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Local Senior Living Organization Hosts Visit From AARP Michigan

Brio Living Services' GREEN HOUSE® Homes Represent 'Golden Standard' for Long-term Care

Grand Rapids, MI, Aug. 2, 2022 – Brio Living Services, formerly UMRC & Porter Hills, recently hosted a visit by representatives from AARP Michigan to its GREEN HOUSE® Homes community, located on East Paris Avenue SE in Grand Rapids. AARP Michigan State Director Paula Cunningham and AARP Associate State Director – Government Affairs Melissa Seifert were there, as well as Marla DeVries, Chief Learning Officer for The Green House® Project, as part of AARP's advocacy efforts to build awareness for the Green House® model and transform long term care for older adults in Michigan.

"AARP has long been a strong advocate of the Green House® model which elevates warmth, respect, and more personalized care as the golden standard," said Cunningham. "Brio Living Services is a shining example of that ideal and what it means to age with dignity and respect in a genuine home environment."

The Green House® model, developed in the early 2000s, is an alternative approach to caring for older adults requiring skilled nursing care. There are just over 300 Green House® Homes nationwide, and only twelve in Michigan, located at six sites. Most are part of nonprofit senior living organizations, such as Brio Living Services, whose Green House® Homes were the first in the Grand Rapids area and were completed in 2009. Green House® Homes utilize "universal caregivers" or "shahbazim", who combine the skills of certified nursing assistants and homemakers to provide consistent, individualized care for older adults.

"Green House® Homes provide nursing home care in a nontraditional way," explained Brio Living Services' Green House® Homes Administrator, Guide, and Director of Nursing, Traci Potter, RN, BSN, LNHA. "The Green House® model offers a small home setting, with no more than 10 to 12 older adults per household, that embraces elder-directed care. It truly is home."

"It was a pleasure to share our Green House® Homes with Paula and Melissa," Potter continued. "To experience the transformative care approach of a person-directed and relationship-rich model, one must simply walk through the threshold of a Green House® Home. Each opportunity to share our homes brings hope for the model to be available to all."

In July 2021, AARP Michigan released a white paper, *Home at Last*, describing the need for change in Michigan's long term care system and making five recommendations for how policymakers could utilize one-time, federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to overcome key structural barriers in the current system. One of the five recommendations was to incentivize small-house nursing homes, such as the Green House® model. Research shows that the small-house model offers better safety and resident satisfaction with comparable operational costs to traditional nursing homes once they are up and running.

"When AARP released the white paper, I felt a spark of excitement," said Potter. "Would policymakers give time to explore alternatives such as the Green House® model for nursing home care? I am hopeful there will be a shift in federal funding to incentivize models of care such as Brio Living Services' Green House® Homes. We are grateful to Paula and Melissa for sharing in our passion to provide higher quality care opportunities for older adults."

Dr. Jackie Taylor, co-chair of the UMRC & Porter Hills Foundation Board, agreed. "What a privilege to have the opportunity to tour our Green House® Homes with Paula and Melissa. I am deeply moved and impressed with the wonderful 'home' atmosphere and the way the team of universal caregivers works closely with every resident. The living areas are outstanding with all types of support to help older adults maintain their independence, and yet understand that they are home. The Green House® concept is outstanding and a true model for senior living."

Visit MyBrio.org/Green-House-Homes/ to learn more.



From left to right: Traci Potter (Brio Living Services), Melissa Seifert (AARP Michigan), Cheryl Van Bemden (Brio Living Services), Marla DeVries (The Green House Project), Jackie Taylor (UMRC & Porter Hills Foundation), and Paula Cunningham (AARP Michigan).

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*Building on a foundation of over 165 years of combined service to older adults, **Brio Living Services**, formerly UMRC & Porter Hills, is a faith-based, nonprofit organization whose mission is: Welcoming all, partnering together, enriching lives. Its vision is: A world in which all are empowered to age well. Brio Living Services represents the second largest nonprofit senior living organization in Michigan and serves the most economically diverse population of older adults. With a tradition of exceptional quality and a commitment to cutting-edge care, Brio Living Services and its affiliates serve more than 8,000 older adults each year, from 24 locations and service lines, across 22 counties in Michigan's lower peninsula.*
734.433.1000 / 616.949.4975 | MyBrio.org

*The mission of the **UMRC & Porter Hills Foundation** is: As faithful, philanthropic stewards and steadfast advocates for vibrant aging, we support the mission of Brio Living Services. 734.433.1000 / 616.577.2297 | Foundation.UMRCPH.org*

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501(c)(4) organization that advocates on issues that matter most to people age 50 and over, such as access to quality long term care and support for family caregivers. AARP has approximately 1.3 million members in Michigan. /states.aarp.org/michigan/

The Green House® Project partners with senior living providers to create homes for elders that demonstrate more powerful, meaningful, and satisfying lives, work, and relationships. We implement true culture change as well as dementia education and training to create person-directed, relationship-rich living environments. thegreenhouseproject.org/410.246.3806