

BUSINESS HOURS:

Mon.	9: 00	to	5: 00
Tues.	9: 00	to	5: 00
Wed.	9: 00	to	5: 00
Thur.	9: 00	to	5: 00
Fri.	9: 00	to	5: 00
Sat.	CLOSED	to	
Sun.	CLOSED	to	

Iowa City Regency

Conversations with
Residents of
Iowa City

Regency Mobile Home Community

&

Amy Correia
Social Services Coordinator
Johnson County Social Services

Russell Royce
Environmental Specialist
Department of Natural Resources

Thomas G. Courtney
Iowa Senate: District 44

Phyllis Reelfs
Park Manager
**Iowa City Regency
Mobile Home Community**

Multimedia Exhibition to be held
May 4th- May 8th

Opening Reception
**Thursday May 5th
6:00-7:00 PM**

edited by:
Carolyn Scherf
University of Iowa School of Art and Art History

@The Ark Gallery
School of Art and Art History Studio Arts

The University of Iowa
1375 Highway 1 West

Published by Little Night Snacks and Chips

Editor's Note:

The following dialogues were collected in the Spring of 2011, shortly after The Mobile Home Park Tenants Bill of Rights failed to pass in the Iowa Senate. It was assembled by Carolyn Grace Scherf, in partial fulfillment of The University of Iowa's Honors in Fine Arts B.A requirements.

This zine was included in a multimedia installation at The Ark Gallery, located just under four miles from Iowa City Regency Mobile Home Community in The University of Iowa's temporary public Art School facility and in the University of Iowa Art and Ecology group show "Some Things We Learned This Spring".

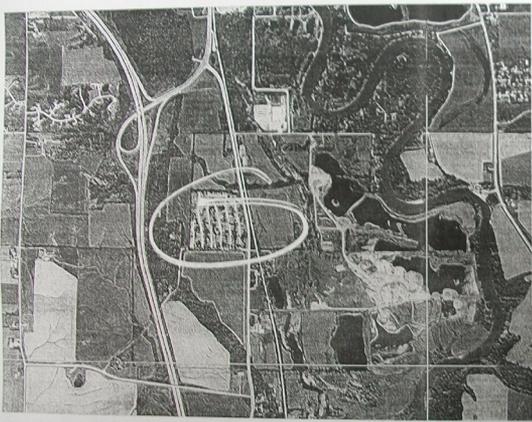
Building rent and technology utilized in the production of this zine was provided in part by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (F.E.M.A) subsequent to the flood of 2008. Additional technical support was provided by Natalie Johnson and Garrett Hohmann (who lent me Donald Whalen's tape recorder.)

To date, the University of Iowa has been the largest single entity ever funded by F.E.M.A.

Many of the residents whose oral histories appear in this publication wished to remain anonymous. Without the rights outlined in The Mobile Home Tenants Bill of Rights, it is still perfectly legal for tenants to be evicted from their homes for no reason.

It is my hope that this publication creates opportunities to build understanding and trusting relationships among the citizens of Johnson County, and that the issues at Regency will be remediated in such a way that supports a long term outcome of sustainability.

This publication is dedicated to John Kulow.



indivisible
work by Carolyn Grace Scherf
B.A. Honors Student in Intermedia

@ The Arc Gallery
Monday, May 2nd - Saturday, May 6th
8:00 am - 7:00 pm
School of Art and Art History
Studio Arts Building
1376 Highway 1 West

Opening Reception to be held
Thursday, May 5th 6:00-7:00 PM

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa-sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation in order to participate in this event, please contact Carolyn Scherf in advance at 319-335-8700.

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Preamble

We Hold These Truths To Be Self Evident,
That All Men Are Created Equal, That They Are Endowed By
Their Creator With Certain Unalienable Rights, That Among
These Are
Life, Liberty, And The Pursuit of Happiness.
That To Secure These Rights,
Governments Are Instituted Among Men,
Deriving Their Just Powers
From The Consent Of
The Governed.

That When

Any Form

of Government
Becomes Destructive
of These Ends,

It Is The Right Of
The People

To **Alter**
Or To **Abolish** It,

And To Institute
New
Government



Laying Its

Foundation

On Such Principles

And
Organizing
Its Powers

In Such Form,

As To Them Shall
Seem Most Likely

To Affect Their
Safety and
Happiness.

It's perfectly fine. Yes when we flood, then it gets into the water and you got a problem, but that's not the trailer court's fault. The flooding is the fault of The State of Iowa. They admitted it twenty years ago. Twenty years ago they promised they's gonna fix it. They've done nothing; and the problem with it is when they put the interstate through they put no drainage on this side of the interstate so when you go back and it storms, and you go back and you look at the hill down back there, it *actually* moves. That's how much water is coming from the Interstate. Strait down the hill and right down into our trailer court.

Now, we have a perfectly good sewage system here, but it's not built to handle that much extra water. So yeah, we flood. The sewage system gets overfilled and everything just backs up, and then, of course it's gonna get into the wells and it's gonna contaminate the water. They're putting in new filter systems, they're puttin' in better pumps for the sewer and everything else! I mean, what more do you want them to do?

As far as the abandoned trailers: Well, the abandoned trailers are all packed up ready to be moved out but they can't move 'em out because the Board of Supervisors isn't going to release the taxes; and most of these trailers... God only knows who you're gonna charge those taxes to! Nobody knows who owns them or who owned them! But yeah, they won't let 'em move the trailers because they have backed taxes on 'em, and until those taxes are paid those trailers have to set here. Now that's a joke! They talk about spending sewage out here. The only place that has standing water up here is that ditch up front; and guess who owns that ditch? The County. When they repaved the road and redid the ditch, they didn't grade it so that the water would run off. It's just perfectly flat. And then they say it's the parks fault. Well no it's not!

Now, a lot of the stuff that goes on out here isn't the trailer court's fault. Is Churchill crooked? Probably. You tell me what corporation in The United States of America isn't. The County Board of Supervisors blames Churchill (for...). It's not their fault. Now, what is their fault, or management's fault, is all the people you got livin' out here that don't belong out here. We got thirteen pedophiles out here. Well, thirteen sex offenders out here, not specifically pedophiles, but thirteen sex offenders out here. We got people that don't pay rent. We got people out here that's not registered and when all the news popped up last year about all this crap and the empty trailers guess what we got? Homeless people walking out in the middle of the night sleeping in the trailers and they getting' up and leaving during the day!

Now it's just a bunch of B.S. If the County Board of Supervisors would do their job, if the Sheriff's department would do his job, if the Health Department and the Social Workers would do their job this place would be heaven! They just don't want to do their jobs! It's too easy to just sit back and blame somebody else. That's the truth of the whole matter. It's not... I mean... like I said, Churchill I'm sure bends the rules and breaks the rules but it's not entirely Churchill Corporation's fault.

A lot that goes on out here is the fault of poor management that let people in that they should have never let in. We had man... up until the one we got now we had managers that was doin' no background checks or nothin'. Pass them a little money and you're in, and that's the way it was.

The empty trailers, you know, forgive the taxes and let us get rid of the damn things! Why keep them? But no. They're not gonna forgive those taxes. They want their money.

So, the State of Iowa's not gonna fix the drainage problem. Twenty years ago when I lived here and it flooded for the very first time: big emergency meeting, 'what the heck's going on?' That's also the first time we had a problem with the water. Well duh! It flooded! Water got into the well. So for two weeks we had to boil our water 'til they got it cleaned out. And every year we go through the same thing!

There's nothing wrong with the water, they're nothing really wrong with this trailer court! As far as the lot rent, yeah, the lot rent's high because of all the people out here, believe it or not, only between 19 or 20 people living out here actually pay lot rent. Everybody else out here is living free of charge.

They haven't raised the lot rent since this has happened, but I'm sure it's going to raise if they keep it up. And the fines that the DNR has pinned aren't fair, shoulda never been pinned. You wanna talk about the DNR? Well, how come it's taken this long for the DNR to all of a sudden notice anything? This trailer court's been here how long? Thirty-some years? And the DNR's just now interested? Can you believe 'em any how? One day the water's safe, the next day...

There was one part last summer when all this hullabaloo was going on, on a Thursday they said the water wasn't safe, and then the following Monday there's nothing wrong with the water, and then the following Wednesday, no the water's not safe, and the following Friday it was safe again! It's like, they don't even now what they're doing! It has been tested by an independent agency out of Washington, and that agency says there's nothing wrong with the water. The water's perfectly fine.

And the people that started all this? Number one, never paid lot rent. Number two, they had this big picture of one of the guys fillin' his "pool" with water, (PIC) well, the pool wasn't a pool it was a broken down

hot tub, ...it was just a tub out of a hot tub thing, and the water he was using to fill it was coming from a trailer that had set empty for ten years. Now, wouldn't you think that water would be a little rusty when it came out? He was using this trailer right here that set empty for ten years! And that water was coming out of this empty trailer; not his trailer; and guess what? He was the one last summer or last fall that stole somebody's tractor and now he's headed to prison!

I mean they don't talk to responsible people out here!

The only one's they talk to are the one's that wanna cause trouble, and they're the one's that's not payin' lot rent! They don't keep up their trailer lots. I mean you go... just take a walk through the trailer court and see the trash, I mean my yard's not perfect, but you don't see a whole lotta trash lying in my yard. You walk down. See all the trash! Cars that are sitting there. Now the rules state that you can have up to two vehicles. You walk down you see some trailers got seven vehicles, and most of 'em don't run!



Saturday April 9th, 2011



They are not doing their jobs!

And then you got Channel Two News, who stood last summer and reported raw sewage running through the trailer court. Well they were taking pictures of the ditch, and then they said it's runnin' right to the well and instead of taking a picture of a well, they were taking a picture of the sewer dump station. And put it on the news! Then of course everyone believed 'em 'cause Channel Two News says it's true! Well, it was a big lie. They were lying through their teeth, and most of the time when reporters come out here they're lying through their teeth, or they're talking to a bunch of people that don't even belong out here. I mean it's ridiculous... everybody knows they're not paying their lot rent, but they do nothing about it.

As far as the drug houses: They know where every drug house is out here, but they've done nothing about it, and the one's they do bust they just turn around and let 'em loose and they're right back here again! It's ridiculous. They just wanna force people out of their homes, that's all they're trying to do. And I won't take it. They're not gonna force me out. They're gonna have to drag me out! My trailer can't be moved. It's too old! It was built in 1974, I believe. This trailer's perfectly fine. We've lived in it for two years, and had no problem except for riff-raff's like these (motions to his son-in law who has sat down on the porch).

"Is she recording this?"

"Yeah"

"Oh you are so lucky old man!"

But no, most of it is just a bunch of ridiculousness. Get rid of the empty trailers! But that aint gonna happen. Regency's perfectly willing to get rid of 'em if they'd just let 'em! Like I said, they've all been prepped. They're all emptied out, they're all prepped! But they're not gonna. They can't do anything else with 'em until Johnson County forgives the taxes. But you don't never read that in the paper. "Oh Regency's terrible, they got all these empty trailers and stuff settin' here. But not once did you read in the paper where... well, they'd move the trailers if they could, but 'cause of the backed taxes they aint allowed to move 'em. You don't read that in the paper!"

And we actually, the three of us, actually wrote an article and told the paper to print it, and they refused to print it, because it's not what they wanted to hear and it wouldn't sell papers. But yeah, it's really a bunch of ridiculousness. Yeah, Churchill probably needs to be punished for some of the things they've done, but don't blame Churchill for everything thats gone on out here. Churchill is the least of our problems. If we could do something about the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, the Johnson County Sheriffs Department, DHS, DNR... if we could do something about those people our problems would be solved! And that's just getting them to get up and do their jobs. And do it responsibly. But they aint gonna do it. So.

We're not worth the effort.

Senator Thomas G. Courtney

State Senator District 44

e-mail: tom.courtney@legis.state.ia.us

e-mail he checks: senate44@msn.com

Cell Phone: 319-759-5334



Thomas Courtney is an elected representative of the people of Iowa. Presently he serves on the Agricultural, Commerce, Rules and Administration, Labor and Business Relations, and Government oversight committees.

As an Iowa Senator, what are your priority issues?
Jobs and education

In your opinion, what is the role of the state in remediating issues like those at Regency and in other rural communities in Iowa?

I think that the state has an obligation to at least set minimum standards for Iowan's living conditions whether they are in mobile homes, apartments or single-family homes in regards to renters.

Legally, what distinctions are made between rural and urban communities, and why do these distinctions exist?

The only distinctions between rural and urban communities is because large cities often have quite different standards on rental units compared to county and small communities.

What were the primary concerns of the lawmakers in drafting The Mobile Home Park Tenants Bill of Rights?

It was our goal to allow those living in mobile home parks to enjoy at least the same rights and benefits as those who live in other types of rentals.

It was also our goal to stop a small percentage of park owners who prey on their tenants. They were evicting their renters without notice and many times making it impossible for them to sell their homes.

On Wednesday, March 30th, The Mobile Home Park

Tenants Bill of Rights failed to pass in the Iowa Senate. In an article on Radiolowa.com, Pat Curtis wrote that "Mobile home managers lobbied hard against the bill".

How can people access this proposed bill?

They can go to the legislative website: They can access any piece of legislation on this website by bill number or keywords.

What arguments were made against it?

Actually very few arguments were made against this bill. The park operator's lobbyist indicated that this would make it difficult for them to manage their parks the way that they want to. I believe that the bill failed in the Senate because one senator had a very close relationship with that particular lobbyist and two other senators had a close relationship with responsible mobile home park operators in their district and they were asked by them not to vote for the bill. As you know, it fell three votes short of passage.

Almost three years ago, I lost use of my left side.

(motioning to my recorder) Is that on right now though?

Yeah, I turned it on, so it is on right now.... So, are you living out here on disability?

Mhmm. Yes. (lights a cigarette) Sorry.

It's okay, I smoke too. (offers me a cigarette) Oh sure. Thank you.

You don't look like the smoking type.

How long have you lived out here?

In this trailer, since 2004

She used to live on first trail.

I lived on Apache for three years
Was it different back then that it is now?

Yes- the management was...

No offense but you look like my sister almost, when she was younger.

I have a 22 year old daughter.

She's two years older than me!

Told you! And she already has two kids!

Yep. The management was totally different out here.

Oh Harry was a lot better than anyone.

Nope, when I first moved out here there was a lady named Beula that was the manager. She was strict, but the park was a much better place to be in.

Yeah, except when...(mumbles)

In what way was she more strict?

She was very particular about who she allowed to move into the trailer park.

Uh, then how were we able to move in? Sorry I just asked that...

'Cause at the time we were living in a camper, Bobby!

Oh. When did we have a camper?

Before you were born.

Oh. Wasn't I in that trailer?

No.

The one on First Trail?

Yep. That's where we lived when you were born.

Oh... So there was three teenage 17 year old girls in there. How many rooms were there?

Two bedrooms.



So those three had to share a bedroom. It's like this one right now, except without the extra bedroom. Yeah the three girls slept in the small bedroom. She's interviewing, not me!

Hey... it doesn't really matter... if you have a story...

Be careful so you don't sit in your ketchup.

I should warn you I'm a ketchup fanatic. Why don't you put that in the garbage. *So, she was more strict as to who she allowed to live in the park?*

Yeah, there wasn't a lot of Mexicans here, there used to be a lot more Mexicans.

Is that a problem for people out here? I know the gentleman down the street...

Sometimes.

Yeah, sometimes.

Yeah.

When we first moved in here there was Mexicans that were in this trailer here (motions to an abandoned trailer).

Yeah they were our friends, there was Mexican right here that was our friend.

There was Mexicans that lived in the trailer right behind us.

Yeah she was... nah, never mind, don't tell her that part.

Will you please be quiet?

Sorry! She's interviewing both of us, not just you, oh she's interviewing... She's just letting us talk!

She's the boss!

Remember that.

Okay.

She's got it on, she's got it on tape.

Yeah it's on the record!

So when I first came up, you said you've been trying to work on this stuff for a while now?

Yeah our... we have a roommate but he doesn't really... he does! I have to say that!

Well, it's not about the trailer itself, it's about the trailer park, Bobby.

This can be about either. Whatever you feel is important.

Well it's just... we pay the most lot rent of anybody in Iowa City and have the least services. (pic of sign)

Yeah. Lake Ridge pays less than us and they're the nicest ones, the nicest looking ones.

Yep.

But you have to have all white trailers pretty much.

Nope.

All tan or somethin'.

Earth tone. Which our trailer is. But. Steve's uh trailer has brown skirting on it, Bobby.

Oh yeah. I like Steve! We should move there!

We can't!

Why?

'Cause I can't afford to buy a trailer there.

Ask Steve to buy one!

Nope.

When did you buy this trailer?

Actually we didn't buy it...

A friend of ours bought it and I did a rent-to-own on it.

Yeah, he's one of our best friends.

...In 2004.

He uh, he, nah nevermind. He bought a Corvette Stingray, one of the T-thou... old ones for \$6,000 bucks. He's got a whole bunch of money there!

So now you own your trailer?

Uh huh.

And are you happy with it?

Mhmm.

She just needs a ramp.

Yep.

You need a ramp?

Mhmm.

Aaaand a better wheelchair, 'cause this wheel keeps falling off.

How old is your wheelchair?

She just got it.

This is an old... well it's an old one. It was a friend of ours.

Third Trail. his friend had it.

(points) That green house?

That green and white house?

His grandmother had it after

she had fallen and broken a

hip or whatever, and it sat out-

side for quite a while before I

needed a wheelchair.

(A motorcycle drives by)

I want one of those! Those Harley Davidsons...

And he just gave it to me. So...

So have you been in contact with the Department of Social Services, or any of those public agencies?

Mhmm, Yep. In fact I just got medical, again, beginning of March so...

What was that process like?

Since I've been on Social Security for two years, my Medicare just automatically kicked in, but trying to get back on Medicaid was hard 'cause they send you applications and since I only have one hand it's hard for me to flip the pages and fill the stuff out. Because if you ever paid attention to when you're writing something, you, you write with one hand and you hold the paper with the other? I can't do that anymore.

Well she's a college new year, so she uses laptops.

Yeah, but she still writes, Bobby.

I do a lot of writing.. and I don't have a laptop, for the record, um...

I bet most of the kids in college have laptops

Shh.

A lot of kids do. There's a lot of different people there. Um, so is that something you'd like? Help with filling out paper work?

Well usually I can get a friend to help me. Or me.

So what kind of contact do you have with the management here?

I've never even met her.

Yeah uh...

I've never met her. Bobby has.

Yeah, we met a couple, we knew a couple of the other ones. Like Harry and Kathrine?

Yep.

Harry and Kathrine worked together, 'casue one was head of maintenance... the only maintenance here and then the manager... Who was the manager here? That lady?

Lisa and Scott.

Yeah, Lisa and Scott.

Actually Lisa was the only one that let me swim in the pool without supervision!

Yep.

Yeah that's another thing. We're supposed to have a lot...

Did you see that pool up there!?

I saw the pool.

Yeah it's been filled in...

Yeah!

..Before I had my stroke, so that's been four years.

Yeah and they just let junk fill in there... and they tore it up too!

So is that one of the reasons... is that why your lot rent is more expensive? Because of this pool?

Supposedly... that and... our lot rent is supposedly \$310 dollars a month and then they add water and sewer on to that, and trash.

Yeah. The sewers stink and the water is rusty and disgusting. Even though I still drink it.

Is your water...

We don't have clean water!

Well it's not... they definitely need to drill a new well. But it's not gonna do a whole lotta good 'cause of all the old piping in the whole trailer court. The whole piping'd have to be cleaned out.

Why don't they just put a giant, a whole buncha bleach in it?

Bleach?

Yeah, like the chlorine Shock it. Shock a well. You never heard of that?

I've never heard of that, what's that?

Well um. Like in swimming pools?

I'm a whole lot smarter than you, and I'm not even in college.

Bobby.

No offense.

Bobby... In swimming pools, if your Ph balance and stuff gets off, they have a chlorine tablet to put in it and it shocks it to get it back to where it should be.

So does that effect the taste of your drinking water? Or the smell?

Well, I lived out in the country before I moved into this trailer here, and they did it to our well out there, but I never drank the water out there... but um, I never noticed a difference in the smell or anything. No.

What about taste?

I don't know I didn't drink it Bobby!
Oh.
Where did you get your drinking water?
I bought it.
No we didn't! Me and dad drank out of it!
Your dad wouldn't even let me make his coffee out of it.
Why?
'Cause there was so much mineral deposits in there it would have clogged up the coffee pot.
I'm talking about drinking it, just pure.
Your dad never drank that water.
I did.
Well he never.
Well, we lived in a two story farm house and uh, they built a staircase all the way to the second floor, and they had a door put in there, and there was a staircase on our floor that goes out there in case of a fire...
Well it was an old stagecoach out on highway one
Yeah, it used to be a prison I think... there was like bars and stuff on the windows
Well, there, the basement there, on one of the windows had bars on it.
So it was a jail pretty much. A small jail.
Well its be like, when they were transferring prisoners from county to county.
Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.
So you lived there? In this place convicts were sent?
No it was... it was a stagecoach.
No they put them down in the basement so they wouldn't riot or anything, or try to kill anyone
No Bobby, they had to put 'em someplace when they'd stop for the night or something to rest.
Yeah, that's pretty much what I said, so they don't riot or kill anyone, or get away....
So that was the place you lived before you lived here? How does that compare?
That house was a lot bigger!
It was huge! But, I didn't own it. I was paying rent on it. Whereas I pay rent here, but I ended up owning it. Rent-to-own.
Well if we got back there it would help with our check... and there's a Hy-Vee closer!
But I don't have a... I can't drive Bobby!
It doesn't mah-
How do you get your groceries?
I have friends that do it.
...which I won't let them in.
I'm in the process of getting a home health

aid.
What's that process like?
I'm over-protective.
Well, I have to go to the doctor first, but the soonest doctor appointment I can get is June 10th.
And that's because... Why do you have to wait that long?
Because they're filled up 'til then.
For a doctor that will accept Medicare.
So would you like for that process to be expedited?
Um, a little bit. Because like... during the day when he's in school I don't have anyone here to help me, so...
Not right now.
What kinds of things do you need help with?
Like cooking.
Don't say the "S" word...
Cooking and bathing and stuff.
Your family doesn't help you with that stuff?
He's only fifteen so he can't.
And she thinks it's inappropriate.
My ex-husband was coming out to help me.
But he's in Cascade.
Well... he got into some trouble so he's in jail.
So... now I don't know when he's getting out.
So you lost some of your help then.
Can I go now?
Bye.
Sorry. I'm trading a scooter for something... not my scooter.
Cool!
He's a little hyper.
It's a good day to be hyper... it's a nice day out.
Well he's got the medication to prove it. He's on heavy doses of medication. So...but... no. I've only been home... I had my stroke in September of 2008, I was in hospitals and nursing homes until April of last year, so.
So is it good to be home now?
Mhmm. I do have a friend that stays here with us. But he works during the day, so when he's at school and Mikes' at work I have nobody to help me. I mean... I can get around okay with my walker and stuff in the house, to go to and from the bathroom and stuff.... And as long as I have something to carry while I use my walker and stuff I can fix myself something to eat, but I don't always have that, so...
(silence)
I mean, have you been following the news stories, about how they've been covering the

* What I was referring to was a camper

park?

There hasn't been many lately.

Yeah, the last one I saw was about the Mobile Home Tenant Protection Law... uh, the Senate didn't pass it. They shut it down. Um, and so, when I was talking to senator Tom Courtney he said that...

I never even heard of him.

He's from District 44... and he's one of the two senators that voted for the Mobile Home Tenant Protection Bill... the other 23 of them said no... and I guess a lot of that had to do with private property concerns.

Yep.

Um...

No, they expect you to pay your rent on time, but if you need something done, they don't do it. Like, I've got this big huge tree in my yard. Two managers ago I was asking to have it trimmed and they said they were gonna do it, but they never did it. So I got branches hitting my roof that could cause holes, make holes in my roof.

So you'd like help with your tree.

Well I can't do it. So...

How do you feel about your neighbors? You said you have some friends that help you out here, you've talked about immigrants a little bit.... So what's like, the general, I mean, do you guys talk to each other?

Well I've got no one that lives in this trailer here next door, and there's no trailer on that side.

That one's abandoned.

Yep.

What year was your trailer made?

1979

So that was made after they started regulating how trailers were made.

Well, when I first moved in here I had handicap come thorough and winterize it. And the guy that came through said mine was... from the age of my trailer that that time... was one of the best trailers he'd ever seen. I have only one soft spot in all my floors. And that's because there was a leaky toilet in here at one time, and around the toilet it's kinda sunk in, but that's it. Otherwise my trailer's in good shape. I just wish I could do stuff around here, like go around back and tell Bobby what needs to be cleaned up in the yard and stuff. But...

So for that you need a ramp, and you need...

Well I can get down the steps but not very easily.

Do you need like, um, a walkway around your house?

Probably. 'Casue all I got is going around the house like that, red brick there? And the way I gotta walk with my left hip it'd probably catch and I'd probably fall. 'Casue I could go back... I got a bench built around my tree back there I could go back, sit back there, but I can't even do that.

Was the bench there when you moved in?

Mrmhmm. Yep.

How do you feel about the waste removal? You

said you pay for that?

Well, once a week, -when I first moved in here it was twice a week, and when I first moved in on my first trail in '93 they had dumpsters on each trail. They got rid of them. 'cause there was too many people going in dragging stuff out and not putting it back in. So it was just... made, big messes around there.

You have a trailer* there stretched over this truck.

No. One of the reasons it's here is 'cause of the rules of only having two vehicles allowed for each trailer. And they already had two vehicles, so since I don't have a vehicle I told 'em they could park here.

Is someone living in that?

No. My ex-husband stayed in it a couple times when he came out here. (sits up in her wheelchair and peers around a pillar) Sorry. Bobbys right over there, I'm just checking to see what he's doing.

I've noticed a lot of kids running around playing, lot of animals. Lot of pets...

Yep. I've got birds.

What kind of birds do you have?

Cockatiels.

When my parents lived in trailer they had a bunch of society finches.

I've got 7 in there right now, 4 of them are mine, 3 of them are my friends that stays here. You see, he's in the hospital too now, so that's not helping matters any either.

(silence)

Your toilet, is that functioning now?

Yeah, 'casue when I got out of the nursing home, I had to get a high rise toilet put in 'cause regular toilets are too low for me to get off of.

Did the Department of Social Services help you with that?

No. I actually had a friend whose mother had one that she wanted to get rid of, and she put it in. That's another thing... white toilets, and I've got a white bathtub. There's a great big ol' rust stain underneath the faucet. My faucet leaks a little bit, so now there's a rust stain about (motions with her hands)...What is that, three inches? And about... about a half inch thick. (Bobby walks through the porch toward the front door)

What is?

The rust stain in the bathtub. Half an inch thick? It's not that thick.

It's about that thick.

No it isn't!

It was.

That's a big rust stain!

It was until your dad cleaned

it off!

Yeah I know.

Yeah he came one day and he saw that and he took some Clorox and cleaned it up so he could help me do a shower. But, no but, my toilet... my tub when I first moved in was in nice shape, and now it's not because of the leaky faucet. *So you need a plumber in here?*

Probably.

Is that something you think the management should take care of?

They should take care of the water so it's not so rusty!

The minerals you said clog up your coffee filter?

Yeah, when my ex-husband was living with me I had to buy water to make his coffee with.

So you had to give money to a friend to buy you water?

No, that was before my stroke, I had to go to town anyway back then for work.

Where did you work?

I worked at a place called suland labs. We made eyeglasses, it's out by Menards.

A factory?

It's a lab. An outholmic lab. We made eyeglasses for like, Eye Associates and Mcdnalds and all those in town here. Coralville Eye and Albar Huskey and Jensen. Those are just the ones in town. We probably had about 30 or 40 clients too, So, Yep.

What is your hope for the immediate future out here?

Well instead of raising the rent every year they should lower is some every year. They try to raise... since I've lived out here they've raised it at least \$20 a year every year.

Since 2004?

Actually since 1993.

When I first moved in on First Trail in 1993 I was paying \$150 a month for lot rent. And within a year I started living here they had it



up to \$190 a month. So that was like \$40 a year that it...

And now it's \$400 a year?

\$390. Yep.

Amy Correia

Social Services Coordinator

Johnson County Department of Social Services

e-mail: acorreia@co.johnson.ia.us

Phone: (319) 356-6090



In 2010 along with Sally Stutsman and Rod Sullivan, you served on a county subcommittee for mobile home parks. Is this subcommittee still active? If so, what are your present goals and objectives, and if not, why are you no longer active?

This Mobile Home Task Force is still formed, but we do not have regularly scheduled meetings at this time. There are no written goals and objectives, however from the minutes of the meetings you can see the issues people have been working on including: clearing up titles & property taxes owed; strengthen tenant's rights through advocacy with state legislators, etc.

On November 30th of 2010 at a legislative meeting held in the Health and Human Services Building you stated that you were putting things together for relocation. What kinds of things are you putting/did you put together, and what can the residents of Regency expect to see from the Department of Social Services in the future?

In November, there was some concern that due to the water/sanitation issues that the state might close the park, thus potentially creating a housing crisis for current tenants. I did pull together a group of organizations and churches to begin to develop a plan for how to assist households if the state did indeed move to close the park. Towards the end of the summer, there was a lot of confusion among residents of the park about what the state and/or the county was going to do. Johnson County Social Services organized a tenant meeting with representatives of state agencies and other organizations to update

“They did try to have a tenant association, and they were hastled by the people... They were just tryin’ to get a bunch of tenents together to try to get things changed around here and management didn’t like it... Well after a bunch of people being afraid that they were gonna get evicted because they were associated with it, they quit going to the meetings.

-Anonymous Resident

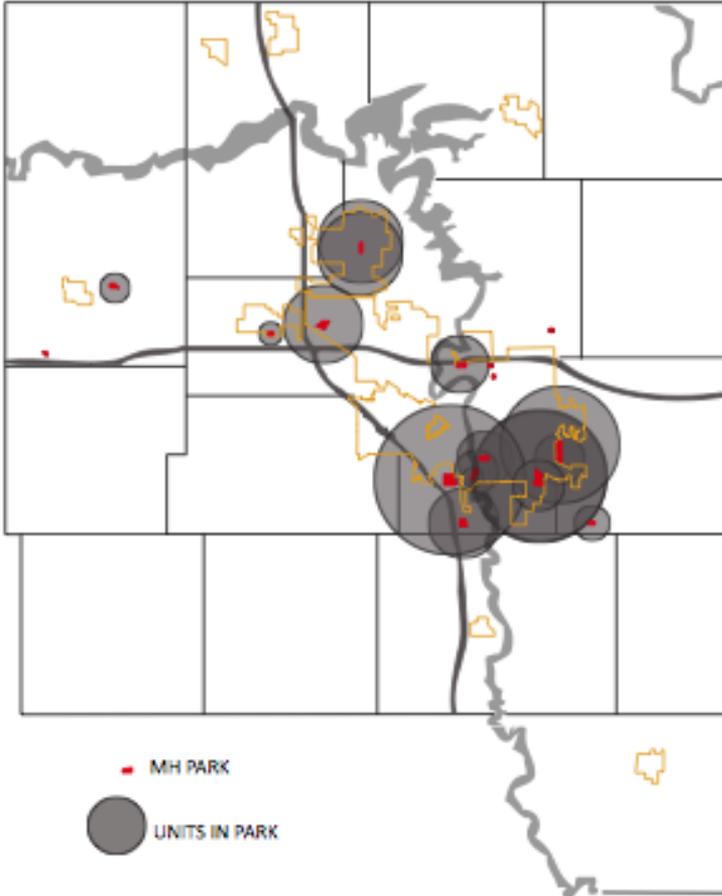






A Study of Older Manufactured Homes in Johnson County: Too Dangerous to Ignore

March 17, 2010



James Bayless, Jordan Jones, Joshua Moe,
Mark Patton and Tia Tyler

<http://iowavalleyhabitat.org>
[/media/howwehelp/Education](http://iowavalleyhabitat.org/media/howwehelp/Education)
[/IVHFH%20Mobile%20Home%20Report.pdf](http://iowavalleyhabitat.org/IVHFH%20Mobile%20Home%20Report.pdf)

Water and Mold

“Improperly installed MH are especially at risk for mold contamination. If a home is placed on land that is not level, water can puddle on the ground beneath it, causing moisture to be absorbed up into the insulation and flooring. In this dim, damp environment mold can flourish, spreading through the floor and into the home itself. As it spreads, mold produces allergens and potentially toxic substances known as mycotoxins, which pose serious health hazards to human beings. Children and elderly people are particularly vulnerable.”

Mold exposure dangers include:

Respiratory problems
Rashes
Eye Irritation
Migrane Headaches
Fungal Infection
in some studies, Death

“No research has been carried out in regards to mold in Johnson County M(obile) H(omes). but the topic is a cause for concern.”

Wind Damage

Mobile Homes are particularly vulnerable to direct wind damage, including blown-off roof panels, loss of roof framing, loss of wall panels, and breakage of unprotected windows. Furthermore, because mobile homes are often connected to the ground with metal rods, older homes in particular are at risk for anchorage failures. Flying debris from mobile homes presents risks to both the people and structures in their vicinity during windy storms.

“I remember last year, there was a storm and there wasn't nobody up at the office to even open the door for the kids to get in the shelter, so they broke the window done then to get into the dang thing!

Pissed the management off, but the management wasn't up there, and the people, you know, wanted to go where it was safe and underneath there is a storm shelter so, you know.

They made a hell of a deal about that broken window, but hey, Someone shoulda been there.”

-Anonymous Resident

Water Quality

Regency, like some other mobile home communities, has an off-site wastewater treatment system which is operated and maintained separately from the cities municipal system. Subject to routine inspections by The Department of Natural Resources to ensure that it certain contaminants in the water do not exceed acceptable standards as outlined by The Safe Drinking Water Act, Regency has been cited nine times in the past ten years for non-compliance.

Fire

MH fires “claim the lives of 345 Americans each year and injure 765 more.” The death rate from a fire in a “manufactured home is twice the death rate in other types of homes.” Fire risks are especially significant in Mobile Homes that predate 1976 safety standards due to a difference in types of building materials and finishes used.

Electrical Wiring

“Aluminum wiring was used in both conventional homes and Mobile Homes throughout the 1960's into the early 1970's. Aluminum wiring is especially problematic when used in screw terminals, like outlets, that were designed for copper. Over time the connections loosen creating the potential for electrical fires.

Russell Royce

Environmental Specialist

Iowa DNR Field Office 6

russell.royce@dnr.iowa.gov

1023 West Madison St.

Washington, IA 52358-1623

Work: 319-653 2135

Could you talk a little about your background, and current position as an environmental specialist at the DNR?

I have worked at the DNR for 9 years, all of which has been with the Environmental Services Division. Prior to coming to DNR I worked for the City of Iowa City as the Chemist at the wastewater treatment plant.

In October of 2007, The DNR discovered violations to effluent limits for the release of Ammonia, Suspended Solids, Fecal Coliform, and residual chlorine from Regency. What other substances are Regency permitted to release into the environment? The NPDES permit also identifies pH and fecal coliform bacteria and set limits for these parameters.

What impact might the release of these substances have on, or off-site if released if repeatedly released in amounts that exceed regulatory standards?

Generally treatment plants such as Regency's have little impact on the receiving streams they discharge to for exceedences of their discharge permit limits due to the large dilution effect of the receiving stream.

Where does the wastewater from Regency go? Is there a nearby body of water that it enters?

The effluent from their treatment plant flow through an un-named tributary of the Iowa River.

How many times, and for what has Regency been cited for non-compliance with DNR regulations relating to its waste water system?

In the past ten years they have been cited approximately nine times for violations of their permit. These violations were for failure to maintain the facility, effluent violations, failure

to properly file operation reports and sewer overflows.

Are the wastewater treatment systems currently being utilized at Regency ideal for the topography/ geography of the area?

In your opinion, are the current EPA standards adequate to protect the environment surrounding Regency from pollution?

Other than issuing non-compliance notices and fines, does the DNR aid landowners in remediating issues associated with unsatisfactory practices, such as offering technical advice on waste water management systems or alternative treatment options? (If not, how are landowners to obtain this type of information?)

We do offer general technical advice to facilities but we do not make recommendations. If deemed necessary we will require that a facility hire a certified engineer to evaluate the facility and make the proper recommendations to address a specific problem at the facility.

How did, and could flooding impact the sewage system at Regency?

The wastewater plant itself escaped damage from the flooding in 2008.

How are the regulatory standards Regency is held to different than the standards of incorporated areas like Iowa City and why?

All facilities that discharge wastewater in Iowa are held to the same standards.

What kind of repairs have the DNR required of Regency in regards to it's septic system, and do these repairs, in your opinion, sufficiently protect the surrounding environment? Do you think the system should be expanded or replaced?

How does the DNR ensure that issues such as those that Regency has been cited for are remediated in a manner conducive to long-term change?

They will be subject to periodic compliance evaluation inspections for as long as they hold a

discharge permit.

On August 5th of 2010, Sally Stutsman of the Johnson County Board of Directors wrote a letter to the DNR saying: "If current regulations are insufficient to ensure drinking water and waste water safety, we expect the DNR to work with the legislature to enact appropriate changes. We support safe drinking water and proper management of wastewater. We appreciate the mission of the Department of Natural Resources and respectfully ask the health, safety, and wellbeing of our residents be protected". 10 days after this letter was written, Richard Leopold, the DNR director announced his resignation and plans to take a federal job in wildlife in Minnesota.

What were the repercussions of this letter for the DNR? Did your organization work with legislature subsequent to receiving it? What was the impact of receiving this letter, if any?

As an expert in the area of natural resources protection, what do you think should be done at Regency Mobile Home Community?

They need to maintain their facility and operate it efficiently in order to obtain the best effluent quality possible.

Where do residents of Regency get their drinking water, and how does the drinking water source relate in terms of positioning to the waste water system?

Regency is a public water supply and the water comes from 3 wells, all located near the former swimming pool, just west of the office. The wastewater treatment plant is located to the southeast across old highway 218. Our regulations require shallow wells to be placed at least 400 feet from a mechanical treatment plant and 1000 feet from a wastewater lagoon. Regency has a mechanical plant and a lagoon - they are about 2000 feet from the wells, which meets our standards.

Could drinking water become contaminated due to unsatisfactory systems, sewage backup, plugged pipes, wastewater leakage, flooding, etc.?

The answer to your question, in general terms is "yes". All the things you list above represent a potential for contamination for any water supply. At this time, we are requiring Regency to move their water treatment from the office basement to an above ground location in a garage. It was more vulnerable to sewage back up and flooding in the basement, and that is our reason for requiring the move.

At Regency, are their issues relating to migrating chemicals, such as nitrogen runoff from surrounding agricultural areas?

Migrating chemicals does not seem to be a problem. Regency has 3 wells - 2 are shallow and one is deep. The deep well has a contaminant, radium, above what we call the maximum contaminant level (MCL). Radium is naturally occurring in the rock formations the water comes from. Since the radium level from the deep well is only slightly over the limit (MCL) they blend this water with water from the shallow wells to keep it under the MCL. Regency has not had an MCL violation for radium since the summer of 2008.

Has the DNR performed nitrate testing on the drinking water supply?

The DNR hasn't - Regency's operating permit requires them to test for nitrate annually. I reviewed the data and the sample results show very low levels of nitrate. It does not present a problem for this water system.

The DNR has also cited Regency for air quality issues relating to the improper removal of abandoned, asbestos and ridden trailers. What were the repercussions of these citations?

In 2009, our office received a complaint that mobile homes were being demolished and debris was staged on Iowa City Regency property. The investigation led to asbestos violations being cited and an Administrative consent order being issued for improper asbestos abatement. The Order required the immediate and proper removal of the asbestos containing material and pay a penalty of \$7500.



Sally Stutsman

(unresponsive)

County Supervisor

Johnson County Board of Supervisors

sstutsma@co.johnson.ia.us

Home: (319) 679-2347

When Regency of Iowa Co. tried to evict tenants after speaking to the media about their living conditions, did the Board of Supervisors step in and prevent the evictions from happening? Can you explain the nature of this intervention?

What else has the Board of Directors done to remediate the health, safety, and environmental issues at Regency?

What barriers, legal or otherwise has the Board faced?

Why, in the midst of health and safety issues, was clearing up titling and property taxes on abandoned trailers a priority issue for the Mobile Home Task Force?

Does the County Board of Supervisors have the ability to release the taxes on the abandoned trailers at Regency?

Would forgiving the taxes on the abandoned trailers expedite the removal of these hazardous materials? If not, do you have any suggestions for how this process might be expedited?

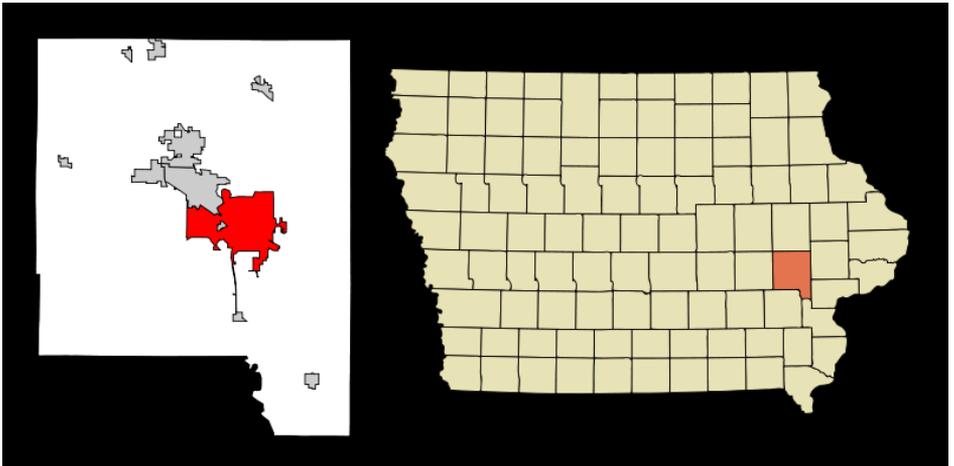
On August 5th, 2010 you reportedly wrote a letter to the DNR.

What lead you to inquire about the adequacy of current drinking water and wastewater regulations?

What came from writing this letter? Did you receive a response?

What did you hope would come from this letter?

According to Amy Correia, The Mobile Home Task Force is still formed but does not have regularly scheduled meetings. Given advocacy efforts have not resulted in the passing of The Mobile Home Tenant Protection Bill in Senate, will the Mobile Home Task Force reconvene with new goals and objectives?



Lee Rood

(unresponsive)

Projects Investigations Editor

lrOOD@dmreg.com

Cell: 515-778-6670

Work: 515-284-8549

Why did you become an investigative journalist?

What do you view the role of the newspaper industry to be in contemporary American society?

What issues do you think are most important for you to cover in your reporting, and why?

How did you find out about Regency Mobile Home Community?

How did you conduct your research?

At a legislative meeting held in the Health and Human Services building in November of 2010, State Representative Jared Klein made a statement that it was tough for him to get information from anyone concerning Regency Mobile Home Parks. He was quoted as saying that sometimes he "does not know what happened until he reads it in the newspaper."

How do you feel about holding this kind of informational power?

As an investigative journalist, how do you balance the company's need to sell a product, and the public's need to be informed about important issues and why they matter? Is this something you are consciously aware of while you work?

From your research, how do you think the conditions at Regency Mobile Home Community should be remediated?

A 2006 four state survey of Heartland Region reveals that the media and personal contacts are primary sources of influence that lead to changes of mind on environmental issues.

In a stratified random sample of all residents in Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, almost 56% reported changing their minds based on news coverage. 50% said first-hand observation and 41% said conversations with other people were primary reasons for changing their mind on environmental issues.

Phyllis Reelfs

Iowa City Regency Mobile Home Park

Manager

phyllisiowacity@hotmail.com

(319) 351-8808

Due to reasons outlined in this letter, Phyllis Reelfs declined to answer interview questions, but agreed to issuing the following statement.

Carolyn,

As I stated during our phone conversation, I have mixed feelings on responding to your request. I started my position of Manager of Iowa City Regency July 2010. Sadly to say, I was completely unaware of the problems/controversies surrounding this mobile home park. I had been truck'n (long haul truck driver) for many years and was looking for a job that would allow me to sleep in the same state every night and get me home more often. Since I live in a mobile home community myself (economical living for a truck driver) I assumed (bad mistake in any situation) all were relatively the same. Had I known of the media frenzy and political agendas of various entities at the time, in retrospect, I may have declined the job offer.

Be it bad or good, I did accept the position and as events and problems unfolded, I found myself in a most precarious situation. It became a matter of fight or flight and I chose to stay and fight. Many tenants at the park felt they had not had a voice for many years concerning their environment and I took on the role of advocate for them in my managerial role. At any rate, it was, and still is a challenging position, far from boring, and my varied education (Teaching Licensure) and work experience (20 Year State Employee) of many years was put to the test. I think the assuming of things, as well as the personal view one has concerning things based on their own experiences and point of reference, is the crux of the whole situation you are attempting to unravel.

As an employee of The Churchill Group – Regency of Iowa Inc., I am not at liberty to discuss or disclose pertinent information I may be privy to, or express my personal point of view whether it would shed light on your query or not. Unfortunate though it may be, I fall in the same category as many other workers in Corporate America as well as the private sector. We are bound by rules of privacy, confidentiality, disclosure, and terms of employment. Someone above us sets the standards, makes the rules, interprets the statutes, and we are obligated to abide or go through the proper channels to implement change.

As an American Citizen, resident of Johnson County, State of Iowa, and a tax payer; personally I have many issues with everything concerning what is happening within and concerning this community. It is my heartfelt opinion based on what I see from my managerial position that my tax dollars are not being well spent. There are flaws in the system, not a new revelation by any means, yet one that is consistently preventing those entitled from securing assistance and those who know how to work the system receive undue benefit. As Manager, I am in the middle, and therefore a perfect liaison between all those concerned; however, my opinion or input is not sought out or welcomed by any regulatory institution, governmental agency, or decision making entity other than my employer or the media. It is my job to keep my employer informed and respectfully decline comment to the media. The difficulty in expressing my personal views is that they may be misconstrued as a statement coming from or reflective of my employer. Hence, saying nothing at all becomes the safest choice.

You indicated to me that your goal in making this zine is to facilitate some kind of direct communication between people working, (or that could be working) to solve problems at the park. You stated that you interviewed persons at the Department of Social Services, DNR, Iowa Senate, and

Board of Supervisors. While I applaud you interviewing a cross-section of persons at these various agencies, I still find it an inadequate cross-section of persons to interview to find solution or thorough understanding as to the real facts of the matter – living conditions and legitimate concerns of the majority of tenants at Iowa City Regency. There are a dozen or so more agencies, regulatory bodies, and professionals that have a hand in decision making that you haven't interviewed. You are still only considering a small sampling of input from all of those involved. Within Johnson County alone there is the Planning and Zoning Department -Building Inspection, County Treasurer's Office, County Attorney, Department of Public Health, and the Johnson County Sheriff's Department. Then we have the Office of the State Public Defender, Parole and Probation Officers, Iowa Legal Aid Attorneys, Corporate Attorneys, Engineering Firms and Consultants, Various Independent Contractors, and the State of Iowa Attorney General's Office. All have an active hand in deciding what will and will not happen based solely from within the confines of their authority, perspective, what has or has not been reported to them, and on their own timeline. It is an impossible task to satisfy all these entities at the same time as I find none of them consider the position, demands, or requests being imposed by the other; each acting independently from one another.

There is another question to consider when interviewing all these agencies. They predominately work out of an office and personally reside in a very different environment. They don't live here, at Regency, and therefore don't have a realistic concept of the community and its' residents. Typically they don't hear from tenants who work for a living, take pride in their homes, provide for their families, follow Park Rules and Regulations - want them enforced, pay taxes, are active in the community, and make contribution to help ensure a safe and healthy environment for all in which to live. Typically they hear from those tenants who know how to work the system, feel a sense of entitlement without effort, feel it is someone else's responsibility to provide for them, have total lack of disrespect for the rights of others, have been incarcerated or possibility even residing in this County illegally, or come from a different culture.

While we all come from various different social – economic class, varying degree of education, privilege, etc., typically in society there are communities where alike persons reside. This is one of those rare communities that has a cross-section of persons living within arm's length of each other which is in and of itself not the norm.

You indicated that your main emphasis in this project is on issues relating to the health and safety concerns associated with the water and the abandoned trailers at the park. I must respectfully decline to articulate directly on these matters for reasons stated earlier. However; it is my understanding that DNR water reports are matter of public record. If indeed this be the case, then I would consider DNR report findings more accurate than accusations brought forth by disgruntled or unhappy tenants or the one-sided, short-sided investigative reporting of certain media. I might ask what the media's reason for reporting is – to sell newspapers, fill blank airtime, or actually report factual information with emotion and biased input aside. It seems to me that reporting the news should be a serious matter taking extensive effort, time, and investigation; else they should be held responsible and accountable for misinforming the public. Likewise, issues concerning abandoned trailers at the park fall under the jurisdiction of several different agencies for varying reasons and all must be investigated and considered before formulating an opinion.

As for commenting specifically to other issues mentioned by tenants during your interviewing process, most of which are my responsibility, I can only respond to that which has been under my control since taking the position of Manager at Iowa City Regency. Tenants, as do we all, focus on that which affects them personally (within their own world) and how they want things to be. As Manager, I must focus on that which affects them globally first and individually second; the whole time keeping in mind that I must support each decision made based on fact and reason, and must ultimately answer to and follow the direction of my superiors.

Most tenants do not understand the infrastructure of operating a “self-contained” community. There is much that must be addressed that they do not see, and as all of us do, take for granted. It's the “take for granted” items that are my first priority; clean water – operation of wells and all that entails, operational sewage treatment plant, electricity provided 24/7, operational street lights and security lights, keeping roadways clear for emergency vehicles (fire, ambulance, Sheriff), providing weekly trash pickup, maintaining Park owned buildings, fences, garages, and common areas for all to enjoy. Each tenant's voice must be heard and listened to on a case-by-case basis and concerns/complaints evaluated for resolution and disposition. Managing a mobile home community is much more than collecting rents, enforcing rules and regulations, operating within a budget, showing financial profit or loss from a business standpoint; or even juggling the concerns of all the outside entities that have direct control on decisions that impact the operations of the Park. It's managing the concerns, problems, hopes, and dreams of the residents within the community hoping the end result is a safe and healthy environment in which to live.

-Phyllis







