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Maria Bruno of Monticello is taped in her new apartment in the Horizons complex yesterday morning by Andrew P. O'Rourke, assistant commissioner with the state Division of Housing and Community. These new apartments will provide affordable housing for residents like Bruno.

Monticello greets affordable housing

By Victor Whitman

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Monticello — Maria Bruno stands on the smooth white carpet of her new apartment in Monticello.

One of the nicest things about the place is everything works.

The stove turns on.

The heat comes out of the wall like it's suppose to.

The pipes don't freeze.

Bruno was among the lucky ones. She got an apartment in the Horizons complex.

At a ribbon cutting in Monticello yesterday, state Sen. John Bonacic, and a handful of other invited guests, stood beneath an arch of balloons celebrating the \$7.7 million complex off Route 42, which opened in September and is now fully occupied.

It's the first affordable rental complex to be built in Monticello in years.

But the pomp masks another fact.

As 56 families celebrate their new homes, hundreds more in the area are on lists waiting for their chance.

Go a less than a mile away from Horizons and David Kaufman, Monticello Housing Authority director, has the same problem he had yesterday.

Right now, 545 low-income families are on a waiting list for Section 8 vouchers, a federal program that provides housing subsidies for people meeting poverty guidelines.

He has 50 vouchers that go unused. Families can't find enough apartments in Liberty, Monticello and Fallsburg that are affordable and will pass an inspection, he said.

"Horizons obviously helps, but it falls far short of what's needed," Kaufman

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said.

Another larger provider of Section 8 vouchers, Rural Opportunities, has a waiting list of 1,118 families. Roughly 80 of the organization's 667 vouchers go unused for the same reason, said Andrea Baez, the Section 8 program administrator. There are no apartments.

The seven-building Horizons complex includes two- and three bedroom apartments, renting for \$384 to \$680 a month. The going rate for two- and three-bedroom apartments in Monticello and other areas of the county is roughly \$750-\$900 monthly.

Some 1,200 families applied for the 56 slots, Horizons developer Ken Regan said.

Gloria Alison, a mother of two teenage boys, was one of the lucky ones to get a place.

Last March, Alison was renting an apartment in a home on Wood Avenue. It was shut down for code violations. She then lived briefly in another home on High Street, which was sold. She had to move to the Delano Motel. Then she heard about Horizons.

She's not planning to move out any time soon.

Neither is Bruno, who is living here with her husband and two children.

"I'm happy," she said.

It's like the family won the lottery.