75 households with safe, lead-free housing.



We can install a new playground at one of our family residential sites.



We could break ground on 35 new units of affordable family housing.

We could establish a Financial Opportunities Center to serve individuals and families here in WNY.



Donate online at
www.belmonthousingwny.org

We could expand housing and financial education programs within the refugee community.



We can continue to grow our Foreclosure Prevention Program.



We could update our security access systems for all of our properties.



We could bring on-site healthy living programs to our senior and family properties.



We can create an online portal for tenant and landlord document sharing.



We could hire an additional housing counseling to assist clients at our Housing Resource Center.



We could purchase new technology to help assist clients in our Housing Resource Center.



Lives changed.

Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, Inc.

CENTRAL OFFICE

1195 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14209-2196
716-884-7791
Fax: 716-884-8026

NIAGARA COUNTY OFFICE

33 Spruce Street
N. Tonawanda, NY 14120-6305
716-213-2784
Fax: 716-213-2787

www.belmonthousingwny.org



Dedicated to Expanding Affordable Housing Opportunities