Mattoon Commons

Mattoon, Illinois

A Supportive Housing Institute Success Story



"...They now know they have an opportunity to get help, to have help, to have a sense of home. And there can't be a much better feeling than that." - Jeremy Yost, CEO of Yost Management Services

In November 2024, Mattoon Commons opened its doors as a center of stability, opportunity, and growth for people at risk of homelessness in Central Illinois. Developed through a partnership between Yost Management Services and the Embarras River Basin Agency (ERBA), the new supportive housing community fulfills the partners' vision to bolster the social safety net for rural Illinoisans who need it most.

That vision was set in motion in 2022 through the Illinois Supportive Housing Institute (the Institute), a capacity-building program jointly offered by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) and the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) to equip organizations with tools, knowledge, and partnerships needed to develop and manage high-quality supportive housing.

Yost Management's CEO Jeremy Yost wanted to join the Institute to grow his knowledge of supportive housing development. Although Yost helped his father build supportive housing properties in the past, Mattoon Commons marked Yost's first venture into supportive

housing on his own. At the same time, Sandy Deters, a Housing Counseling Coordinator at ERBA, wanted to learn about the process of creating supportive housing. Though the ERBA provides emergency assistance and other programs for residents in nine counties across Central and Southern Illinois, the organization had never created a property-based service program and did not know what the creation or day-to-day operation of supportive housing developments involved. For both organizations, their partnership and participation in the Institute was a turning point.



"The Institute provided so much invaluable guidance on the development strategy, the service coordination, and [building] compliance, and then just helping our team in general to really bring the Commons to life," Yost said.

Through the Institute's workshops, individualized technical assistance, and collaboration with peers and experts, Yost expanded his knowledge of the financing tools, service coordination, and specialized property management strategies needed to create and operate supportive housing over the long term. Meanwhile, Deters and ERBA gained experience in building relationships with contractors, developers, and others outside of the supportive services field. Deters also learned about the many practices and regulations involved in creating supportive housing properties, including the many approvals needed from government officials and the zoning requirements developments must meet.

But the duo agreed that the most valuable lesson they took from the Institute related to early planning, research and, especially, collaboration.

"They [at the Institute] emphasized the importance of early coordination among all partners to be able to strengthen the integration between development, service providing, and the property management – so that way, all partners understood what each side was supposed to do when working together," Yost said. "… It truly gave everyone there the proper tools to collaborate more effectively and ensuring each organization's strengths could be leveraged to serve the residents holistically."

The result of this collaboration was a strong, evidence-based development proposal that soon became a successful application that qualified for $8.4 million in funding through IHDA's Permanent Supportive Housing Program, which awards federal and state funding to developments that seek to fulfill the statewide need for supportive housing. Today, Mattoon Commons provides 25 apartments with modern

finishes, spacious layouts, and connections to a supportive service program specifically designed to help. residents at risk of homelessness to achieve and maintain stability and independence. In addition to the supportive services provided by ERBA, the development offers behavioral and psychological counseling services from LifeLinks Mental Health, a Mattoon-based nonprofit agency that provides outpatient behavioral health services.

For Yost, Mattoon Commons represents not only housing for those in need, but a way to address the disparities in access to healthcare and housing that permeate rural Illinois.

"Our work ensures that smaller communities benefit from the same innovative, service-oriented housing opportunities that you typically would find in larger cities or municipalities," Yost said. "… We face significant housing challenges [in rural areas]. There are so many aging properties, there's limited availability, and so few resources for residents needing supportive services. So, developments like the Mattoon Commons are so essential to bridging those gaps to provide high-quality housing with built-in support that promotes stability and independence."

Yost and Deters agreed that they would like to work with each other on more supportive housing developments in the future and apply the lessons they learned at the Institute to help many more people without housing and other special populations in their region.

"My ultimate goal is to make sure everyone is safely and stably housed, whether that be through homeownership or by providing supportive housing," Deters said. "Anything that we can do to help that along, I just feel is very important."

Ready to make a difference like Jeremy and Sandy? The 2027 Supportive Housing Institute is now accepting applications from service providers, developers, and property managers across Illinois. To learn more or submit your application, visit ***insights.csh.org/il-institute-interest****.*