



THE GIFT OF STABILITY: Josh Colvin, *right*, entertaining a friend in his new apartment provided through an initiative of a Presbyterian and a Congregational church in Minneapolis

The young and the homeless

Churches offer affordable housing to a growing population.

I was scared,” says 21-year-old Josh Colvin, who was homeless for the last three years. “It was stressful, not knowing where I was going to stay, what I was going to do night after night.”

Then right before Christmas 2010, Colvin got the ultimate gift. He was one of the first young people to move into the new Nicollet Square, an affordable housing development designed for homeless teens and young adults, with services to support mental health, independent living and employment skills.

The 42-unit housing complex, located in a community just south of Minneapolis, was created by two churches that were celebrating their 150th anniversaries. To mark the historical milestone, Westminster Presbyterian and Plymouth Congregational decided to do something to address the increasing number of homeless teens near downtown Minneapolis. They teamed up with a local affordable housing developer and YouthLink, a social

services organization that provides support to young people.

“Once I got on board with this project I was in awe of how well organized it was,” says Katie Miller, who works for YouthLink. “It was incredible to see churches in their community working together with professionals and volunteers to support this project.”

By this spring, 32 young men and women between the ages of 16 and 21 had moved into Nicollet Square. Each time a new tenant moves in, volunteers from the two churches fill the person’s apartment with basic living necessities—dishes, silverware, towels, lamps, comforters and other items.

“That’s such a great gift, because they basically come here with a garbage bag of clothes,” says Miller.

Colvin says he was “really grateful” to the churches for helping stock his new apartment. “I had no money left after I paid for the damage deposit and first month’s rent.”

Colvin is now attending college and hopes to work in the computer networking and support field. “Ever since I came to Nicollet Square, I’ve gotten help at building up stability,”

he says. “I’m no longer stuck out on the street, not moving forward with my life.”

Douglas Mitchell, Westminster Church’s associate pastor, is thrilled to see the Nicollet Square residents making progress. “This is the church showing mercy and hospitality to some of those in our community with the greatest need,” he says. “This investment for affordable housing is bearing fruit in the lives of these young people.”—*Paul Seebeck*

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