



AFFORDABILITY FOR SENIORS AWARENESS TOOLKIT

February 2016

Sample emails, social posts, graphics and memes are available online at <http://www.makeroomusa.org/tools/>

NEWSLETTER & WEBSITE

NEWSLETTER PROMOTION

Please consider inserting this blurb or one like it in your member newsletters:

This is what retirement looks like when things don't go as planned. In the past 5 years, Tom Wall, 67, has lost his livelihood to a stroke and his wife to cancer. Now he is about to lose his home to foreclosure and may have to leave his community due to high rents. He is telling his story via [Make Room](#) to raise awareness of the 2.2 million seniors who are paying more than 50% of their income for rent.

Learn more at: <http://www.MakeRoomUSA.org>

WEBSITE INFO

Here is some text to share information on your website about seniors struggling to make rent:

The number of senior households paying unaffordable rent has outpaced the growth in the overall senior population during the past decade. To highlight the issue, Tom Wall, a 67-year-old renter from Annapolis, Maryland, is telling his story via [Make Room](#). Tom was forced to retire when he had a stroke in 2011. He and his wife lived on her income until she passed away from cancer in 2015.

Facing foreclosure on his home loan, he moved to an apartment last year and now spends 70 percent of his income, which comes entirely from Social Security, toward rent.

On the first of the month, the day rent is due, Make Room releases short [documentary films](#), “Concerts for the 1st” footage and data analysis of rent burden. These concerts feature musicians performing intimate concerts across the country to spotlight Americans struggling to afford rent.

Between 2005 and 2014, the overall population of seniors age 65 and over increased by 25 percent nationwide, from 22.5 million to 28.1 million, while the number of seniors paying more than half of their household income (before taxes) toward rent and utilities shot up by 34 percent, from 1.4 million to 1.8 million.

According to Make Room’s analysis, 43 percent of seniors who pay more than half their income on rent have no income except for Social Security. Meanwhile, there will be no Social Security payment increase in 2016 for only the third year since the federal government instated cost-of-living adjustments in 1975.

Individuals and families who pay more than half their income for housing costs are considered “severely burdened” by housing experts. Seniors who must pay such a large share of their income on rent are often forced to choose between making rent and paying for groceries, medicine and other essentials.

Single women with a median age of 78 represent nearly 1.1 million, or 58 percent, of the 1.8 million senior renter households spending more than half their income on rent. Men living alone with a median age of 73 represent nearly 390,000, or 21 percent, of these households.

Seniors struggling to pay rent are far more likely to live in large apartment buildings. More than half of senior severely burdened renters live in buildings with 10 or more units, compared with just over 30 percent of all severely burdened renters.

Nationally, 11.4 million families, or 26.4 percent of the 43.1 million U.S. renter households, spend at least half their income on rent according to 2014 Census data, the latest available. Visit: <http://www.MakeRoomUSA.org>



SOCIAL MEDIA

HASHTAGS: #MakeRoom, #Concertsforthe1st

Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Don't forget to tag @MakeRoomUSA.

Dates are suggested. Feel free to post any of these at your discretion.

Feb 1 / Post via Twitter and Facebook



Rent is DUE! Over 2 million seniors like Tom are barely able to make rent. Join our rent party: <http://bit.ly/makeRoom>



Rent is DUE! Over 2 million seniors like Tom are barely able to make rent. Join our rent party to give them a voice: <http://bit.ly/makeRoom> and like MakeRoomUSA.

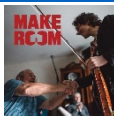


image: Feb_rentparty_700x700.jpg

Feb 5 / Post via Twitter and Facebook



Violinist @TimFain joins #Concertsforthe1st to #MakeRoom for a struggling senior renter: <http://bit.ly/1QRCHUR>



Violinist @TimFain joins #Concertsforthe1st to #MakeRoom for a struggling senior renter: <http://bit.ly/1QRCHUR>



image: Feb_TimFain_700x700.jpg

Feb 8 / Post via Twitter and Facebook



Get this poster! Limited edition and signed by @TimFain. Details here: <http://bit.ly/MRTimFain>



Make Room on your wall. This limited edition poster is signed by [Tim Fain](http://TimFain). Donate \$100 or more and it's yours (while supplies last). Details here: <http://bit.ly/MRTimFain>



image: Feb_poster_700x700.jpg

**MAKE
ROOM**

Feb 15 / Post via Twitter and Facebook



Seniors paying more than 1/2 of income to rent in your state and 50 metro areas: <http://bit.ly/SnrMaps> #MakeRoom



How many seniors are paying more than half of their income to rent in your state or metro area? Check out these maps: <http://bit.ly/SnrMaps> #MakeRoom



image: Feb_map_700x700.gif

Feb 22 / Post via Twitter and Facebook



2 million+ seniors pay over half their income to rent. <http://bit.ly/makeRoom> Follow @MakeRoomUSA to learn more.



Over 2 million seniors pay over 50% of their income to rent. It's time to #MakeRoom <http://bit.ly/makeRoom> Follow @MakeRoomUSA



image: Feb_seniors_700x700.jpg

Feb 29 / Post via Twitter and Facebook



This is what retirement looks like when things don't go as planned. See Tom's story: <http://bit.ly/TomWall>



This is what retirement looks like when things don't go as planned. Tom Wall is renting again at 67 after losing his wife to cancer and having to move out of his home, which is in foreclosure. See his story: <http://bit.ly/TomWall>



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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

RESPONSE TEMPLATE

When the news media reports on rental housing in your area, you can use this template to quickly respond and bring attention to senior renters.

To the editor:

[OUTLET] was right to draw attention to the growing struggles facing renters and America's middle class in **[CITY/STATE]**. ("**[ARTICLE TITLE]**") Nationally, 11.4 million renter households spend more than half their income toward rent and utilities each month, leaving too little left over for other necessities like groceries or medical expenses. But not every family paying unaffordable rent is the same and policymakers searching for solutions to this crisis should tailor interventions accordingly.

One group that needs more attention: senior renters. According to new data from the national [Make Room](#) campaign, between 2005 and 2014 the number of people aged 65 and over paying more than half their income in rent rose by 34 percent, from 1.4 million to 1.8 million. And too often, they have no recourse when rising rents put their homes in jeopardy.

To protect senior renters, federal, state, and local policymakers should support the expansion of programs that seniors already rely on, like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, the HOME program and Section 8 rental assistance vouchers. By making smart investments and advancing policies that have been proven to make a difference, we can reverse the trend and keep seniors in their homes and communities—and make progress on addressing broader national housing challenges along the way.

[Name]

[Organization]

[Local Address/Contact Information]



E-MAIL SAMPLE

SUBJECT: LET'S MAKE ROOM

Dear [FIRST NAME],

I want you to know about the [Make Room](#) campaign, which is working to put the 11 million American families whose rent consumes more than half their incomes on the national agenda. Make Room is sharing real people's stories and promoting solutions — all to urge our nation's leaders to act. As part of the Concerts for the 1st series, top musical artists are lending their voices with performances in the living rooms of affected families. I'm excited to be part of the beginning of this new effort and I hope you'll join me today.

I would personally appreciate it if you could do these easy things to help us spread the word about Make Room and the families we're aiming to help:

1. [Like us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) (@MakeRoomUSA)
2. [Sign up on the website](#) to stay informed and hear about new ways to act. (Expect about 1-2 email updates a month and your email address won't be shared).
3. Join the 54,000+ people who've taken the [Make Room pledge](#) to give renters a voice.
4. Forward this email to others and help spread the word about the [campaign](#). One in 4 families who rent are affected by the rental crisis. It will take all of us to get our country's leaders to pay more attention to the needs of struggling families.

Thank you for all you can do to help Make Room for everyone trying to make ends meet.

