

Sisters living facility changes hands

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

A new agency is taking over the reins at A Home To Share (AHTS), a local coop residence that was established about three years ago to offer accommodations for Sisters residents with developmental disabilities.

The new nonprofit organization, Advocates for Life Skills and Opportunities (ALSO), has been providing supported living, residential, and employment services to low-to-moderate income adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities in the Portland metro area since 1988. Their mission is to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of their community.

They now also have an office located in Bend at 2525 NE Twin Knolls Dr., Suite #7, and can be reached at 541-410-0317. The area director for Central Oregon is Lori Johnson.

The change in ownership came about after the AHTS board of directors walked away last year, “worn out from the challenges of running a small nonprofit in Sisters,” according to interim board chair, Heath Foott. “It proved to be an unsustainable model.”

When the board dissolved, AHTS founder Sandy Affonso approached Foott and several other Sisters residents to see what could be done to continue to offer services to the community. That board searched for an established entity that could assume ownership of the facility and successfully provide residential services. Foott thinks they have found that with the ALSO group.

ALSO operates over 25 sites and supports over 80 adults who require full- or part-time services. They offer a variety of programs that promote independence, being part of a community, job development, job placement, and an art studio (in

Portland) where everyone has an opportunity to be creative.

Their residential care and supported living programs include: assistance with household maintenance; budgeting; cooking; medical issues; personal care; hygiene; and recreation. The 24-hour residential care service provides around-the-clock care for about 70 individuals in the Portland area, living in small groups of two to five people.

The supportive living staff offers customized support to more than a dozen people staying in their own homes, with or without roommates, who may require care 24 or fewer hours a day. Supported living offers an approach where people with disabilities maintain control of where and how they live and how often they receive support with meal preparation, household tasks, medical assistance, and all other aspects of personal care that may be needed.

“We’re so excited to have an organization with the breadth of experience that ALSO has,” said Foott. “It’s going to be a great opportunity for ALSO to come in and establish themselves in the community to help take AHTS to the next level.”

Foott reported there is already a waiting list of people interested in the facility. He was “very appreciative of what the community has done for AHTS to bring it into being. We hope they will continue that support now that ALSO has taken over.”

“A Home To Share wouldn’t be what it is without the time and resources donated by so many,” Foott added.

ALSO CEO, Brett Turner, of Portland, told *The Nugget* that the paperwork for the transfer went to the title company the end of last week. The house, which can accommodate three residents, was given to ALSO,

which now takes ownership. If the house next door, which belongs to Affonso, can be purchased or leased, ALSO would be able to provide residential care for six residents between the two houses.

Turner indicated that the exact model to be used to structure the services provided are currently being discussed with possible residents and will be based on what people want and need.

“Our programs are designed around the residents. The kind of services offered, the staffing of the residence, and the cost will all depend on the program that is designed to meet the needs in Sisters,” Turner explained.

They work closely with family members and guardians to provide the security they desire to see for their loved ones to thrive. According to their website, “Our services are based on person-centered approaches to help people live the lives that they have always dreamed of.”

ALSO relies on state and county funding as well as donors to support their efforts. As state funding becomes more restricted they have recently initiated fundraising efforts by hosting a variety of events to raise awareness and the needed funds.

The organization was recently voted No. 15 in *Oregon Business Magazine’s* “100 Best Non-Profits to Work For in Oregon” and has earned a spot in the ranking in 2014, 2016, and 2017.

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