



NATURALLY INVESTED IN COMMUNITY

NEWS RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathy Rowan, 704.591.8945 or kathy@rowancommunications.com

David High, 704-201-0456 or davidh@aldersgateccrc.com

Tracy Morgan, 704-737-4206 or tracy@davolagroup.com

ourBRIDGE for KIDS readies for move to Aldersgate's Center for Health, Education and Opportunity

Beginning with May 19 painting day, retirement community becomes multigenerational

Charlotte, N.C., (May 9, 2017) – ourBRIDGE for KIDS, a nonprofit after-school program for immigrant and refugee children, is moving – and expanding – its operation to Aldersgate's 231-acre campus. When ourBRIDGE begins operating in its new home on June 19, it will bring 78 children originally from Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East to the campus of the nonprofit Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC).

But the intergenerational collaboration will begin a month prior. On May 19, teams from Aldersgate and ourBRIDGE will spend half a day painting the space to prepare for move-in. PPG donated the paint and supplies. Residents and staff from Aldersgate, including CEO Suzanne Hodge Pugh, and children and volunteers from ourBRIDGE, including Executive Director Sil Ganzó, will pick up paintbrushes at 1 p.m. and begin painting the walls of the new space. **The media is invited to attend and film or photograph the event.**

Painting the 6,000-square-foot space is a major undertaking. Volunteers will continue painting on Saturday at 9 a.m. Fairwood Construction has donated its services to assist with the effort and will be on hand Saturday to help with finishing touches.

Pugh says there are many forms of bridge-building; collaborating on a DIY painting project is one of them. "It's the best way we know of for everyone to feel invested," she said.

City Councilwoman Dimple Ajmera, who represents District 5 (Aldersgate's neighborhood) will be part of the painting crew. Ajmera relates to the mission of ourBRIDGE, as she is herself an immigrant. Without knowing English, she came to the United States from India with her family at age 16. She went to high school in Durham and then to the University of Southern California.

With this move, ourBRIDGE is tripling the space it currently has on Central Avenue in Plaza Midwood. The organization, with a staff of 10, will be able to serve 75 percent more children in its new, larger space. The program currently serves 78 K-5th grade kids, but there's been a waiting list of families hoping to become part of ourBRIDGE.

Expanding their reach

ourBRIDGE Founder and Executive Director Sil Ganzó – a native of Buenos Aires – said, "We are thrilled for the opportunity to be part of Aldersgate's initiative to embrace the culturally rich communities in the eastside. Through this partnership, ourBRIDGE will be able to expand its unique out-of-school programming to include more children and more intergenerational activities, while continuing to help newly arrived families feel welcomed and become acculturated to the United States."

ourBRIDGE becomes the fifth nonprofit to be headquartered on Aldersgate's campus. They join UMAR, Inc., The Charlotte Museum of History, The Western NC Conference of the United Methodist Church and

Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation facilities, the Methodist Home Recreation Center/Shamrock Senior Center. ourBRIDGE signed a three-year lease for space at Aldersgate's Center for Health, Education and Opportunity. Like other nonprofits based at Aldersgate, ourBRIDGE will pay \$1 a year in rent. The center is housed in the former Shamrock Senior Center, which relocated to the Methodist Home Park site by the Aldersgate campus.

The children in ourBRIDGE won't be separated from day-to-day life at Aldersgate; they'll be integral to it. "Aldersgate residents are excited about engaging with children and families in meaningful ways," Pugh said. "Intergenerational engagement is part of who we are as a community. Many ourBRIDGE kids don't have grandparents nearby. Our hope is that some Aldersgate residents will become surrogate grandparents to these kids." There will be opportunities for tutoring and mentoring as well as time to just have unstructured fun.

Many of the children ourBRIDGE serves are dealing with poverty, family separation, the aftermath of living in refugee camps, culture shock and trying to learn English as a second (or third, fourth or fifth) language.

ourBRIDGE programs focus on academics and English, socio-emotional development and cultural awareness. The organization also focuses on building understanding and respect among people from different cultures – a mission that's more important now than ever.

ourBRIDGE's mission fits seamlessly with Aldersgate's "Gateway Promise," Aldersgate's growth plan that enhances its greatest asset: its 231-acre, wooded campus. Aldersgate's leadership team is working with city planners, local neighborhood associations and community partners to invigorate east Charlotte. "Welcoming ourBRIDGE to Aldersgate is part of fulfilling our promise to the community and to the elders who live here," Pugh said. "We couldn't have dreamed up a better partner or a more fulfilling way for elders to give back to our community."

Enhancing the east side

Aldersgate is broadening its mission of care beyond its walls. "Bringing ourBRIDGE to campus is just one of many things we're doing to revolutionize Aldersgate and the senior living experience," said Pugh. "We are on a mission to be a good neighbor to families and businesses on the east side. We love the diversity of this community and want to do our part to celebrate that. Our elders love being inclusive and welcoming to people of all ages and cultures."

The Center for Health, Education and Opportunity is a collaboration that benefits Aldersgate residents and the surrounding community. The center is the result of a nine-month study Aldersgate undertook with Foundation For The Carolinas that examined ways to support neighbors – particularly children and elders – and break generational cycles of poverty.

The 6,000-square-foot center, a partnership between Aldersgate and UNC Charlotte Cato College of Education and College of Health and Human Services, houses more than just ourBRIDGE. Also part of the center is the Summer Reading Camp, which kicked off last summer, and is a collaborative effort between UNC Charlotte College of Education, Aldersgate, CMS and the Johnston YMCA. This summer's camp runs from July 5 through August 4.

Pugh expects this center, and ultimately, the entire Aldersgate campus, to be a model of multigenerational engagement.

About Aldersgate

Founded in 1943 as The Methodist Home – a home for retired Methodist ministers – Aldersgate is a nonprofit Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) with a legacy of nearly 70 years of caring for seniors. Today, about 350 seniors call Aldersgate home and have access to all levels of care on the wooded, 231-acre campus. The new Gateway Promise expansion campaign will create space for about 100 more seniors. Aldersgate derives its name from the street in London where Methodist Church founder John Wesley experienced the "confirmation of his salvation by the grace of God." The community is on Charlotte's east side at 3800 Shamrock Drive. Learn more at aldersgateccrc.com