The Raynier Foundation has expanded its funding to efforts to alleviate homelessness and mental illness both in Seattle and Philadelphia. After his untimely death in 2005 at the age of 57, the Foundation's directors decided to honor him by expanding funding to efforts to alleviate homelessness and mental illness both in Seattle and Philadelphia.

James Wildener Ray's story touches us at Project H.O.M.E. in many ways. His life-long struggle with bipolar disease reminds us of the vulnerability that is part of the human condition. His life also testifies to the amazing gifts, dignity, and beauty that are present even in persons who go through profound hardships. We also believe his own experiences of suffering were a taproot of compassion for others, which took the form of his astounding generosity to so many.

**Jim's story also touches us in a very tangible way.** The Raynier Foundation, which he founded, has pledged a significant contribution to Project H.O.M.E., in large part to fund our new residence on Venango Street. This residence will open its doors later this month to provide safe, dignified, and affordable housing. It will include 53 efficiency apartments, including 33 for formerly homeless persons, 7 for veterans, and 13 for low-income persons. And it will have a fitting name: The James Widener Ray Homes – a wonderful legacy to the triumph of his spirit. We are excited to welcome home 53 new persons as part of our ongoing efforts to end homelessness in Philadelphia. The project would not have been possible without the Raynier Foundation, Barbara and Bob Ryan, and a transformational leadership gift from Leigh and John Middleton. The Middleton Housing Partnership supplied start-up capital funding and enabled Project H.O.M.E. to access federal stimulus dollars. We are deeply grateful to all of these supporters. And we are grateful for the inspiring story of James Wildener Ray, whose name the residence will proudly bear, and to all those who bear witness to the power of transformation and the resilience to turn suffering into hope and possibility for others.

Our next edition in Dwelling Place, learn more about The James Widener Ray Homes and our new housing initiative to help end homelessness in Philadelphia.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are deeply grateful to the following for their support of James Widener Ray Homes, and for all of their efforts to build a stronger, more just society.

Leigh and John Middleton
Raynier Institute & Foundation
City of Philadelphia
City of Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority
City of Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health
City of Philadelphia Office of Supportive Housing
City of Philadelphia Office of Housing and Community Development
FHLBank Pittsburgh
From the Heart Ministries of Philadelphia
The Independence Foundation
Mercy Neighborhood Ministries
Barbara and Robert Ryan
Tioga United
Star Group
Tioga-Nicetown Civic Association
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
James Widener Ray was one of those rare human beings filled with the challenges of life and enthralled with the possibilities of what could be. He had boundless energy and a hearty, from-the-gut laugh. Everyone was his friend; he invited people into his life with no judgments and recognized goodness and potential where others didn’t see it.

But like thousands of others, James Widener Ray had a serious, untreated mental illness that led him to the streets of San Francisco, living in various halfway houses – barely a step off the curb of living on the streets.

Jim, as his friends knew him, would often tell people he met during those years that he was a multimillionaire. They would nod and chuckle, and walk away. But in fact, James Widener Ray was heir to a fortune. His grandfather, Peter Widener, owned the first rail lines between New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. At his death in 1915, Peter was the wealthiest man in Philadelphia.

Reviewing Jim’s medical records, the terms “grandiosity”, “inflated self-worth”, and “delusions of grandeur” were not uncommon, all referring to Jim’s statements about his family’s wealth. But one psychiatrist believed Jim’s story. A support system was developed, and Jim began his arduous journey back to the life he was more familiar with – but now with more understanding of some of the realities of life for the most vulnerable in society.

Jim had come to know well the plight of people who are homeless, the underserved, the ignored, and the rejected. His heart was moved by those on the margins, because he himself was marginalized. His experiences led Jim to found the Raynier Institute & Foundation.

Jim’s life-long struggle with bipolar disease reminds us of the vulnerability that is part of the human condition. His life is a testament to the fact that with a home and caring support, those who are struggling can achieve their fullest potential. His Raynier Institute & Foundation is doing just that for the residents of James Widener Ray Homes.
The first development of the Middleton Partnership is named after the founder of the Rainier Institute and Foundation. The homes provide 53 units of permanent, supportive housing for formerly homeless men, women and children, as well as veterans and low-income families.

Background:

- This project is located in the Tioga and Nicetown neighborhoods of Philadelphia, and is bounded by an industrial zone at Allegheny Avenue along the R-8 and R-6 rail lines at the south, the Broad & Erie transportation hub and Temple University Health complex at the east, Hunting Park Avenue at the west, and Erie Avenue at the north.

- The Tioga and Allegheny West neighborhoods, situated immediately to the south, experienced a 7% and 13% decline in population, respectively, from 1990 to 2000, resulting in a high number of houses being vacated and abandoned. This decline and resulting vacancy, combined with the mortgage foreclosure crisis of 2008, was a major deterrent to housing development in these neighborhoods.

- In an effort to combat the decline in population and resulting vacancies, the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth directed federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds to this project and to the area, to support development efforts in the neighborhood.

Building Design and Resident Services:

- The property consists of a 42,522 square foot building on a 10,012 square foot parcel, comprised of 53 efficiency apartments, elevator, a management office suite, a lobby/mail area, a community room with kitchen, an exercise room, a laundry room and supportive services offices.

- Each efficiency apartment is between 450-550 square feet, has a full kitchen and bath, a living area, a bedroom area, and a large closet.

- The facility will be LEED-Certified at the Silver level, and environmental components include highly insulated walls, high-efficiency mechanical systems and lighting.

- Residents have full access to Project H.O.M.E.’s health care initiatives, including medical care services, immunizations, check-ups/physicals, health education, blood pressure screenings, connecting people to resources, diabetes screenings, health-related workshops, fitness classes and home visits.

- Residents also access Project H.O.M.E.’s employment services program, and all programs at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs, including adult education classes, computer skills classes, tutoring, afterschool programs, and the College Access Program.