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It was a year like no other in Oakridge Neighborhood’s 50-year history. But if there was one thing that was clear throughout 2020 and into 2021, it was just how resilient and relevant our organization remains. During a year marked by the devastating effects of COVID-19, societal unrest and even a derecho (!), our mission of creating pathways to success for our ethnically-rich community of adults, children and families proved more critical than ever.

Oakridge Neighborhood provides affordable, quality housing coupled with supportive programs and essential services for residents and others in the community — some of our city’s most vulnerable. Our programs impact hundreds of people daily, helping them succeed and become economically independent in their quest to enjoy a secure and happy life.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting Iowa in March 2020 with school and business closures, Oakridge Neighborhood residents and clients were particularly impacted. Oakridge Neighborhood has a poverty level exceeding 95 percent, and over 40 percent of our residents became unemployed in the early stages of the pandemic, adding an extra burden to families who were already experiencing financial strain.

Throughout the pandemic, Oakridge remained open, serving as a lifeline, safe haven and center of hope for residents and clients when they needed us most. As it has done many times during its 50 years, Oakridge Neighborhood quickly shifted course with ingenuity to address the unique and specific needs of our clients.

Our community partners rallied to provide much needed support. Our board was unflattering in its dedication, commitment and guidance. Large companies, small family-owned restaurants and church groups donated thousands of fresh meals for our families. Scores of individuals donated funds and regularly brought in food, paper products and other needed supplies. Each and every contribution mattered and was so appreciated.

We are proud of the impact Oakridge Neighborhood has had on so many, especially in the last year. Your support helps make it all possible. Together we are #OakridgeStrong.

Teree Caldwell Johnson
President and CEO
• Served as frontline case managers, translating important COVID-19 information for families, providing resources and emotional support.

• Created and implemented resident and client survey assessing employment status, COVID awareness, immediate needs and overall wellbeing.

• Implemented new services, including food and prescription delivery and assistance with medical intervention, food insecurity and unemployment applications, contacting creditors due to job loss, and more.

• Conducted routine health and welfare check-ups, provided options for those needing to isolate from ill family members, and delivered care packages.

• Retained additional multilingual employees to provide increased translation capabilities and case management services.

• Established new partnerships with employers and staffing agencies to bring significant new employment opportunities to clients.

• Expanded Youth Department programming to 10 hours daily as students schooled virtually, providing an environment conducive to learning.

• Adjusted program delivery and instituted new safety protocols like meeting clients by appointment only and adjusting in-person classes.

• Implemented WhatsApp to communicate with residents of multiple languages.

• Organized resident giveaways of fresh produce and non-perishable goods; coats, clothing and household items; and cleaning and hygiene supplies.

• Secured a variety of new grants to help support critical programming.

• Provided unfaltering operation of our Oak Academy early care and preschool, so frontline workers and those supporting families could work.
Our Oakridge Neighbors

1,100 residents

53% children ages 0–18

66% refugees and immigrants

$15,203 average household income for family of 4

23 countries

29 languages
Oakridge Neighborhood provides safe, affordable housing coupled with wraparound services to create opportunities for individual and family success. A nonprofit housing and human services agency located in Des Moines’ urban core, Oakridge Neighborhood is not just a housing facility, but truly a neighborhood, a community of people gaining stability while preparing for the next step in their life’s journey.

Our neighborhood is Iowa’s largest project-based Section 8 housing complex with 300 town-home units ranging from studios to five-bedroom units. In 2013 we opened Silver Oaks, which offers 39 one- and two-bedroom senior living apartment homes. Our campus offers urban living in a well maintained, park-like setting.

Oakridge Neighborhood is unique in its ability to provide for the needs of low-income and refugee families through government-assisted permanent housing in conjunction with human services, making it an integral part of the greater Des Moines housing and human services continuum.

'OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS... the grandfather who came to live here as a child, who remembers the sense of community and support that embraced his family, who credits his years at Oakridge with instilling a strong sense of confidence, and who now works for the Des Moines Public Schools as an associate providing guidance to high school students.'
Housing

300 Section 8 townhomes — efficiencies to five-bedroom units

39 senior living apartment homes

17 acres in Des Moines’ urban core

60% residents live at Oakridge Neighborhood 1–5 years
Oak Academy provides safe, nurturing and high-quality child care and early enrichment education to an ethnically and culturally diverse group of infants and toddlers ages six weeks to Pre-K. The Academy prepares preschoolers to enter kindergarten with a love of learning and on an equal playing field with their peers. Oak Academy is nationally accredited and a QRS Level 5 state licensed early care and preschool designed to meet the social, emotional, intellectual and physical needs of the whole child. The program utilizes the research-based Creative Curriculum, founded on principles of child development, individualized for each child and incorporating culturally relevant practices.

The challenging curriculum also meets and exceeds the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s (NAEYC) standards.

We are proud to staff Oak Academy with caring individuals who are engaged in ongoing personal and professional development and are committed to the application of their education. Oak Academy’s teaching staff is state certified, fully credentialed, and degreed. All teachers dedicate over 30 hours per year to continuing education.

OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS... the college sophomore whose education began at Oak Academy, who participated in our youth program where she was mentored by a teacher who “saw the potential in me when I didn’t even know it was there,” and who credits having someone believe in her as the sole reason she is in college.
Services

Early Childhood

125 children served
500+ hours of professional development
80% to kindergarten proficient in literacy skills
85% to kindergarten proficient in social emotional skills
Our Youth Education and Engagement programs provide pathways to success for our young people. We understand the barriers faced by high-poverty and at-risk students. By providing an array of meaningful programming that wraps around each child from kindergarten through high school, we can ensure each student’s academic and developmental success.

The result: Young people with confidence and critical thinking skills who graduate from high school and go on to higher education and/or productive careers.

Oakridge is a designated 21st Century Learning Center providing much needed support through after-school and out-of-school programming focused on the academic, social, emotional, and enrichment needs of students.

Data reveals that participation in youth programs positively influences academic performance in a variety of ways, including: improved grades, better attitudes toward school, higher school attendance rates, deeper engagement in learning and higher graduation rates.

OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS... the budding musician who came to America from the Ivory Coast, who is proud of the money he has saved working for four years in our Youth Summer Employment Program, who earned a scholarship to play basketball in junior college and who has since moved on to attend Iowa State University.
Services
Youth Education and Engagement

**Project OASIS (K–5th Grade)**
is an educationally based after-school program focused on increasing math and reading proficiency, improving school attendance and improving academic engagement.

**BE REAL Academy and SWAGG (6th–8th Grade)**
programs prepare students and parents for the transitions experienced during middle school years and provide mentoring and support to set the course for a successful high school experience.

**Youth Summer Employment Program (YSEP) (ages 14–21)**
is a comprehensive program offering paid employment opportunities for high school youth coupled with job skills workshops, career exploration, plus leadership and community involvement opportunities.

**STEAM**
combines STEM plus the Arts to provide opportunities for middle and high school students to participate in creative arts programming — digital film making, video production, music and theater — as well as dive deeper into science and technology in fun and engaging ways.

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**180**
K–12 students served

**10**
hours daily programming Summer and Fall 2020 virtual learning

**94%**
high school graduation rate

**Youth program graduates attending college**
- University of Iowa
- Iowa State University
- Drake University
- Grand View University
- Central College
- Buena Vista University
- Des Moines Area Community College
- University of Nebraska
- Ellsworth Community College
- U.S. Marine Corps
Our Family and Workforce Programs move families to sustained self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Programming focuses on intensive case management and developing job readiness skills. Case managers work with clients to establish an individualized plan of action, identify and provide needed services, and track and monitor their progress. Working collaboratively with the case managers are job readiness and placement coordinators who work with employers and placement agencies to monitor position openings and opportunities in a variety of fields and disciplines. We had numerous employment partners in 2020, like the US Postal Service, Osceola Foods, Amazon, Hy-Vee, Pitney Bowes and Andersen Windows.

We offer a number of services — for speakers of English and multiple other languages — designed to improve computer skills, resume writing, networking, and other skills necessary to compete in the modern workplace. Our recently expanded Workforce Resource Center includes new computers, tablets, and other resources for client use as they progress through their journey.

Our adult programs also provide the necessary tools for long-term success, including education and coaching to enhance and promote financial literacy, effective parenting and self-sufficiency. We offer cultural transition support groups and peer discussions, English language and citizenship classes, driver’s education, food pantry and fulfillment of other essential needs.

OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS… the single mom of three who came from Sudan, who took English, citizenship, parenting and financial classes offered at Oakridge, who now goes to college while working at UnityPoint, whose children are involved in Oakridge youth programs plus guitar and piano lessons and will most definitely follow her lead and go to college!
Services

Family and Workforce Programs

1,289 people served
170 job placements
$18 highest hourly rate
21 citizenship attainment
OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS... the Somalian refuge who arrived with young children but no other family or friends, who could not speak English but was able to take advantage of Oakridge services while her children attended Oak Academy, who went to college and now owns her own home.
Our Vision

Oakridge is the premier housing and service provider offering a safe community where poverty is alleviated and all people develop their full potential.

Our Mission

The Oakridge community creates pathways to success for adults, children, and families by providing affordable housing and culturally diverse education and employability programs.
OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS... the 17-year-old from Sudan who is taking mostly advanced placement classes to prepare for college and already has her own digital art business.
Board of Directors

Martine Olson-Daniel  
Wells Fargo  
President

Dr. Andrea McGuire  
Dr. Andy McGuire & Associates  
Vice President

Jamie Buelt  
enQStrategies  
Secretary

Mark Wiltse  
Fidelity and Guaranty Life  
Treasurer

Tim Haight  
Deere & Company/John Deere Financial (Ret.)  
Immediate Past-President

Carol Bodensteiner  
Writer & Consultant

Denise Broadnax  
Oakridge Resident Representative

Albert Farr  
DMACC Urban Campus

Sharon Gaddy-Hanna  
Bankers Trust

Steve Hinrichs  
Hinrichs Partners, LLC

Michael Hutney  
The Stelter Company

Mary Johnson  
LaMair-Mulock-Condon Co.

Kent Kramer  
The Foster Group

Erin Kuhl  
Kum & Go

Skylar Mayberry-Mayes  
Nationwide Insurance

Joyce McDanel  
UnityPoint Health Des Moines

Deidre Williams  
EMC

“I am honored to be able to work with the committed, talented volunteers and staff at Oakridge. I am so proud to be a part of an organization that creates such a strong sense of community among its very diverse residents and provides life-changing services that empower people to succeed.”

Martine Olson-Daniel, President, Oakridge Neighborhood Board of Directors

“I was intrigued by Oakridge’s model of combining housing with services. As the saying goes, you can feed someone a fish, but the better thing is to teach one how to fish. We are teaching a lot of people how to fish, changing lives and building stronger communities, and I have gotten deep satisfaction from being a part of that.”

Tim Haight, Past President, Oakridge Neighborhood Board of Directors

“My passion is with children and education. It’s gratifying to volunteer with an organization like Oakridge that helps families achieve their dreams of self-sufficiency and children see the promise of the future can be theirs. As a board member, my time, talent, and financial support make a meaningful impact for our residents. I’ve never had a more rewarding board engagement.”

Carol Bodensteiner, Past President, Oakridge Neighborhood Board of Directors
Thank you for your support!

Oakridge Neighborhood remains **resilient** and **relevant**. We rely on the generous support of our donors and community partners to build our life changing programs, and value the collaborative network of corporate, foundation, government and private supporters. A special thanks to these key contributors who’ve been particularly instrumental to our success.

**If you’d like to help, please consider:**
- ✔ Spreading the word
- ✔ Volunteering your time
- ✔ Providing financial assistance
- ✔ Attending a fundraising event

Contact Kristin Littlejohn
Vice President — Development
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515-244-7702

**Please follow us**

OakridgeNeighborhood.org

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OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD IS... the 14-year-old who was born in the brush of Uganda as her family fled war, who earns money in the summer in our Youth Summer Employment Program and provides half to her sister who is raising her to help support the family.