

Rosalyn Volkmer:

I am a member of a church team that is sponsoring one of the Yale Park families that was displaced last year. The KAREN family that we are helping was relocated to one of Mr. Paladino's properties.

We gathered new furniture for the family. Upon delivering it a few days after they moved in we were shocked to see mice running through the apartment.

Since the family arrived there, we have been helping them to battle unsanitary living conditions including cockroach and rodent infestation. At the time the apartment was rented by this family, the toilet was not functioning correctly, cabinets drawers in the bathroom were not working, the stove had a broken handle making that burner inoperable and a vent covering was mangled and hanging off the vent. We were saddened to see our vulnerable neighbors being relocated to a place that appeared so unsanitary and ill-kept. Our team has been working with Restoring Dignity and Mr. Paladino to resolve these issues for months now, as our refugee friends do not speak English well and do not know how to communicate these concerns to their landlord.

Some of the issues have been resolved, but as of today, our refugee friend (renter of the apartment) let me know through an interpreter that she is still seeing mice in the apartment at least a few times per week and that bugs remain a constant problem. We will continue to address these health and safety issues with Mr. Paladino. Our vulnerable neighbors deserve a safe and habitable home. This family is in special need of safe living conditions, as they were resettled to the US as a special medical case, with the children of the family having a special medical need that requires monthly treatments.

I am happy that we are able to help this one family, I have deep concern for the probably at least 100 other mostly immigrant and refugee families living in that rental property, as I know that they also must be facing some of these same issues (rodent and bug infestations), but they likely do not have someone to advocate for them.

I ask that the city of Omaha do everything in its power to ensure that ALL landlords provide safe and habitable dwellings for all tenants, and especially for our most vulnerable neighbors.

I appreciate Ms. Wyble's suggestion that this type of TIF funding should be awarded to landlords who prove they are maintaining current properties.

Thank you for making a decision that is in the best interest of all Omaha renters and taxpayers.