

Everyday Hero

Howard Kimmel



Photo: Tony Lopez

Housing Pro Builds Complex for Seniors

As far back as Howard Kimmel can remember, housing has been a subject dear to his heart. He remembers how his mother stepped up to become the family breadwinner during the Depression when his father's shoe business went bankrupt.

"She pieced together her pennies to go into the real estate business," says Kimmel.

Kimmel, 78, would go on to join the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal and served there in various capacities for 40 years, until he retired in 1989.

For the last decade, he's devoted his life to promoting better housing, primarily through the Anna and Philip Kimmel Foundation that he formed in 1994 with proceeds from his parents' estate. The Foundation's crowning achievement thus far was unveiled this spring in New Cassel -- the 38-unit, \$7.5 million Apex Senior Citizen Housing complex. It's a trendsetter -- the first affordable (rents start at \$410 and go to \$710) multifamily complex in Nassau County to include shared units.

"Our goal was to create a community, to weld the body to be one family. We want seniors looking after each other," says Kimmel.

In addition to a lovely, secure facility, residents can take advantage of Apex's relationship with various social service agencies. The government benefits too. Kimmel estimates the government saves \$100,000 per person per year, if the individual is not institutionalized.

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Kimmel recalls the story of one woman living in the Apex. "Where she was living before, she cooked on a hot plate and washed dishes in a bathtub. Now, she's happy to have a kitchen."

Kimmel, who lives with his wife Sylvia in Great Neck and is the father of three says, "We're at work on plans for much more."

Sheryl Nance-Nash