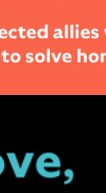


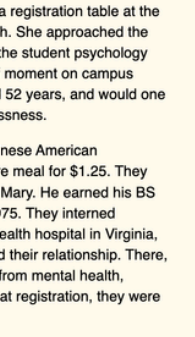
# LOTUS CAMPAIGN



Unexpected allies working together to solve homelessness

FEATURE STORY

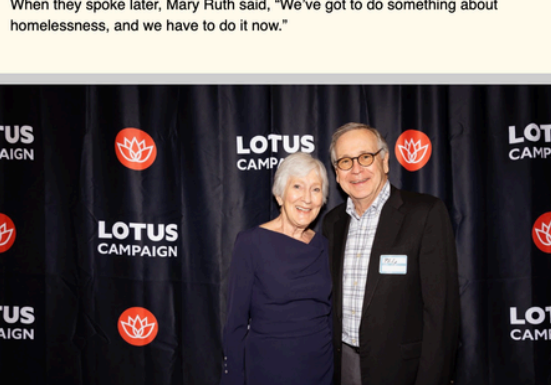
## Where Love, And Lotus, Began



In honor of Valentine's Day, we present a love story that launched Lotus Campaign.

In September 1972, Philip Payne was standing behind a registration table at the College of William and Mary when he spotted Mary Ruth. She approached the psychology table, and Philip, a senior and president of the student psychology association, remembers thinking simply: *ooh*. That brief moment on campus marked the start of a partnership that has now spanned 52 years, and would one day help reshape how communities respond to homelessness.

On their first date, Philip took Mary Ruth to Russo's Chinese American Steakhouse near campus, where you could get an entire meal for \$1.25. They were both deeply immersed in psychology at William & Mary. He earned his BS in 1973 (and JD in 1978), she earned her masters in 1975. They interned together at Eastern Star Hospital, the largest mental health hospital in Virginia, where they had long lunch conversations that deepened their relationship. There, they saw firsthand how housing stability is inseparable from mental health, dignity, and recovery. Two years after that first meeting at registration, they were married.



Lotus Co-Founders Beth Silverman, Philip & Mary Ruth Payne

### Small moments bring big changes

Their commitment to William & Mary—and to students navigating hardship—has endured. In honor of Mary Ruth's mother, Edith Rolphs Marsh, they established the Edith Rolphs Marsh Endowment at William & Mary to support students facing unexpected financial crises. The endowment reflects a belief Philip and Mary Ruth formed early on: that small moments of stability at the right time can change the entire course of a life.

Decades later, those same convictions resurfaced. In 2017, Philip was attending a national Urban Land Institute panel in Los Angeles, confronting a persistent question: why the private sector wasn't more meaningfully engaged in solving homelessness. That same evening, Mary Ruth was in Charlotte, listening to a speaker describe the "fierce urgency of now" for people living on the streets. When they spoke later, Mary Ruth said, "We've got to do something about homelessness, and we have to do it now."



### Lotus blossoms

That conversation became the spark for Lotus Campaign, which brings private landlords into housing-plus-services solutions that work to house people in open units - much sooner than most approaches to placement. It's a model grounded in economics, compassion, and practicality—and in values first shaped in Williamsburg classrooms, hospital hallways, and a chance meeting at a registration table.



LANDLORD PARTNER UPDATE

## Partnerships & Momentum

### A partnership that makes housing work

For Leah Bergman, housing is a family legacy - and a responsibility. As a third-generation housing provider with BR Apartments, Leah has spent decades working in the affordable housing space while also managing market-rate properties in North Carolina. She knows from experience that when people who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads have the right support, stable housing works.

That's why partnering with Lotus Campaign has been such a natural fit.

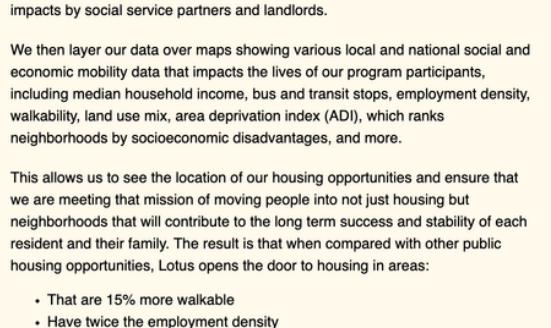
"We provide great apartments in great locations at an affordable price point," Leah explains. "Lotus and their social service partners provide the wraparound services. Our job does not include support services but when Lotus-sponsored residents come in with that support, housing works really well."



### Seeking each other out

Over the past two years, BR Apartments has worked closely with Lotus Campaign to house at least ten households, with families of varying sizes and circumstances. Referrals come directly from Lotus. For Leah, success appears quietly. "If I don't hear about it, that means things are going well," she says. "And that's exactly what's been happening."

BR Apartments manages approximately 150 units across three Raleigh communities, all located near public transportation, grocery stores, pharmacies, and other essentials. Amenities include on-site management, community centers, and playgrounds - spaces designed to support stability and everyday family life. Lotus' Senior Director of the Landlord Participation Program Julie Paul notes that BR's communities are highly sought after due to their affordable rents and strong property management. "When a unit does become available, it is quickly leased because the communities are so well maintained and desirable."



BR Apartments' Site Manager Yazmin Figueroa (right) with Lotus Sponsored Resident Irma Martínez and Maintenance Manager Carlos Estrada

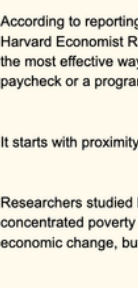
### Lotus sponsored residents make great tenants

Yazmin Figueroa, property manager for three Raleigh properties, sees the impact firsthand. "This partnership gives people a second chance," she says. "Many of our Lotus-sponsored residents wouldn't be approved in a traditional marketplace. We look beyond that. These residents are grateful, they take care of their homes, and they pay their rent on time."

Importantly, Lotus residents are treated like every other tenant. "No one knows who they are, and that's the point," Yazmin explains. "They're still supported by social service agencies, but here, they're residents just like all of our other residents."

One Lotus resident recently completed their annual certification, officially graduated from the program, and chose to remain in their BR apartment. For Leah and her team, that's the ultimate outcome. "Lotus has done 100% of what they're supposed to do. The residents have done 100% of what they're supposed to do."

Yazmin adds, "Anytime we have a unit available, Lotus is the first call I make."



2026 Key Party

## Something BIG Is Unlocking This Fall

Our 2026 Key Parties return this September, and next month we'll be releasing our official sponsor packets. Be on the lookout!

After raising **\$127,000** last year, we're aiming even higher in 2026 to expand housing placements, strengthen our infrastructure in Charlotte and the Triangle, and fuel thoughtful expansion into new communities.

Each year, the Key Party celebrates the doors you've helped open and the stability you've helped create. This year, we're building on that momentum. We're deepening landlord partnerships, increasing the number of neighbors we move into stable housing, and scaling the systems that make our model possible.

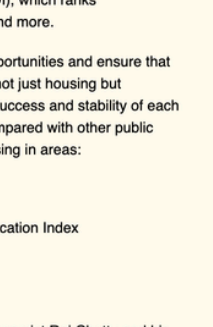
If you believe homelessness is solvable and that systems can work better, this is your moment to take a seat at the table.

Sponsor materials drop in March!

For early conversations or questions, contact Jessica James-Hill, CFRE, Senior Director of Development, at [jessica@lotuscampaign.org](mailto:jessica@lotuscampaign.org)

MYTHBUSTING

## Neighborhoods of Opportunity Do Matter



Housing people in neighborhoods of opportunity has been an essential part of Lotus Campaign's mission since our start. So essential that we built our own custom dashboard to track this data, looking at both demographics as well as impacts by social service partners and landlords.

We then layer our data over maps showing various local and national social and economic mobility data that impacts the lives of our program participants, including median household income, bus and transit stops, employment density, walkability, land use mix, area deprivation index (ADI), which ranks neighborhoods by socioeconomic disadvantages, and more.

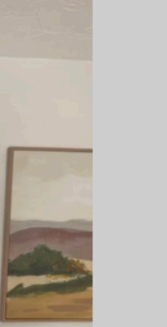
This allows us to see the location of our housing opportunities and ensure that we are meeting that mission of moving people into not just housing but neighborhoods that will contribute to the long term success and stability of each resident and their family. The result is that when compared with other public housing opportunities, Lotus opens the door to housing in areas:

- That are 15% more walkable
- Have twice the employment density
- Scored 13% higher on the US EPA's Smart Location Index
- With lower area deprivation index (ADI)
- With higher median household incomes

But don't take our word for it. See what Harvard Economist Raj Chetty and his Opportunity Insights team had to say in "What We're Reading," below.

IN THE NEWS

## What We Are Reading



"How to Bring Back the American Dream," by NYT columnist Nicholas Kristof

What if the American Dream isn't gone... it's just been blocked by the way we've built our communities?

According to reporting from [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com), a powerful new study from Harvard Economist Raj Chetty and his Opportunity Insights group shows one of the most effective ways to break intergenerational poverty doesn't start with a paycheck or a program.

It starts with proximity.

Researchers studied large-scale housing redevelopments that replaced concentrated poverty with mixed-income neighborhoods. Adults didn't see major economic change, but children did.

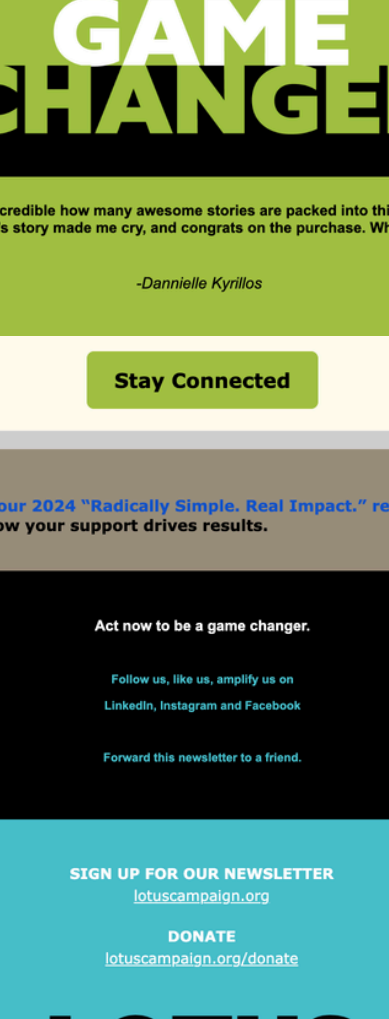
Kids who grow up in these communities are more likely to go to college, far less likely to be incarcerated, and earn significantly more over their lifetimes

And the breakthrough isn't just better housing.

It's access to new peer groups, new norms, and new visions of what adulthood could look like. Friendships across income levels expanded opportunity in ways money alone couldn't. Those connections shaped everything from educational goals to career pathways. When kids could see different futures up close, they began to imagine themselves in them.

At Lotus Campaign, this reinforces what we believe at our core: lasting change doesn't come from isolating people in need. It comes from building communities that create connection, dignity, and shared opportunity. That's exactly why our model houses people experiencing homelessness in mixed-rate units that are located in neighborhoods of opportunity - near good schools, public transit, jobs and daily amenities like grocery stores.

Because sometimes, the most powerful driver of upward mobility is simply being brought into a space where possibility feels real.



# BE A GAME CHANGER

"It's incredible how many awesome stories are packed into this email. Dennis's story made me cry, and congrats on the purchase. What wins."

-Dannielle Kyrillos

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