



Anixter Center • 6610 N. Clark, Chicago, IL 60626 • (773) 973-7900  
The Village Foundation • 2300 Children's Plaza #28, Chicago, IL 60614 • (312) 402-6666

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**Contacts:**

Betsy Storm, Public Relations, Anixter Center; Phone (773) 973-7900, Ext. 243; Cell (773) 315-6912  
Kathleen Keenan, Public Affairs, Children's Memorial; Phone (773) 880-4500; Cell (773) 965-0870  
Julie Pesch, Public Affairs, Children's Memorial; Phone (773) 880-3055; Cell (773) 965-0868

## **Anixter Village, first-of-its-kind residence in Illinois for people with spina bifida, breaks ground**

*15-unit apartment building offers accessible, affordable housing  
that enables independent living*

**CHICAGO (March 28, 2006)** – The groundbreaking of Anixter Village, a pioneering apartment building designed to enable independent living for people with spina bifida and similar disabilities, took place at 10 a.m. today. A 15-unit building located at 2059 W. Washburne Avenue in Chicago's Illinois Medical District, Anixter Village will make the dream of independent living a reality for people with spina bifida and similar disabilities. The residence is expected to open in spring of 2007. Mayor Richard M. Daley was a guest speaker at the groundbreaking.

“What Anixter Village seeks to accomplish is independent living for people with disabilities,” explained Mayor Daley. “Allowing those with disabilities to enjoy transportation, enjoy education, jobs and cultural institutions independent of their families, yet at the same time as part of our community. That is truly the goal of this development and, to me, Anixter Village is a dream come true.”

Anixter Village features “universal design,” simply defined as design that provides as much accessibility as possible to as many people as possible, without the need for additional adaptation or specialized design. It's particularly essential for people in wheelchairs. According to the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University, building universal design features into a home adds only 2 to 5 percent to the cost. These features may include oversized bathrooms, door handles that open with easy-to-use levers rather than doorknobs, and easily accessible storage space. The architectural firm that designed Anixter Village is Lisec & Biederman, Ltd. of Chicago.

Many young adults with spina bifida have lived at home longer than the typical young adult. Residents of Anixter Village will be offered an array of tailor-made support services to assist them in the transition to living on their own. Among the possible skills they may hone will be cooking, grocery shopping, navigating urban transportation and employment-development skills.

## **Anixter Village Breaks Ground**

### **Add one**

Courtney Daly, a vivacious 17-year-old Chicagoan with spina bifida, also spoke at the event. She's a junior at Marist High School on Chicago's Southwest Side. Like most teens, she anticipates the day — in the near future — when she'll live in her own apartment. When Courtney learned of Anixter Village, she was thrilled to discover that a place like it will soon exist as a living option for her, an apartment designed with the ultimate in wheelchair accessibility.

Courtney joked, "My mom and I have been pretty much joined at the hip my entire life. Making the transition from living with my family to having an apartment will be challenging, so anything that would make it easier — like complete accessibility in an apartment — would be a great help."

Spina bifida is a condition that occurs in nearly 10 of every 10,000 births in the United States. *Spina bifida* means cleft spine, which is an incomplete closure in the spinal column. It is a birth anomaly that occurs in the developing fetus when a part of the spinal column fails to close and drop below the surface of the skin. The condition occurs at various levels of severity from mild to severe, depending on the level at which the spinal column is involved. Individuals with spina bifida and similar disabilities can live independently with personal and environmental supports. Most use wheelchairs or crutches to aid mobility.

Anixter Village is a unique entity in Illinois, one that neither of the two organizations responsible for it could have created alone. Six years ago, the two nonprofits were introduced by a mutual acquaintance. The vision for Anixter Village came from David G. McLone, M.D., PhD. and president and CEO of The Village Foundation. For more than 25 years, McLone led the division of Neurosurgery at Children's Memorial Hospital. He created the Spina Bifida Clinic at Children's Memorial in 1975, building it into a premier center of its kind in the world. McLone is recognized as one of the foremost international experts in pediatric neurosurgery and neural tube defects.

The Village Foundation, founded in 2001, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for young adults with chronic neurological disabilities by providing opportunities and habilitation services that foster independence. A primary goal of The Village Foundation is to promote independence through camping experiences. McLone has been a leader in facilitating camping experiences for children with spina bifida over the past 15 years. When it came time to developing housing for young adults with spina bifida, said McLone, "Anixter Center was the natural partner for us. We have similar objectives and philosophies."

Anixter Center, founded nearly 90 years ago, is a nonprofit with the mission of assisting people with disabilities to live and work successfully in the community. With more than 20 residences among its 70 programs and offerings, Anixter Center is known as an innovator with broad expertise in housing. Anixter Center President and CEO Allan I. Bergman is a nationally recognized leader and expert on disability rights, services and advocacy.

"Our vision for Anixter Village is two-fold," said Bergman. "First, it's essential to ensure that people with spina bifida and similar disabilities have a place of their own to call 'home' that is affordable, accessible and enhances their sense of freedom and well-being. And second, we're spreading the important message that there's a large and rapidly growing need for accessible, affordable housing that incorporates universal design — not only for people with disabilities as those individuals are usually defined, but also for the increasing number of aging baby boomers."

**Anixter Village Breaks Ground**  
**Add two**

A variety of sources provided financial support for Anixter Village, including: the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Chicago, The Illinois Housing Development Authority, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago, Anixter Center, The Camp Ability Foundation and The Village Foundation.

**Caption Information**

Anixter Center President & CEO Allan I. Bergman, Mayor Daley, Courtney Daly and David McLone, M.D., PhD.

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