

Advanced Living Cuts Ribbon on 5-Unit Apartment Community

The former Amchick plant at 220 S. Line Street is now income-eligible, affordable housing, courtesy of Advanced Living Communities and Montgomery County Housing and Urban Development

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From chicken hatchery to hatching new lives for low-income families.

Advanced Living Communities, owners of Schwenckfeld Manor and Derstine Run, cut the ribbon Friday afternoon at 220 S.

Line St. in Lansdale for the grand opening of its newest affordable housing project in Montgomery County.

The five-unit apartment complex is the former site of Amchick, a chick hatchery that opened around 1949 and has since moved to North Carolina. It stands next to the now Morgan Properties-owned Silk Factory Lofts.

Kim Krauter, vice president of operations for Advanced Living Communities, said it was a real pleasure for Advanced Living to try something different.

For several years, Advanced Living scouted locations for new affordable housing. Elsie Smith, a former controller at Amchick and now part-time clerk at Advanced Living, notified executives of the availability of the building.

"She recommended we take a look," said Krauter. "My father (Advanced Living CEO and President Bill Brown) is a regular at Henning's Scale Models. Between Elsie and he, we were able to look in and out of houses all day long. We walked in to Amchick and said, 'This is it.'"

The project, which took 18 months to complete, was made possible through a \$1 million Montgomery County Housing and Urban Development grant. Grant sanctions required environmental reviews of the site.

"We were able to offer this great opportunity for folks in our community," Krauter said. "We're very proud of ourselves (in keeping construction and acquisition costs under \$1 million)."

Brown said the county initiated the project, and asked Advanced Living to serve as owner of the property.

"We have a long history of taking properties from inception to completion," he said.

Kramer Marks Architects and Cathedral Building Services were able to renovate and convert the one-story main building into four apartments, including one one-bedroom handicap-accessible apartment. The others are two two-bedroom apartments and one one-bedroom apartment. The main housing unit has a community laundry room and a bathroom for Advanced Living staff.

Behind the main building is a separate two-story structure that serves as the fourth one-bedroom apartment. It was once the living unit of former property owner David Nitta.

"There was a bit of demolition, and then it was trying to carve out four different units," said Andrew Rich, project manager with Kramer Marks. "All different types of construction were used to bring it up to current building codes."

Rich, who worked alongside Kramer Marks principal George Marks, also designed a new entrance way on the front covered porch.

"It is built with durable materials. It will be just as good down the line as it was when it was first installed," Rich said.

Steve Bauman, executive director of Bridge of Hope BuxMont, and Rich Aichele, executive director of Keystone Opportunity Center, were instrumental in setting up the foundation for how the housing program will work for residents moving into 220 S. Line St.

One such resident, whose residency is pending, is a single father to three children, who currently resides with his mother.

"It's a very exciting opportunity to give him an apartment he can afford and be responsible and take care of his children," Krauter said.

Krauter said Advanced Living is awaiting its use and occupancy permits from Lansdale. She expected all units to be filled in the next four to six weeks.