



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Garden Court Announces Fund to Assist Frail, Low-Income Seniors in Santa Barbara**

**Support for housing and medical emergencies helps seniors live independently longer;  
First ever fundraiser November 11 at Hotel Andalucia**

**Santa Barbara, CA, October 25, 2006**—Teacher, nurse, banker, newspaper reporter, cook, farmworker, receptionist, housekeeper, bookkeeper, gardener, painter, office manager, food server, childcare provider, lab technician, restaurant owner, hotel owner. What do these people have in common? ‘Yesterday’, they helped to build and sustain the Santa Barbara we know and love. Today, they are frail seniors, many with fixed monthly incomes of less than \$700, yet they unanimously consider themselves lucky. Each is one of the current 97 residents of Garden Court on De La Vina.

Seniors living at Garden Court are independent, which means they have the freedom to make their own choices about how they spend their time and what little money they may have to spend. But at very low incomes, having choices takes on another, alarming meaning – making choices between vital needs such as medicine vs. clothing. This is a continual threat to the health and well-being of these seniors, and when emergencies arise, there are tragically few safety nets available.

**The Garden Court Endowment** has been established to help fill the most critical gaps in the ability of seniors at Garden Court to maintain an independent lifestyle for as long as possible. Money raised through the Endowment assists extremely low-income seniors in paying rent and costs of medical emergencies, purchasing medical supplies and clothes, and helping meet other essential needs.

“We’re not just helping people live longer, we’re helping them live as vital parts of the community,” said Alyce Parsons, Garden Court, Inc. board member and co-owner of family company The Parsons Group which provides management services to Garden Court on De La Vina.

**The Garden Court Endowment is now welcoming individual and corporate support, and will hold its first ever fundraiser, titled “The Best is Yet to Be”, on November 11 at Hotel Andalucia, honoring former Santa Barbara Mayor Harriet Miller.** The Endowment was started with grants from the Alice Tweed Tuohy Foundation and the Hutton Foundation and has ongoing support from the Hotel Andalucia.

“We are proud to be honoring Harriet Miller as we launch the Garden Court Endowment at our first ever fundraising event,” said Parsons. “We are recognizing Harriet for her leadership, for her advocacy for affordable housing, helping to shape a compassionate Santa Barbara, and as a reminder to us all how involved we can be in our community - at every age.”

### **Garden Court Seniors**

“I’m disabled, old and poor – it ought to be miserable and I’m having the time of my life.  
I can’t imagine surviving anywhere else, let alone enjoying life.”

—A resident of Garden Court, October 2006

Residents of Garden Court are the people in our community who worked all their lives in Santa Barbara to make it a better place, as laborers, nurses, business owners, teachers and others, who deserve to be able to enjoy their golden years as an active part of the community they helped to shape and tend. Some residents have moved to Santa Barbara in more recent years, to be closer to their families who live here, and to enjoy those relationships without ‘becoming a burden’. Some are people who never imagined they would be without options; and others who struggled throughout their lives at extremely low income levels and are now able to fully enjoy life for the first time.

And enjoy, they do. The most astonishing part of life at Garden Court is that the very people who cannot afford other housing options are continually giving to others in need. Residents volunteer for charities, and now hold fundraisers – rummage, crafts, or cookie sales – for charities every month. In the past year residents have raised over \$7,500 for local causes including local homeless shelters and other low-income housing, and for global disaster and health relief. Residents also join together to help each other with costs of medical situations, and also to provide wedding or new baby gifts for each others’ families.

Independence for seniors requires housing that is safe and secure, but also an environment that encourages participation and helps minimize the negative impact of isolation, depression, and dementia which can onset with aging. Garden Court residents enjoy their downtown location, close to the places they need and want to go such as pharmacy, grocery, senior recreation center, transit, and downtown shopping. Residents have their own apartments and make their own choices, and the majority do choose to get involved through the many relationships Garden Court fosters with other community groups and organizations.

### **History of Garden Court and the Endowment**

Garden Court on De La Vina opened in 2000, in response to a desperate need for very low income housing for the frail elderly in Santa Barbara. This need intensified when the Carrillo Hotel, which functioned as a long-term residence for low-income individuals, was demolished in the face of the prohibitive cost to retrofit to new State-mandated seismic safety standards – displacing 120 frail seniors. Tenant relocation assistance and financial support for a replacement facility were required by the City as part of the new development approvals for Hotel Andalucia, built on the site. Several other long-time “single resident occupancy” (SRO) downtown hotels catering to low income individuals were also forced to close, continuing to create a crisis of need for affordable housing for seniors.

An innovative housing solution from the start, a public-private partnership consisting of resident and senior advocate groups, and the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara, were involved in the design, planning, and funding of Garden Court. Garden Court is a successful example of ‘purpose built’ housing, built specifically around the needs of the population, to allow more mobility and include social elements that reduce isolation and its negative physical and psychological effects. Since opening, Garden Court has garnered national and local recognitions as a successful model of housing for seniors.

“The creation, operational success, and financial well being of any independent living or assisted living facility for frail, low-income seniors in Santa Barbara requires the community’s support and long-term commitment to subsidize the cost of such facilities,” said Parsons. “The alternatives come at a much greater cost to our society.”

The Garden Court Endowment fund may be used to meet the operational costs of maintaining Garden Court on De La Vina, to provide scholarships to Garden Court seniors to assist with short term housing and medical related needs, and to promote the development of an “assisted living facility” for the low- income seniors of the Santa Barbara area.

For more information about Garden Court, Inc, The Endowment, and Garden Court on De La Vina affordable housing for seniors, please visit [www.gardencourt.org](http://www.gardencourt.org) or call 560-7993.

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