



WVAHA *Collection*

A Publication of the West Virginia Association of Housing Agencies

Fall 2008

Advocating for Housing



Catherine Dodson, Executive Director of Martinsburg Housing Authority, testified at the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity field hearing on July 29, 2008. The hearing, hosted by U.S. Representatives Shelley Moore Capito, R - WV and Maxine Waters, D - CA (pictured above) was entitled, "Affordable Housing in West Virginia: Challenges in the Eastern Panhandle."

Ms. Dodson, stressed the need for additional affordable housing units and reducing the wait time for those seeking housing. She explained that they are located in a fast growing area and have many people moving in from Baltimore and Washington because the cost of housing is less expensive for them. However, affordable housing is in short supply since most of the housing being built is out of the reach of local people.

She also voiced her concerns about HUD asking for asset-management and project based accounting and the hardship it causes smaller housing authorities. Ms. Dodson testified that housing authorities in West Virginia are run well and the practices and procedures that apply to larger agencies like Baltimore and New York are not feasible for our state.

First FSS Graduate Recognized



Steven Skipwith, pictured above right, has been a resident of Charleston-Kanawha Housing since 2003. He moved in one of the first remodeled units at Orchard Manor. He signed his FSS contract on February 2, 2006. Although the contract is initially set for five years, participants may complete the program prior to this time. The goals that Steven wished to accomplish were:

1. Complete the FSS program
2. Improve credit score
3. Save money for down payment on a house.
4. Heavy equipment training
5. Buy a car

Steven accomplished many of his goals. He was promoted in his company and through this was able to establish an escrow account of over \$7,000.00. He also recently purchased a vehicle. In addition to the goals set through the program, Steven got married August 14, 2006 to his wife Connie and they will be relocating due to a job transfer.

Steven is the first graduate of Charleston-Kanawha Housing's Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency Program which began in 2005.

President's Message:



Change for today, hope for tomorrow; the buzzwords of the current political season. These are appropriate phrases for our agencies to consider, for our hope for tomorrow may not be realized if we don't recognize

the changes that are taking place in the workforce and begin to adapt. For it is likely within the next five years many of our veteran staff will reach retirement age and seek other areas to apply their talents and skills. I can't think of another group of people more deserving of a break than this generation, both in management and maintenance, for they have built a fine record of achievement in assisting families all across West Virginia. Yet, if we do not recruit and build up the next generation of housing leaders, all their efforts to provide safe, decent housing for low-income families may be in jeopardy.

To do this we must recognize that those coming up through today's workforce have had different formative experiences from most of our current employees. Their approach to work, what they hope to accomplish and their long term employment goals are different. I believe the training offered during this week's conference will begin to help us with the task of securing the hope of affordable housing for future generations. Thank you for your attendance and I hope you enjoy the beautiful Stonewall Resort.

Scattered Site Development



The Huntington WV Housing Authority received HUD approval to develop a 14-unit scattered-site housing project that includes the new construction of eight (8) single-family homes or duplex units. It also requires the rehabilitation of six (6) existing vacant units primarily in the Fairfield West Neighborhood in Huntington. This \$1,300,000 development project is 60% completed with only the new construction units left to build. The completed units will serve as Public Housing replacement rental apartments.

Huntington Awarded VASH Vouchers

In partnership with the Huntington Veteran's Affairs Medical Center Program, the Huntington WV Housing Authority was recently awarded 35 housing choice vouchers that serve homeless veterans in need of housing assistance. The HUD VASH Program combines HUD HCV rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by a case management team from the Veterans Affairs for the communities it serves. This Veterans Affairs service area includes the WV counties of Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, Putnam, Kanawha, Boone, Jackson, Mason, Logan and Mingo. It also provides services in eastern Kentucky and Lawrence County in Ohio.

Affordable Housing in Randolph County



Representatives and partners from Highland Community Builders Inc., a nonprofit developer started by the Randolph County Housing Authority, recently gathered with U.S. Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito to celebrate the progress of the Highland Meadows project in Elkins. The dedication ceremony was held at the site of the first home to be built in this neighborhood which will bring new, affordable housing to Randolph County.

Capito is the ranking member of the Housing sub-committee of financial services and an advocate for rural and affordable housing issues. At the event, she acknowledged the importance of strong partnerships in creating successful development projects like Highland Meadows.

Highland Meadows is a 14+ acre development which will consist of 42 ¼ acre lots. The homes target low-to-middle-income families and first-time home buyers.

Highland Community Builders has optioned eight lots and has now begun construction on two model homes. The subdivision includes buried utilities, landscaped grounds and paved streets, a large greenway and convenient access to shopping, dining, health care, schools and other amenities.

Highland Community Builders Inc. partners who attended the August 20 event included the Benedum Foundation, the WV Housing Development Fund, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh and local member bank Mountain Valley Bank, the West Virginia Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Fannie Mae Foundation, and the Federation of Appalachian Housing Enterprises.

Pictured from left: Karen Jacobson, Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito and Josie Cuda.

Budgeting Seminar



In April of 2008, the Mount Hope Housing Authority held a budgeting workshop, that featured a speaker from Capital Resource Agency. Those in attendance received information packets that are designed to help track spending habits and point out areas where personal savings could be increased. Pictured are several residents from the MHHA as well as the MHHA Social Service Coordinator Micah Bailey. Residents shared ideas of ways to increase personal savings with each other, and also agreed to meet again in six months to share the progress that was made since the time of the meeting.

American Basketball Association Expands to Bluefield

Indianapolis, IN. The American Basketball Association (ABA) today announced that it will add Bluefield, West Virginia to its growing roster of teams for the upcoming season beginning in December. According to Joe Newman, "We are very pleased and proud to have the West Virginia Blazers as part of the ABA; this is one of the most unusual ownership groups ever - and not only makes a major sports statement, but a major social statement. I'm not sure that anything quite like this has ever been done, but our hats are off to the State of West Virginia, the City of Bluefield and the Bluefield Housing Authority for undertaking such a great endeavor. We are excited."

The team will be owned by the Bluefield Housing Authority, a government agency operating in Mercer County, WV. The agency office is located in the City of Bluefield WV. The Authority operates under the direction of a five member Board of Commissioners, and in accordance with the laws of the State of West Virginia and Federal Laws applicable to Housing Authorities.

The agency provides rental subsidy programs to low and very-low income families within Mercer County, and operates the Public Housing Program in the City of Bluefield. Approximately 565 families within the County depend on the Housing Authority for help with obtaining and keeping safe, decent, sanitary and affordable housing. Housing programs are funded solely by federal funds from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Authority has a ten year history of providing activities and programs for youth and young adults in the community. Statistics show that children who are economically disadvantaged meet the federal and state guidelines for being "at-risk" for drug and alcohol abuse, and involvement in criminal activities. Programs offered by the Authority through camps, sports programs, and other activities provide educational and recreational activities to keep young community members involved in alternative activities to drugs, alcohol and crime. These programs are funded by grants, when available, and by contributions from local business that support the agency's efforts to work.



"The agency is a proud sponsor of the Bluefield Blazers youth basketball team, which has helped many young men in the area to improve athletic abilities and sportsmanship, relate to role models, develop and improve social skills, and increase awareness of the effects of drugs and alcohol," said Cindy Preast, Executive Director. "The team has traveled to many states in the east to compete in tournaments, and has hosted successful tournaments in Bluefield. To participate on the team, players must maintain a minimum GPA or be in tutoring (provided by the agency), and must remain drug and alcohol free. They also must remain free of behavior that violates federal, state and local laws."

"On July 14th, The Housing Authority Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to develop a team to participate in the American Basketball Association," added Ms. Preast. "The goals of the agency in developing our team, the West Virginia Blazers, are to provide another positive activity for young men in the area, to provide the community with benefits of a professional basketball team and to raise money to continue to support programs and activities to serve at-risk youth. We are very proud to be part of the ABA."

Of the 30 season games, the Blazers' 15 home games will be played at the Raleigh County Armory in Beckley, WV. Ticket sales will begin soon and the schedule will be announced in August. Team tryouts will also be held in August. Interested players, sponsors, and fans please email WVBlazers@live.com or call (304) 325-9653, ext. 21. You may also visit www.abalive.com.

Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority Purchases West Side Properties



Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority recently purchased and began renovating vacant buildings located in the 1500 block of West Washington Street in Charleston, WV. Two of the buildings will be the future home of Charleston-Kanawha Housing's administrative and operations offices which will house approximately 42 staff. Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority has been instrumental in the revitalization efforts on the West Side of Charleston beginning with the demolition of 230 units of obsolete public housing in Orchard Manor in 1998.

Since this time, 36 new units have been constructed in Orchard Manor giving the community a total of 166 units. In 2007, 28 new townhomes were constructed at two additional sites on the West Side of Charleston and thirty-six are currently under construction.

In August 2006, Charleston Housing Authority and Kanawha County Housing Authority reorganized operations to become the Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority. Executive Director Mark Taylor said, "We were aware of the need to accommodate the increasing number of clients and staff and began researching buildings in the area. The idea of adding to the revitalization of the West Side appealed to us and we decided to go in that direction. We hope to serve as a catalyst to attract other businesses to the area."

Charleston-Kanawha Housing Authority's plan to relocate staff into one centralized location is also the result of the current locations being less accessible to clients. Staff currently provide services in four separate locations.

In addition to consolidating services, this new location will be: convenient to the public, located on the city busline, fully handicap accessible, connect two currently vacant buildings creating a large waiting area and contribute to revitalizing the West Side.

"Not only are we going to be able to position Charleston-Kanawha Housing to be a more accessible and efficient operation with the merging of all administration functions, but we will also improve a part of the city that is in much need of improvement in a lot of areas. My hope is that other property owners in the area will see this as the first step in the rebuilding of that entire part of our community and will join us in continuing efforts of revitalization" Allan McVey, Vice-Chair, Charleston Kanawha Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

The renovated office buildings will be another significant investment in the community. These buildings have been sitting vacant and deteriorating for a number of years. The renovations will give the main street a much needed face-lift and will contribute to a changing climate for residents and visitors of the West Side of Charleston.



Current Condition

Student Given a Free Car!

Ashley Nelson who is a former Neighborhood Network and Cabell County Youth Empowerment Program (CCYEP) student has set goals for herself and is accomplishing them one at a time. Ashley enrolled in our program in the winter of 2007 in hopes of receiving GED tutoring and job readiness skills.



She worked very hard and only a few short months later Ashley passed the test and received her GED on February 8, 2008. She then began volunteering in the CCYEP/ROSS office. Ashley learned the daily office operations quickly as she answered phones, made copies, and directed lobby traffic. She then set another goal of attending post secondary education.

Without hesitation Ashley began classes at Huntington Junior College on June 30, 2008. She received a call that she qualified for a vehicle through the Good News Mountaineer Garage.

On July 15, Ashley picked up a 1996 Chrysler Town and Country minivan. She now had transportation back and forth to college and to daycare for her 5 young children. "This was something that I never expected. This has been life changing not just for me but also my children", Ashley said. The future looks very bright for Ashley Nelson and we wish her the best.

If you would like more information on the Good News Mountaineer Garage, go to goodnewsmountaineergarage.com.

Contributed by: Tim White, Huntington Housing Authority

Congratulations Ashley on a job well done!



Wheeling HA Updates

In addition to normal staff turnover, subsequent in house training needs, normal occupancy issues, etc. Wheeling Housing Authority has two activities/projects of some importance.

First, WHA is a Stop-Loss agency. As a result, we have submitted both for Year 1 and Year 2 Stop-Loss. In May of this year, HUD contractors conducted an on-site review of our application. The indication from the reviewer was that we should be approved. HUD has not yet indicated whether we were successful or not. On August 26, 2008 HUD published Supplemental Information Regarding Year 3 Stop-Loss Submissions on their website. That indicated that all PHA's that submitted Year 1 applications will be notified by September 30, 2008 if approved or denied.

Second, WHA in cooperation with TREK Development, submitted a LIHTC application to the WVHDF for an 18 unit development for Jacob Street in south Wheeling. As a result of the HOPE VI project, WHA is receiving Replacement Housing funds which we will leverage with the tax credits. All 18 units will also be public housing assisted. The WVHDF has approved our application and we anticipate the start of construction in the spring of 2009.

Summer Fun at Parkland Terrace

For children of South Charleston Housing Authority, summer began with a ceremony acknowledging the students who had worked hard the past school year for their grades and attendance. The Rewards for Effort program first began 13 years ago and has been a success every year.

The students count on receiving this reward when they achieve high grades and have missed very few, if any school days. There were four students who received \$100 for earning straight A's and perfect attendance the entire year. An additional 45 children received cash incentives and movie passes for their efforts.

Parkland Terrace was a busy place all summer under the direction of Emily Hill, a part-time temporary resident coordinator for the South Charleston Housing Authority. She along with some great assistance from resident Brandey Scarberry, a senior at South Charleston High School, helped make a fun summer for approximately 35-40 children each day that live at Parkland Terrace.

The children enjoyed a healthy lunch from the Summer Food Program each weekday. Each Wednesday, Thursday and Friday special events were planned. The weeks were filled with going to the movies, swimming at Little Creek County Club, bowling, and crafts. Commissioner Deena Ellison from DHHR Family Planning Program, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, came for a day of presentations on Teen Talk. She presented to three age groups; 6-12 yrs., 13-18 yrs., and parents. Teen Talk was so successful the teens have requested that she return for another session. At the end of each month a birthday party was held to celebrate all birthdays for the month. Sixty-two children and adults filled school buses and headed to Camden Park for an evening of fun for the last field trip of the summer.



To wrap up the summer activities the annual Back-to-School bingo games were played. Each child that attended received a back pack filled with paper, pencils, pens, glue, markers, crayons, colored pencils, erasers, scissors, rulers and notebooks. The South Charleston Christian Church donated 50 back packs to the cause.

Throughout the summer, many parents volunteered their time to chaperone the children on field trips. A special lunch treat was in store for the parents who faithfully volunteered throughout the summer. What a treat it was at the local Japanese Steak House "Hibachi's"!



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

NAHRO National Conference
October 26-28, 2008
San Antonio, TX

SERC-NAHRO Fall Workshop
November 9-11, 2008
Biloxi, MS

PHADA Commissioners Conference
January 25-28, 2009
San Diego, CA

NAHRO Legislative Conference
March 16-18, 2009
Washington, DC

PHADA Annual Convention
May 3-6, 2009
Atlanta, GA

NAHRO Summer Conference
July 16-18, 2009
Portland, OR

WVAHA Spring Workshop
April 20-22, 2009 (Tentative)
Flatwoods, WV

**Article Deadline for the Spring Issue of the WVAHA Collection
is March 13, 2009.**

**Please submit articles to Michele Hatfield
at mhatfield@charlestonhousing.com
or by mail to P.O. Box 86, Charleston, WV 25321**