



community development partnership

Creating opportunities for people to live, work, and thrive on the Lower Cape

Dianna Cavalierri: Safe, Stable and Affordable Housing for a Longtime Resident

"I don't have to worry about my bills. I don't have to worry about being cold during the winter. And I'm no longer working 50 hours a week on my feet."

Dianna Cavalierri
CDP Advisory Board Member



At 77 years, Provincetown resident Dianna Cavalierri is barely slowing down. In March, after being on a waitlist for an affordable rental apartment for 5 years, Dianna moved out of her expensive home and into her new affordable 1-bedroom apartment owned and managed by the CDP. As a lifelong restaurant professional, decades of constantly being on her feet have taken a toll and the move has made it possible for her to work fewer hours.

Born in Boston's West End, Dianna was on her own at the age of 16 and picked up her first job operating the soda fountain at Kresge's in Park Square. Her

next jobs included working as a short order cook at the Registry of Motor Vehicles during a time when they supplied food to their staff, and as a shoe factory worker in Lynn for seven years. In 1987, Dianna started a cleaning business in Boston supplementing her income with a restaurant job.

Dianna fondly remembers visiting Provincetown regularly as a child and throughout the years she continued to spend time there. Although the cleaning business was doing well, she and her close friend and business partner, Mona, decided to move to the tip of the Cape. Along with another friend, they purchased a house on Bradford Street and Dianna moved to Provincetown full-time in 1992. It was a very different time – before a scarcity of rentals and skyrocketing prices were the norm.

Dianna landed a job at the Red Inn where she worked for 5 years. It was then that a friend told her to meet CDP CEO Jay Coburn and his husband John Guerra who were at the time opening their newly established and soon to be successful restaurant CHESTER. At her interview for a wait staff position, she told John "You need to hire me. I have a following." She was hired, and her candor and sense of humor made her a favorite among the staff and customers. For the next nine years, Dianna would

3 Main Street Mercantile, Unit 7 Eastham, MA 02642
P 508.240.7873 F 508.240.5085 E contact@capecdp.org

www.capecdp.org



come in early every shift and set up the dining room and shine the wine glasses. “Everything had to be perfect,” she says with a wink.

When CHESTER closed in 2006 Dianna worked at various restaurants throughout town. Five years ago, she began working at Joon Bar, a CDP small business client. Joon’s owner, Audrey Mostaghim, had worked with Dianna at CHESTER, “it was like a homecoming,” she reminisces. So, at the age of 72 Dianna embarked on a new career as a host, managing the reservation book and welcoming guests. Despite working three jobs she was spending more than 50% of her income on housing and paying the bills was a constant struggle. Diana recalls that “Sometimes I had to borrow money to pay the utility bills.” It was not a sustainable situation and as a septuagenarian, working 14-hour days, was becoming increasingly difficult.

After Mona died tragically in 2013, Dianna started to think about her long-term prospects and realized she needed to downsize and find a place that was less of a financial burden. By this time, the housing market in Provincetown had become a nightmare for anyone looking for an affordable year-round rental. That is when Dianna applied for one of the CDPs affordable rentals and was put on the waiting list. It took five years for an affordable apartment in Provincetown to become available.

Although the move from her house to the apartment has been a big adjustment, Dianna is now really loving it. “I feel at home,” she says. It turns out that it has been a safe place to be during the public health crisis. “There are only three other apartments in the building so there is minimal interaction. And with everything being shut down, it has given me time to move in and set up house.”

Dianna now only pays one-third of her income on rent and utilities which makes it possible for her to live off of her social security benefits and odd jobs. “It makes my life less stressful,” she remarks. “I don’t have to worry about my bills. I don’t have to worry about being cold during the winter. And I’m no longer working 50 hours a week on my feet. I can afford to get my hair done now!” she says with a laugh.

Dianna is one of 189 individuals for whom the CDP provides housing. We are thrilled that we were able to help Dianna secure a safe and affordable place to live in the town she has called home for over twenty-five years.