

BERLIN — REHABILITATION OF THE NOTRE DAME SCHOOL

— Olivia Bebeau (Senior Project Manager, AHEAD)

In December 2014, Affordable Housing, Education, and Development (AHEAD) celebrated the completion of Notre Dame Apartments, a 33-unit senior housing project in Berlin. The community-driven effort to rehabilitate the historic Notre Dame School provides service-enriched housing for low-income seniors.



AHEAD is proud of this effort, which is important not only as a senior housing project, but also as the centerpiece to revitalizing a distressed neighborhood. A group of Notre Dame alumni formed the "Rescue Notre Dame" group in 2003 to save the building, which had been vacant for many years and suffered damage from arson. The City of Berlin, working with the Environmental Protection Agency, spent more than \$800,000 to remove hazardous materials from the site prior to the building's rehabilitation.



The more than \$8 million rehabilitation of Notre Dame School was funded with a \$1 million loan from the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority, a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant, and more than \$1.5 million from the Federal 20% Preservation Tax Credit program. The project met the difficult task of placing 33 units of modern and accessible senior housing into an historic school while keeping the character-defining spaces and features of the school intact. The school also needed to be

modernized to allow for better energy use in a way that conserved resources without doing damage to the building. The ultimate success of the project was built on the foundation of a collaborative process including the owner, the architect, the preservation consultant, the contractor, and representatives from the State of New Hampshire.

The Notre Dame School, with its views of Berlin, the Androscoggin River, and New Hampshire's Presidential Range, serves as a comfortable and attractive home to Berlin's senior population. The school's location places it in walking distance to many churches and the city's downtown. The success of the Notre Dame School project has been celebrated locally and across the state. In 2015, the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance honored the project with a preservation award.

