



# press release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Brookfield Home Sale Opens Door to Group Living for People with Disabilities, Honors Sisters' Relative**

“Giving Tuesday” on December 2<sup>nd</sup> is designed to spark financial support for not-for-profit organizations performing a wide spectrum of important work serving a variety of people in need.

And for one pair of sisters who grew up in Brookfield, the recent sale of their distinctive home to UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago—as well as their Realtor’s support of its efforts with a donation on Giving Tuesday—culminates a very personal journey in their support of a broader movement benefitting those who have developmental disabilities.

From the late-1950s to the mid-1970s, Barb and Margi Sirovatka’s parents, Norbert and Helen, would welcome their second cousin, Ralph Haremski, every Easter and Thanksgiving at 8840 Windemere Avenue.

Born in 1912, Ralph contracted scarlet fever as a young child, resulting in the lifelong condition of developmental disabilities. As a young adult, after his parents died, he was relegated to living at Dixon State Developmental Center, an overcrowded and understaffed institution about 100 miles west of Chicago.

The Sirovatkas were his closest family and Ralph greeted the holiday visits with great anticipation. He had a remarkable ability to remember birthdays and a passion for the Chicago Cubs that surfaced in his recitation of players’ statistics. He also was thrilled to enjoy home-cooked meals that sharply contrasted with the food he customarily received at Dixon.

“Those holiday meals were the highlight of his year,” Barb recalled.

Now, with the November 10<sup>th</sup> sale of the home to UCP Seguin, whose elongated ranch-style design gives it a striking appearance, by early 2015 it will soon be the residence for four adults with developmental disabilities. The property is perfectly suited to such an arrangement, with a mirror-image layout that includes two living rooms, two dining rooms, two kitchens and four bedrooms.

“To think a community of people supported by UCP Seguin will be living there, cooking meals for each other all the time, is very touching,” said Margi.

Over the past half-century, advocates have been instrumental in bringing about much-needed changes in the care of those with developmental disabilities. A significant step has been the creation and expansion of small group homes that enable these men and women to be integrated in the community.

In its residential program UCP Seguin serves nearly 270 people with developmental disabilities in 70 group homes across 25 west and south suburban communities. With the addition of this new home, the organization will have five homes in Brookfield serving 20 individuals.

Norbert Sirovatka bought the home in 1952, as it was being built and shortly before getting married. Eventually, his mother moved into one half of the house, and later he and his wife lived in one half, while Barb lived in the other half. Margi moved to Riverside for many years before retiring and then, after selling her home there a year ago, moved back in with her sister.

They fulfilled a long-term dream by moving to a downsized home in Montana earlier this year. As they placed the home on the market, they were attracted to the idea of it being used as a community group home.

“We are just so pleased that this has all fallen into place,” Barb said. “We can’t think of a better way to honor Ralph’s memory.”

Their Realtor, Roz Byrne of Oak Park-based RE/MAX In The Village, donates \$100 from the proceeds of every transaction to the charity of her client’s choice. Over the last decade, that has amounted to more than \$35,000 in donations to scores of non-profit organizations. In this instance, there was no doubt about the organization that she would make the donation to: UCP Seguin

And by donating on Giving Tuesday, the \$100 will be doubled because of a matching grant challenge issued by the Coleman Foundation for every dollar received from new donors on that day.

“This generosity will greatly benefit the people with disabilities we serve – not in segregated institutions but in thriving homes integrated into their communities,” said UCP Seguin CEO John Voit. “Giving Tuesday donors provide these individuals the chance to enjoy productive work, gain life skills, and participate fully in society.”

To learn more about UCP Seguin’s #GivingTuesday campaign, visit [www.ucpsequin.org](http://www.ucpsequin.org)

*UCP Seguin of Greater Chicago is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit human services agency dedicated to enriching the lives of people with disabilities. Providing programs and services from birth to old age, UCP Seguin serves 1,000 children and adults with*

*disabilities and helps them achieve their potential, advance their independence and act as full members of the community. Its programs include innovative training and education, family support, employment and life-skills training, and residential services.*

*In 1986, it was among the first agencies in Illinois to redesign its residential programs to emphasize community integration and traditional home-life experiences by establishing its Community Integrated Living Arrangements (CILA) group homes.*

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