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The Brothers Redevelopment

# BLUEPRINT

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## Remembering Don Schierling

### 1934-2021

There's a story that Don Schierling's daughters, Sonja and Dawn, like to tell about how their father started Brothers Redevelopment.

50 years ago, Schierling, Richard Magnus, Joe Giron and Manny Martinez began talking about how they could serve low-income individuals who live in Southwest Denver.

"The story goes two Catholics, a Lutheran and a Mennonite were at a bar. They got to talking, and they came up with this concept of Brothers and helping low-income people," explained Sonja. "I know my father went to his family a few days later, and my grandfather gave him \$1,000 to start Brothers. Dad fluttered ideas. Then he went to the community to help get people involved whether it's through donations or community involvement." "Brothers has always been his home away from home."

Brothers is among the many legacies Schierling leaves as the founder, mentor, father and man who served as an inspiration to many passed away at the age of 86 in February. He is survived by Sonja, Dawn and his grandchildren Darren and Travis and is preceded in death by his wife Elvira — the woman who Schierling served as a caregiver to during her last days as she battled dementia.

Schierling was born in 1934 in Henderson, Nebraska and grew up in the middle of an economic crisis. While he was attending Bethel College in Kansas, he signed up for Pax, a service program that worked to

reconstruct areas that were devastated by World War II. He spent two years building houses in Germany and teaching people in Greece effective farming techniques. Schierling's service in Pax had a lasting impact on him as he carried a picture of a malnourished child he met in Greece to remind him of how we're all responsible for people everywhere.

His work outside of the United States continued as he held a role with nonprofit International Development Enterprises that encourages self-sufficiency in Africa, Asia and Central America through agriculture, water, sanitation and financial programs.

"Aside from being an amazing father, he had a heart to help anybody who needed it. The kids, the poor, third world countries — he was just so passionate about helping others," said Dawn. "He was very humble and always saw the good in people."

In 1969, the Schierling family moved to Denver and two years later, Schierling helped start Brothers. Through Brothers, he has touched countless lives with the nonprofit's affordable communities, housing-related services, programs directed at helping low-income seniors and his time serving as a board member to the organization for nearly 50 years.

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Brothers Redevelopment, Inc.

Housing • Home Modification & Repair • Housing Counseling

## Schierling continued...

“Don will be remembered as a great man and visionary who cared about our neighbors who were less fortunate,” said Brothers Redevelopment President Jeff Martinez. “I always called him the conscience of the organization. Don always challenged me to ponder business motives through the lens of helping clients, particularly seniors. He was a great mentor, and dear friend, and he will be greatly missed.”

Even in his last days, Schierling told his family he wanted Brothers’ employees to know how important the organization was to him and how he had hoped he made a difference in the community.

Outside of Brothers, Schierling’s humanitarian work involved revitalizing Denver neighborhoods through strategic lending. Schierling also taught at Regis University Business School from the early 1980’s until around 2013.

In 2015, he testified at the launch of the Assisting Caregivers Today Caucus in Washington D.C. He was honored by AARP for being a caregiver to Elvira and was recognized for model Christian stewardship through the 2020 National Journey Award presented by Everence — a faith based financial services organization.

“I think people will always remember Don as someone who was always in a good mood, always happy and always willing to help whoever needed help,” said Brothers Board Chair Chad Mitchell. “He was someone who was very passionate about Brothers and helping those around him. I have no doubt his legacy and name will live on and will continue to be part of not only Brothers but also the Denver community.”



## What do our clients have to say about us?

The COVID-19 pandemic has made life even more difficult for some of our clients who were already struggling. Brothers Redevelopment stepped up to the challenge last year and provided services to more than 17,000 Coloradans through our programs aimed at helping seniors age in place, our housing assistance resources and more. Click on the image on the right to see a glimpse at what life is like for some of our clients and what we’ve done to help make life easier for them.



## Vaccinating Brothers Redevelopment's seniors

When COVID-19 vaccines became eligible to people 65 years and older earlier this year, Daniel Stratton knew he would need help getting signed up for the shot.

Stratton, who has lived at Brothers Redevelopment's Edgewater Plaza affordable community for nine years, didn't have to look far to receive assistance in finding a vaccine provider. All he had to do was go to Brothers Resident Service Coordinator Kathleen Duran for help.

"I was more excited about getting the help than getting the vaccine. Kathleen and I started searching for a vaccine appointment before I was even eligible," said Stratton, 72. "There are people who are struggling to get in line to get this thing, and I was lucky to have help right here at my home."

Duran and other resident service coordinators at Brothers' 16 affordable communities have been hard at work getting the nonprofit's residents vaccinated against COVID-19 — a virus that poses an elevated risk of dying for older people who fall ill to it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Throughout the pandemic, Brothers' resident service coordinators have been on site at the nonprofit's affordable communities helping residents access crucial resources like Medicaid, food and other benefits.

"For a lot of our residents, we're the only help they have," said Duran. "Many of them have had no idea what the first step is in finding a vaccine appointment. It's been a challenge for them because you have to register online to get a vaccine at some sites, and they don't know how to navigate through the process."

Brothers Senior Services Manager Gary Olson said each resident service coordinator has reached out to agencies that provide transportation or have requested the establishment of a temporary remote vaccination site. Duran, for example, reached out to the city of Edgewater who helped Edgewater Plaza residents access a sign-up system for a mobile vaccination clinic in the city.

"Our residents expressed some fear and have been reassured by each resident service coordinator's efforts and ability to provide information and comfort. The efforts of the resident service coordinators have produced positive results," said Olson.



## Looking ahead to the 43rd annual Paint-A-Thon

Around 17 years ago, Denver resident Lonzo Vann injured his knee at his job as a warehouse worker.

Vann ended up getting a knee replacement, but the operation went bad when his doctor gave him the wrong size of knee. He said his knee is now permanently damaged, and there is a chance he may have to get his leg amputated in the future.

Vann's health conditions made it impossible for him to paint the outside of his home by himself. But after he got in touch with Brothers Redevelopment's Paint-A-Thon program, a free service in which volunteers paint the exterior of houses for elderly and disabled homeowners in the metro area and Colorado Springs, Vann received the changes to his home that he had long dreamed for.

Through the Paint-A-Thon, Vann received fresh paint on his house, a wheelchair ramp and a bar to help him stand.

"I love it, all the neighbors give me compliments and tell me how nice my house looks. It saved me a lot of money, because I have a lot of medical bills," said Vann. "If it weren't for Brothers, I don't know if I would still be in my home."





## Paint-A-Thon continued...

Brothers is getting ready to kick off its 43rd annual Paint-A-Thon season. Ahead of the season, Paint-A-Thon Volunteer Program Manager Chad Nibbelink discussed what to expect from the program this year. Here is what he had to say.

**Q: What do you most look forward to about Paint-A-Thon?**

**CN:** There are so many things I am excited about for! I genuinely look forward to being onsite with our volunteers — with shared purpose and group energy for the task. It is great to be outside, getting exercise, having meaningful conversations and working hard on valuable projects! Paint-A-Thon sites are fun!

Not only do we get to physically see the home exterior restored, but we also get to witness our homeowner's stress and worry turn into peace of mind.

Finally, I am excited to work with our college aged project management interns and to witness firsthand the growth of their leadership skills over the course of the summer.

**Q: What benefits does Paint-A-Thon provide to its clients?**

**CN:** Research shows aging adults are happier and healthier the longer they stay in their homes. The Paint-A-Thon plays an important role in helping our clients age well in their homes. Repairing and painting the homes of our clients improves and protects home exteriors, increases the aesthetics of both the home and community, preserves their largest financial investment, contributes to neighborhood stabilization and addresses safety concerns like lead-based paint hazards. Exterior painting can help clients maintain their homeowner's insurance, and we have even had multiple clients prevent foreclosure by bringing their homes up to the terms of their refinance or reverse mortgages. On average it would cost our clients 25% of their annual income to paint the outside of their home. By doing this important work we also help our clients use their limited income on things like groceries and healthcare.

**Q: What are the benefits of volunteering for Paint-A-Thon?**

**CN:** When we focus on helping others, we reduce our stress, we are happier, and our immune system works better. Our hope is that Paint-A-Thon volunteers have a fun and rewarding day of service and enjoy their time working alongside each other and our clients. We strive to provide a safe and organized volunteer experience, real time training, an encouraging atmosphere and the opportunity to make a positive impact on our both our broader community and the life of an individual client.

We hope that each of our volunteers leave a Paint-A-Thon site with a better understanding of our region's housing challenges, ways that Brothers Redevelopment and local organizations are stepping up to meet these needs and what they individually can do to contribute to this housing mission. I am also confident that everyone will leave a Paint-A-Thon site physically tired but emotionally and intellectually rejuvenated after a meaningful day of service.

*To apply or volunteer for Paint-A-Thon click [here](#).*



## HMR goes green in Manitou Springs

Bobby McAtee's 100-year-old Manitou Springs house was originally built as a summer cottage that had no insulation.

Him and his wife could feel the wind blow through their house's doors when the temperature dropped. And when the couple would place their hands on their house's walls on cold nights, it felt like they were sticking their hands in a freezer.

But after a house assessment conducted by Brothers Redevelopment's Home Modification and Repair Program, a free service in which the nonprofit helps low-income and disabled seniors maintain their homes and age in place, McAtee's house received crucial repairs and modifications that will keep his family warm and make his house energy efficient. Among the repairs Brothers carried out for the house include insulation, LED bulbs that are environmentally friendly, weather stripped doors that prevent leakage and cold air and more.

"We wouldn't have been able to afford it. We had talked about fixing our house for years, but these projects kept falling to the bottom of the list because it was too expensive," said McAtee. Brothers saved the household \$7,054 by completing the home projects.

"Without Brothers, we wouldn't have been able to do this at all," he added.

Since 2020, Brothers has been conducting weatherization and energy improvements to low-income households in Manitou Springs through the city's Energy Efficiency Pilot Program — funded by the City of Manitou Springs and El Paso County. The goal of the program is to improve the energy efficiency of a home and to remove health and safety hazards.

Manitou Springs homeowners can receive weatherization and energy improvements to their house like insulation system replacements, window and door replacements, energy efficient furnace and water heaters, installation and replacement of solar energy equipment and more.

Those who are interested in the service can call 719-666-7181 for more details.

"As a long-standing Colorado housing assistance provider, we at Brothers Redevelopment are honored to be able to partner with the City of Manitou Springs and El Paso County to improve the overall living conditions for this community," said Brothers Home Modification and Repair Program Manager Jason McCullough. "As a community, Manitou Springs has taken proactive steps to improve the long-term sustainability for existing housing stock and to reduce the city's carbon to work towards a more environmentally responsible future."

Manitou Springs is but one of the more than a dozen communities across the Front Range for which Brothers has tailored a program to help improve overall housing conditions and to help homeowners maintain their homes. The organization has a satellite office in Colorado Springs and has worked throughout El Paso County since 2016.





## From homeless to helping others with housing

When Coloradans call Colorado Housing Connects (1-844-926-6632) and are greeted by housing navigator Shelli Fransen, they are speaking to someone who knows what it's like to be in a housing crisis.

In the summer of 2018, Fransen split from her husband and moved to a friend's house with her two daughters. To pay for rent, she watched her friend's three children and her own daughters while they all shared a two-bedroom house.

But the living arrangement didn't work, so Fransen and her daughters stayed at different motels along Colfax that she paid for using motel vouchers before moving into the Sacred Heart House — a Denver shelter for homeless families with children and single women. While at the shelter, she entered an internship program through the Jefferson County Workforce Center that helped her quickly find stable housing and an internship that turned into a full-time position with Colorado Housing Connects — a free housing helpline Brothers Redevelopment operates for the state that helps Coloradans navigate non-emergency housing services and resources.

"When I looked into the different jobs, I knew I had wanted to do this," said Fransen. Her role as a housing navigator requires her to provide information about housing services and topics of interest to anyone with fair housing concerns. Fransen is also assisting Brothers with processing applications for the state's Emergency Housing Assistance Program — a financial resource for residents who have been financially impacted by COVID-19.

"When people call, and they're in a panic, I can relate to that. I know what it's like to be desperate," Fransen added. "I tell them I've been in their situation before, walk them through resources and let them know to be positive. I've had people call me back once they find housing. Just being able to put yourselves in their shoes is the biggest thing."

Colorado Housing Connects offers counseling services for renters looking to become homeowners, tenant and landlord laws and rights, eviction advice, mortgage payment issues and more. Last year, 9,010 contacts were made through Colorado Housing Connects while 3,657 residents received housing counseling services through the helpline.

"I have a really strong belief in what Brothers does. The Colorado Housing Connects helpline is a good resource for people," said Fransen. "I know the navigators do an excellent job at keeping up with housing resources. I never knew about Colorado Housing Connects when I was homeless, but it's something I would've took advantage of."



