**Exclusion Works!**

A small county housing authority in rural Illinois had a notable success in stopping the spread of bed bugs in one of their 107-unit high-rise apartment buildings. At one point in 2014, this building had 20 units with active bed bug infestations. Although caught off guard by the quick spread, the director and staff researched how could improve their current pest control efforts. They were happy with their pest control service contractor but not making progress in containing the spread of bed bugs through the building. The director of the housing authority took the initiative to contact StopPests in Housing and start talking to neighboring housing authorities to find out how others were managing the recent influx of bed bugs in their part of the state. He discovered the heating system pipes were a perfect conduit for bed bugs and other pests to travel through the walls and move to neighboring apartments. Maintenance staff then put in days of work sealing and caulking each and every unit in the building. This significantly reduced the number of infested units. In July 2016 they reported that their last building-wide inspection identified 2 units with low-level bed bug infestations. Certainly, a thorough pest control technician and resident and staff education efforts have played a role in their success but the director and head of maintenance still maintain, it was the exclusion efforts that made the biggest impact on their bed bug management success. This backs up recent research by Dr. Richard Cooper and Dr. Changlu Wang at Rutgers University. Through their research we now know even when a food source is present, bed bugs are highly likely to disperse beyond the bedroom and couch to surrounding rooms, neighboring apartments, and even across the hall (Cooper et al, 2015). This case in Illinois is a perfect example of the importance of addressing wall voids and dispersal habits of bed bugs. Treating each infestation as an isolated occurrence is not an adequate response to addressing pests building-wide.

**Lessons Learned: Bed bugs travel among units; exclusion works!**