

# It takes a Rainbow Village

Agency provides homes for people with disabilities

By Jessica Bassett  
Of the St. Louis American

Cornelius Nall has never met a stranger. An energetic and talkative fellow, he shakes the hand of every person he meets. His home – located on Dautel Lane, between Creve Coeur and Maryland Heights – has been his home for the past 11 years.

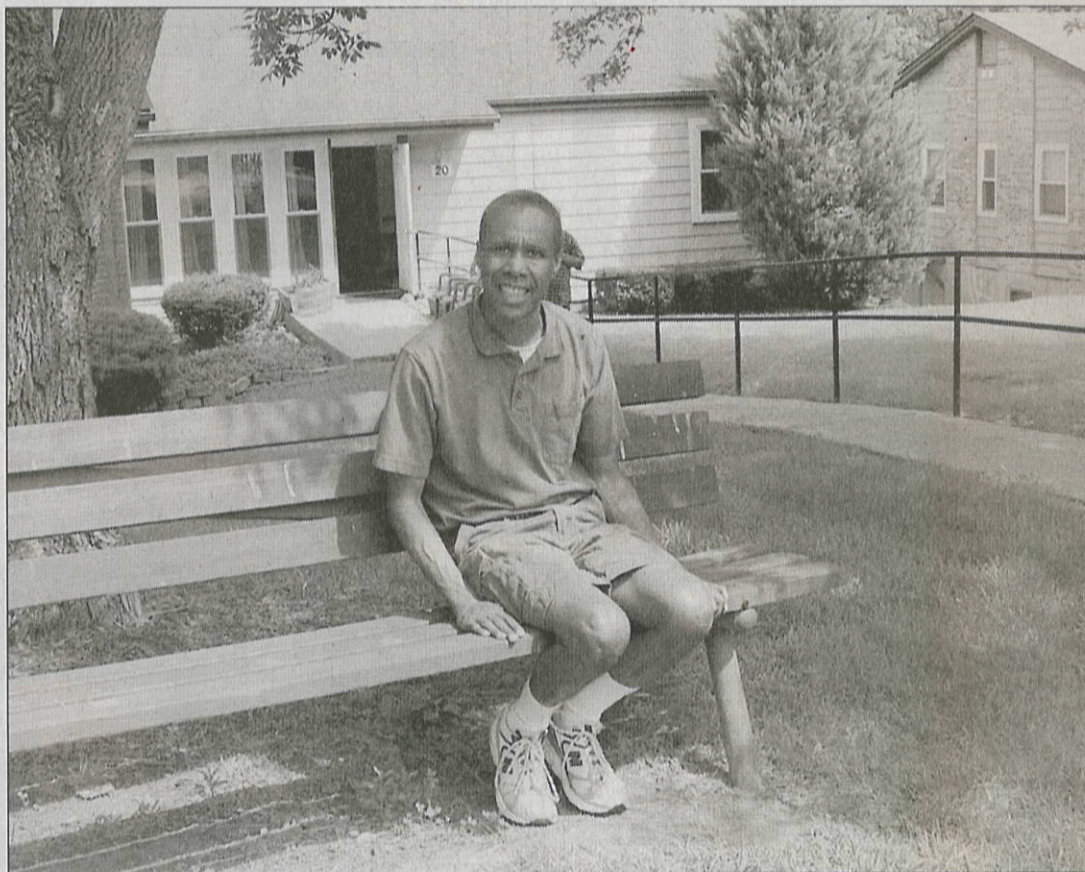
Cornelius, age 47, is autistic. Rainbow Village provides homes for people with developmental disabilities like Cornelius. Its goal is to allow them to live in the community, be a part of the neighborhood and enjoy their lives. It is the only St. Louis-based non-profit agency that focuses solely on residential housing for people with disabilities. Typically, residents live with one to six other roommates.

“He loves it,” said Cornelius’ mother, Barbara. “He likes coming home every week, but he’s also always ready to go back.”

Cornelius’ home, which he shares with five roommates, is built to assure safety, comfort and a “home for life,” said Nancy Parker Tice, board president. Many of the homes have roll-in showers, wider doorways and walkways, wheelchair ramps, and accessible bathroom and kitchen fixtures to accommodate people in wheelchairs.

“Because he lives in this community, people know him and accept him,” St. Louis Arc staff member Kristen Shipp, said of Cornelius. “He can walk around freely and visit people and say ‘hi’ and be safe here.”

Rainbow Village started in



**Cornelius Nall in front of his Rainbow Village home in St. Louis County. Rainbow Village, a non-profit agency, provides safe and affordable neighborhood homes for people with developmental disabilities in the St. Louis area. Photo by Leigh Albright**

the mid-1960s with several families who wanted to ensure quality and affordable housing for children with developmental disabilities. By 1978, the organization opened its first group home. Today, it owns and operates 46 homes that serve over 225 residents in St. Louis County and St. Charles County.

Many of the residents have jobs to earn extra spending money. Michael Rea, director of development and community relations, said about 30 percent of a resident’s social security income goes toward rent. The

rest, he said, pays for support services, food, clothing and leisure.

Several support agencies – St. Louis Arc, Emmaus Homes Inc., Life Skills, United Cerebral Palsy, Open Options and Cooperative Home Care – work with Rainbow Village to provide 24-hour staffing.

Tice said the need for residential housing is increasing as people live longer and are more likely to develop physical and developmental disabilities. She said the Missouri Department of Mental Health has nearly 600

people on a waiting list just for housing. It makes what Rainbow Village does even more important, she said.

Cornelius’ company is well-received and very much appreciated by the staff and other residents at Rainbow Village. For Kristi Ifland, St. Louis Arc staff member, he is the reason she started working there permanently.

For more information, visit [www.rainbowvillagestl.org](http://www.rainbowvillagestl.org) or call 314-567-1522. The main office is located at 1240 Dautel Lane, St. Louis.