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Oakland Resident Is a Rambling Man



Francis Estrella says he's ridden the rails in every state except Hawaii, where he was born, and Alaska, where he was a salmon fisherman for 30 years. From the time he left home at 12 until two years ago, when he moved into ABHOW's E.E. Cleveland Manor in Oakland, Calif., Estrella has been a rambling man.

These days, the taut, energetic 67-year-old confines most of his rambling to walking or cycling San Francisco Bay's eastern waterfront, where he collects and disposes of washed-up plastic junk that could be hazardous to sea or bird life. He takes pride in his Native Hawaiian heritage and feels a kinship with the natural world nourished by a lifetime as a fisherman, farmer and outdoorsman.

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But he still hears the call of the railroad. “When I see tracks, I see freedom,” says Estrella, who also claims Chinese and Portuguese ancestry.

To free himself from an abusive mother, Estrella left home at 12. The second of four siblings, he lived on the streets of Honolulu for two years before he met Ed Bilderback, an Alaska salmon fisherman who became his respected “elder.”

Bilderback was building a boat in Hawaii. When the “Valiant Maid,” a 50-footer designed for netting salmon, was launched, Estrella stowed away. He says his only provisions for the 2,700-mile voyage to the mainland were a canteen of water, a jar of peanut butter and a loaf of bread.

He was soon discovered. But he convinced Bilderback to take him to the mainland.

Estrella eventually became a member of Bilderback’s four-person seasonal salmon fishing crew, based in Cordova, Alaska.

But the traveling bug bit again, and when he wasn’t fishing, Estrella toured the lower 48 on freight trains. He did farming work and other odd jobs to pay his way.

In the 1970s, Estrella befriended a group of Mohawk Indians and settled in Akwesasne, an upstate New York Mohawk reservation straddling the United States-Canada border. He married a woman of the Wolf clan, fathered a daughter and grew buckwheat, squash, white corn and potatoes on an island in the middle of the



Estrella sits in his ground-floor studio apartment looking at a photo of his grandchildren on his daughter’s Facebook page.

St. Lawrence River.

Unfortunately, when his daughter was 6, the marriage failed. Estrella headed west and ended up in Oakland.

After several lean years, a nun at St. Mary’s Senior Center connected Estrella with Kenetta Jackson, E.E. Cleveland Manor’s administrator. He’ll never forget

“When I see tracks, I see freedom.”

— Francis Estrella, E.E. Cleveland Manor resident

that she took a chance on him. “I will stick with her till the walls fall down,” he says.

Estrella shares his passion for protecting the coastline with St. Mary’s patrons and E.E. Cleveland Manor residents through a multimedia presentation he created using his own words and photographs.

Now when Estrella travels to visit friends or family, he uses Amtrak or the airlines. He also uses the Internet, where he recently reconnected with his daughter.

On her Facebook page he’s seen photos of his five grandchildren. And after three decades of estrangement, he was moved to read a Facebook post in which she referred to him, for the first time ever, as her father.



Estrella swings a daypack onto his shoulder as he heads out for a walk on the San Francisco Bay shoreline.

The list of ABHOW affordable housing communities continues to grow. The company acquired Three Rivers Village in Richland, Wash., during the summer in a purchase from its original owner, Richland Senior Associates, which operated the community as a for-profit enterprise.

“We are pleased to welcome Three Rivers Village to ABHOW’s expanding affordable housing portfolio,” says Ancel Romero, senior vice president for affordable housing.

The addition of Three Rivers Village brings the total number of ABHOW affordable housing communities to 23.

ABHOW bought the community for just under \$2.1 million using outside funds, including eight-year-term loans of \$975,000 from the Washington Community Reinvestment Association and \$850,000 from the Washington State Housing Commission’s Land Acquisition Program. Rental income will cover the loan payments.

The purchase headed off the prospect of the community’s conversion to market-rate housing under an option in the previous owner’s 30-year contract. The result will be the preservation of Three Rivers Village’s affordable housing status for the community’s 40 apartments, Romero says.

“The possibility could have been devastating to low-income seniors in the rapidly growing Richland area,” he says. “ABHOW stepped in to prevent that from occurring, and we are honored to have the privilege to be in a position to do so.”

The city of Richland is part of Washington’s Tri-Cities area, which includes Kennewick and Pasco. The metropolitan area was created during World War II



Susan Ruan (far left), administrator of Broadmoor Plaza in San Leandro, Calif., visits Three Rivers Village residents (from left) Frances Zagarella, Geneva Hughes, Virginia Neil and Sharon Brumbaugh.

when the nearby Hanford Nuclear Reservation was established to refine plutonium for atomic bombs built as part of the Manhattan Project.

The name Three Rivers comes from the area’s location at the confluence of the Snake, Yakima, and Columbia rivers.

Numerous improvements were necessary to bring the community up to ABHOW standards, says Travis Hanna, director of operations for affordable housing. First, a number of veteran ABHOW employees were dispatched to Three Rivers Village to organize files and records.

The next major step was the hiring of Cindy Jam as the community’s administrator. Jam relocated to Washington from Billings, Mont., where she managed many aspects of a busy law office, including rental homes and apartments that the firm owned.

Although no major changes to the community are

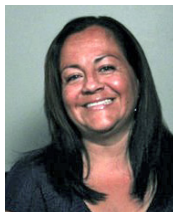
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The past few months have seen a number of transfers, new faces, and promotions at ABHOW's affordable housing communities.



Daugherty

In May, longtime administrator Cleda Givens-Bullock retired from Mount Rubidoux Manor in Riverside, Calif., and Melody Daugherty, previously administrator of Casa de Redwood in Redwood City, Calif., took on the job. Daugherty is ABHOW's current administrator of the year.



Cruz

Joining ABHOW as new administrators are Zuly Cruz, Cindy Jam and Natasha Djordjevic. Cruz, who follows Daugherty at Casa de Redwood, arrives from Martin Luther Tower Apartments, a 121-apartment affordable housing community in San Francisco.



Djordjevic

Djordjevic will begin her job as the new administrator for Shepherd's Garden in Lynnwood, Wash., on Oct. 25. She comes to ABHOW from the Tacoma Housing Authority with an in-depth knowledge of property management and affordable housing.



Jam

Jam fills the administrator position at ABHOW's newly acquired affordable housing community, Three Rivers Village in Richland, Wash. She comes to ABHOW from Billings, Mont., where she managed numerous functions at a busy law office, including several apartments and homes owned by the firm, says Travis Hanna, ABHOW's director of operations for affordable housing.

Both Redlands, Calif., affordable housing communities also have new administrators promoted from within ABHOW.

Cathy Galvez takes over at Fern Lodge. She joined ABHOW in 2004 after working for 20 years with the Housing Authority of San Bernardino, Calif.



Galvez

"Cathy has proven to be a dependable and hardworking team member who has been willing to pitch in and help out at sister communities such as Judson Terrace Homes in San Luis Obispo," Hanna says. "We are confident that Cathy will continue to excel in her new role as administrator at Fern Lodge."



Makamure

Moirah Makamure, the new administrator at Casa de la Vista, originally joined ABHOW in 2002 as an occupancy specialist at Fern Lodge, later moving to Mount Rubidoux Manor in the same capacity. Galvez and Makamure are members of the first class of Leadership ABHOW, the company's professional development program.

Moirah is the sister of Mildred Makamure, an ABHOW regional property supervisor whose portfolio also includes Casa de la Vista. As such, Moirah will report directly to Hanna.

"In the two years that Moirah was at Mount Rubidoux Manor she was able to greatly reduce the vacancy rate at the property and improved the HUD audit scores to 'above average,'" Hanna says. "We are excited to see how Moirah uses her skills to enrich the lives of the residents at Casa de la Vista."

All the recent moves speak to ABHOW's ability to find and foster talent throughout the organization, says Ancel Romero, senior vice president for affordable housing.

"Smart growth has many joyful end results. Chief among them is the furtherance of our mission of service to elders," he says. "Coming close to that, though, is the ability to recruit and promote leaders within our organization, and Zuly, Cindy and Natasha now rank among ABHOW's new shining stars. We have also been blessed by the contributions of Melody, Cathy and Moirah for many years and are very proud of their recent promotions."

Pilgrim Haven Becomes The Terraces at Los Altos

In anticipation of major campus improvements, ABHOW's Los Altos, Calif., community has unveiled a new name: The Terraces at Los Altos.

The official renaming of the former Pilgrim Haven took place Oct. 1.

"ABHOW is dedicated to investing in its first retirement community, Pilgrim Haven," says Sloan Bentley, president of Seniority, Inc., ABHOW's subsidiary sales, marketing and management business. "As part of the campus' master plan and redevelopment, we have an opportunity to review our brand image, which includes the community name."

The change, she notes, is part of a larger strategy in ABHOW.

"Throughout the years, ABHOW has supported brand development such as The Grove for our memory support programs," she says. "For our campuses that undertake a master plan redevelopment, we have incorporated The Terraces brand. We believe The Terraces at Los Altos is brand that's fitting for the planned new buildings and wonderful location of Los Altos."

As part of the physical transformation of the community, a number of older buildings will be demolished, with more modern structures built in three stages, starting in 2012, says Russell Mauk, ABHOW's vice president for design, construction and redevelopment.

The first phase will include the addition of The Grove, a memory support program, plus expansion of The Village, the community's skilled nursing center.

The second phase includes the addition of 28 assisted living apartments in The Lodge. The final phase will add 81 residential living apartment homes plus common areas.

Other additions and upgrades will include two new dining venues, a library, exercise room, small theater, computer room, two hair salons, and an underground parking garage for residents, team members and visitors.



Given all those improvements, Bentley says, the name change not only recasts what the Los Altos community represents but builds positive associations with ABHOW communities bearing The Terraces name in Los Gatos and Fresno, Calif.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and Boise, Idaho.

"We feel sure that The Terraces at Los Altos will immediately be associated with the vibrant, wellness-focused lifestyle we will offer to those 65 and older," she says. "The new name reflects the vibrancy, style and design of the community we will build."

Around Los Altos and in the community itself, the response to the change has been positive, says Executive Director Rae Holt.

"There's a feeling among the people in this area that ABHOW values the location of The Terraces at Los Altos. Pilgrim Haven has been in Los Altos for more than 60 years, and our new name emphasizes our location and our commitment to the community," he says. "We really want to be an active participant in the life of Los Altos, and we're working at establishing and developing close relationships with our neighbors, civic leaders and the business community. So as we develop this new project, we definitely want to be closely connected with our community."

Three Rivers Village

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planned immediately, Hanna says some basic repairs will begin right away. He requested assistance from the ABHOW Foundation for a complete renovation of the community room and received a \$7,500 grant. Funds for additional improvements could come from fully refinancing the community, he says.

“The goal is to steadily improve the building systems, infrastructure, and aesthetics during the next couple of years. We definitely want to leverage the Foundation to help us as much as it can,” Hanna says. “One advantage we have over for-profit communities is that we have the Foundation to help us out.”



Three ABHOW leaders visit Three Rivers Village: Ancel Romero (left), senior vice president for affordable housing; Susan Ruan, administrator of Broadmoor Plaza in San Leandro, Calif.; and Travis Hanna, director of operations.



Golf Classic Is a Winner

More than 180 participants and volunteers made the 14th Annual ABHOW Foundation Golf Classic a huge success Oct. 11 at Round Hill Country Club in Alamo, Calif. For ABHOW friends and partners, such as Sodexo Senior Vice President Chester Castillo (right), who shares a ride with Ron Schaefer, executive director of Valle Verde in Santa Barbara, Calif., it was another great day on the links for a great cause – ABHOW affordable housing. Look for more coverage in the November edition of ABHOW Words.



ABHOW
Words

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“American Baptist Homes of the West, as an expression of Christian mission, seeks to enhance the independence, well-being and security of older people through the provision of housing, health care and supportive services.”

