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NEW

## Rainbow Village to use \$75K grant to expand into county

Agency hopes to have home ready in about 3 months



By Tracey Bruce  
For the Leader

Rainbow Village, a nonprofit organization that purchases, refurbishes and maintains homes for people with developmental disabilities, is looking for its first home in Jefferson County, thanks to a \$75,000 grant from the Jefferson Memorial Community Foundation.

Rainbow Village works with agencies that provide residential services for people with developmental disabilities. Arc and Easter Seals are Rainbow Village's largest partners, executive director Michael Rea said. "We have 16 different partner agencies," he said.

For this project, the organization is working with Sunnyhill Inc., he said.

"We're expanding into Jefferson County because obviously, there is a need and we want to respond to that need," Rea said.

Rainbow Village already maintains 77 homes that provide living space for 340 people in neighborhoods throughout the St. Louis metropolitan area. Most of those homes are in St. Louis County and some in St. Charles County, Rea said.

"Our mission is to provide safe, affordable and accessible homes for people with developmental disabilities," he said. "The reason agencies come to us is because what we do, we're really good at. We understand the population we are serving."

Rea said once in a while Rainbow Village will purchase property and build a home, but not very often because it is much less expensive to buy a home and then repair and remodel it to accommodate special needs and special budgets.

"These are people with very limited income. They can afford maybe \$300 to \$400 a month rent," Rea said. "It's almost impossible to find a home for one or two individuals for that little rent."

Rainbow Village wants to find a home in northern Jefferson County, he said and hopes to have it ready for residents soon.

"Hopefully, we can make this happen in the next three months," Rea said.

Rea said the grant from the Jefferson Memorial Community Foundation, awarded June 1, made the expansion into Jefferson County possible.

"We are so grateful to the Jefferson Memorial Community Board of Trustees for making this very special gift. It will directly benefit individuals with developmental disabilities in the Jefferson County community," Rea said.

The foundation was set up to safeguard and invest the \$154 million Mercy paid in 2013 for Jefferson County's only hospital, Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Crystal City.

Proceeds from those investments are used to fund health care-related grants. Over the five cycles so far, the foundation has awarded more than \$16 million.