

Topeka Developer Honored for Lifelong Commitment to Providing Affordable Housing for Kansas Families

--Ross Freeman Named "Affordable Housing Trail Blazer" at 2009 Kansas Housing Conference--



KHRC's Gary Allsup and Laurie Bedlington of HUD present Developer Ross Freeman with the 2009 Ad Astra Trail Blazer Award.

Overland Park – Topeka Developer Ross Freeman, President of Pioneer Group, Inc. received top honors at the 2009 Kansas Housing Conference held in Overland Park, Kansas. Freeman was named this year's **Affordable Housing Trail Blazer** for his exemplary leadership and service in responding to affordable housing and community development needs within the state of Kansas.

During the Ad Astra Awards ceremony on August 20th, Freeman said he was deeply honored by the selection. "Working in the area of providing housing that is clean, safe, modern, energy-efficient and affordable is extremely gratifying," said Freeman.

"When you can take a deteriorated and crime-ridden trailer park and turn it into an oasis of attractive housing for families, such as was the case at Pioneer Adams located at 21st and Adams in Topeka, you get a feeling of reaching out to and serving your neighbor, whether they are located next door, across town or across our country," said Freeman.

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Colleagues who have worked with Ross over the years say they're impressed by his endless drive and talents, and that simply put, he knows how to get things done.

"Ross has made a lifelong commitment to providing affordable housing for Kansas families," said Ernie Straub III, President of Straub Construction Company. "He is well-known for his determination in preserving historic buildings across the state."

Under Freeman's leadership, the Pioneer Group has brought several award-winning projects across the finish line. Developments include Pioneer Curtis, Pioneer Adams, Pioneer Presidents' Place, Woodland Village, Eisenhower Ridge, and most recently Northeast Junior High Place.

An historic icon in the Kansas City, Kansas community, Northeast Jr. High School is now a unique setting for senior housing apartments. The Pioneer Group renovated and redeveloped historic classrooms into 43 quality affordable apartments. To view pictures of this development [click here](#):

Earlier this year, Northeast Junior High received the 2009 Medallion Award of Excellence from the Kansas Preservation Alliance and is the sixth Pioneer Group development to receive the statewide historic preservation award. In addition, Pioneer Presidents' Place, located in Salina, was the first affordable housing/historic rehabilitation property in the nation to receive the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification through the U.S. Green Building Council.

A list of other 2009 Ad Astra award winners also honored at the Kansas Housing Conference follows:

Special Achievement in Affordable Housing Development - URBAN

Gardens at Creekside - Olathe

Contact: Brett Johnson, Partner, Overland Property Group, 913-693-7970

Special Achievement in Affordable Housing Development - RURAL

Tierra Verde - Hutchinson

Contact: Shara Gonzales, Executive Director, New Beginnings, 620-966-0274

Excellence in Partnership

The Lawrence Community Housing Trust Program

Contact: Rebecca Buford, Executive Director, Tenants to Homeowners, 785-760-2058

Outstanding Housing Advocate

Kansas State Representative Steven Brunk (District 85 - Bel Aire, KS)

Contact: Rep. Brunk, 316-744-1547

Innovation in Housing and Community Development

Prairie Pointe Townhomes - Greensburg

Contact: Jay Manske of Manske and Associates, 316-630-8344

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The Ad Astra Awards are given out each year at the statewide Kansas Housing Conference. The awards honor individuals and organizations who demonstrate excellence in developing affordable housing, shaping housing policy and creating innovative housing solutions to meet the daily needs of low and moderate-income Kansans. The awards celebrate housing leaders who consistently make a positive impact on their communities, as well as showcase the best practices of housing developers, housing authorities, community service organizations and others.

For more information about Ross Freeman, please contact the Pioneer Group at 785-232-1122. To learn more about the Kansas Housing Conference or the 2009 Ad Astra Awards, contact Catherine Couch of Kansas Housing Resources Corporation at 785-296-0081, ccouch@kshousingcorp.org.

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