

# A Community for All Ages

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active.

"They use their specific talents and skills, which could be cooking, crochet, arts and crafts, or simply taking the kids to the park," she said.

Both Davenport and Schubert recalled a story of a 6-year-old named Noah, who lives with his family at Bridge Meadows. His mom told the boy to go and get something from his grandma, and Noah asked, "Which one?"

Although the community representatives agree that the concept can seem a bit foreign at first, they both are adamant that Bridge Meadows is a creative way to bring people together to support each other in ways, which have been seemingly lost in the United States.

Davenport quoted broadcast journalist Ted Koppel: "The idea of an intergenerational society is so old—it's new."

"A lot of other cultures are already doing this," she said. "But Americans have moved



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Bridge Meadows Executive Director and psychologist Dr. Derenda Schubert joins Amanda Davenport, development director for intergenerational housing community, to walk through the 22-acre north Portland housing site where residents of all ages live together to change the current model of support for foster youth.

voice and support."

As a clinical psychologist for 17-years who worked with foster children and built programs, Schubert said she has seen how the foster care system can impact a child's life, which catalyzed her to continue asking how she could help these kids and become a part of the solution.

"We know there are a lot of problems—it is not a perfect system," she said. "So we need to be active."

Schubert said there are health challenges, including post traumatic stress disorders that emerge as a result of being in and out of the current model of support for foster children.

Failures in the traditional foster care system cause this silent epidemic that often doesn't get recognized, she said.

"The system is in need of more help, support and innovative ideas," said Davenport.

"It is overloaded, frankly," she said. "We want to be part of this solution and be seen as a partner."

According to Schubert, the community not only increases the quality of life for youth, but also truly helps provide meaning and purpose in the lives of the elderly, who often times can feel lonely.

Although Bridge Meadows merely opened its doors last year, there is already a waiting list for elders who are looking to be a part of the intergenerational living community.

"The community helps decrease isolation and increase involvement in their lives," said Schubert. "Several of the elders who moved here were faced with many challenges, but here, it's affordable, and the financial strain is taken off of them."

On-site there are a number of resident resources, including a community center, library, tutoring room, computer lab, and community garden. Program services also cover four specific categories, including education, recreation, health and well-being, and arts and culture.

"We think the people who live here are amazing," said Schubert. "They are our heroes."

Davenport agreed. "We are amazed with the miracles we see every day," she said.

away from the idea, and we are trying to bring it back."

It is about helping one another, and being part of your neighbor's lives, Schubert said.

Shirley Gulliksen, 30, has been a resident at Bridge Meadows since May 2011. As a single mother of her three-year-old Karishma, and the adoptive parent of her nieces Karyssa, 9, and Alyssa, 11, she said she is extremely thankful for the community they are a part of at Bridge Meadows.

Gulliksen said, if she hadn't stepped in to care for her nieces, they would have been put into foster care and possibly separated. "There was nowhere else for them to go," she said. "This way they can stay together."

At the complex, she said everybody gets along with one another, and it is truly a place of resident interaction.

"They (the elders) give so much support with the kids and even with me," she said. "It is amazing."

According to Schubert, there is a need for everyone to understand that these children are everyone's children. "They sit next to your child at school, they live in your neighborhood, and they need us to be their

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