

Hello and thank you for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Terez Giuliana and I live in Roxborough. For 35 years, I volunteered with Aid for Friends as a cook, visitor, and regional coordinator, bringing home-cooked meals and friendly visits to the homebound and isolated. That work brought me into the homes of close to 100 people, almost all elderly, with varying degrees of disability and poverty, so I've seen a lot. I always said that there was a tragedy behind every door I opened. The most tragic situation I have encountered in 35 years has been the brothers, and I'm here to tell their story.

Six years ago I was referred to two elderly disabled brothers a few blocks from my home in Roxborough—Joe and Marty, now aged 80 and 75, aka “the brothers.” Joe is physically disabled and Marty had a traumatic brain injury in his teens; Joe has looked after his brother for decades. The brothers had rented a run-down row home for years for \$535 a month and were barely getting by on their fixed incomes, no food in the fridge. Aid for Friends solved the food issue and I saw them weekly. In 2017, everything changed. Their landlord died, the home was being sold, and their lease terminated. Eviction proceedings loomed. That's when I crossed the line and tried to solve their housing problem, because I could not stand by and watch two elderly disabled men become homeless.

It took some doing but my dear husband and I found them an apartment for \$950 right down the street from us. We had to cosign the lease and paid a year's rent up front to sweeten the deal. We have paid a portion of their rent and all their utilities for the past four years. This was meant to be a way station until they could get into senior subsidized housing. In 2017, we were told it was a three-year wait. Joe got “the book” of listings from PCA and he said he applied. He must have made an error and applied to a facility with only a few spaces, because he tells me he is now #76 on their list. Remember, he is 80 years old.

Joe is irascible, cantankerous, and prideful; he does not accept help easily. We have a social relationship, not a legal one. I try to preserve his independence and dignity, stepping in on matters of health and housing in whatever way I can.

The building where the brothers currently live is being sold and their lease expires in 11 days. I have tried frantically to find them a new home, a one-bedroom apartment on a first floor for \$1000. They want to stay in Roxborough, and it would be more convenient for me to look after them if they were close by. No luck. I've contacted property management companies, realtors, and the local senior center. The few who actually returned my calls have referred me to websites like Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, and Zumper. The process is slow and frustrating for me, a person comfortable with technology, but it is a major barrier for someone like Joe, trying to search on his phone with a limited data plan. Most applications charge a fee for a credit check, which Joe will surely fail.

While Roxborough is rife with new construction, these new apartment buildings along Ridge Avenue are far out of reach of seniors in desperate need of housing, like Joe and Marty.

One ray of hope: a realtor from my church is now trying to help. If we can find an affordable place, we'll cosign and pay another year's rent up front to get the brothers into another apartment and keep them from becoming homeless. We're even looking for an affordable condo to buy so we can act as their landlords. But we are not finding anything in their price range (or ours).

I figured there had to be someone whose job it was to help the elderly navigate this process, someone who could take Joe by the hand and act as a case manager, making sure he was doing everything he possibly could do to secure housing. PCA said they didn't offer that. No one does, but someone should. Joe and Marty have me and my husband, trying to help, but what about other seniors? There are other tragedies out there, and we can personally only deal with one of them.

The waiting time to get into senior subsidized housing is shameful, with no accommodation for an emergency situation. The application process, with a separate packet for each building, is onerous and unwieldy. The supply of affordable housing in the midst of a building boom is negligible.

What is going to become of Joe and Marty if they are evicted? Having done homeless outreach, I know of no shelter that could accommodate their respective disabilities and keep them together. We cannot watch two elderly disabled brothers be put out onto the street. We are desperate and we need help.

Thank you for your attention.