The PHA Experience

Philadelphia Housing Authority

Vol. I No. 2 | A Community Newspaper for and about Residents | Spring 2004

Chubby Checker leads limbo line at Rosen's new Head Start center's grand opening celebration.

Chubby Headlines at Head Start

The man who popularized the Twist when he was a senior at South Philadelphia High School in 1960 danced in a different kind of school in North Philadelphia.

Chubby Checker helped the Philadelphia Housing Authority showcase its newest Head Start center at the Raymond Rosen development by entertaining prospective pre-school students and their parents.

The center at Rosen is PHA's seventh across the city. PHA executive director Carl Greene said the continued expansion of the program demonstrates PHA's commitment to making sure young residents get their learning off to a great beginning.

"PHA offers educational programs at all levels, from preschoolers to adults because we know education is the path to economic independence," Greene said.

Greene also commented on how fortunate PHA was to have Chubby Checker donate his time to help drum up publicity for the new center.

"If Chubby showing 50 preschool kids and their parents how to do the Limbo doesn't attract some attention nothing will."

Head Start is a federally funded program for preschool children from low-income families. At least 10% of the enrollment is available to children with disabilities. The PHA centers employ highly qualified teachers who hold college degrees. The centers also emphasize parental involvement. Each center has a policy council made up of parents and PHA staff.

Pre-Apprentice Grads Nominated for Award

Three graduates of PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program for the building trades have been nominated for the Governor's Achievement Award. The award recognizes people who successfully complete a job-training program, become independent and leave the welfare rolls.

George Johnson, who manages the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, nominated Tamika Preston, Marlon Williams and Lisa Reese. Here are their stories.

Tamika Preston

A few years ago Tamika Preston planned to become a Philadelphia policewoman. She passed the police academy entrance exam and then saw a flyer about PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Tamika, 28 years old with three children, decided that working in the building trades would give her greater economic opportunities and more personal satisfaction.

Preston graduated from the Pre-Apprenticeship Program in November 2000. She went on to complete a three-year apprenticeship with the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (Local 703). She is one of the first two women in 20 years to join Local 703. While an apprentice, Preston worked at Lincoln Financial Field, putting

(Cont. on Page 3)

She Saw The Light and Changed Her Life

Saundra Robinson once made her living in the world's oldest profession. Now, this soft-spoken woman makes it as a school bus driver, a manicurist, writer and minister. For the last five years, she's been in PHA's Housing Choice Voucher program and before that lived at one of PHA's scattered sites.

"From Prostitution to Purity" was recently published by Borders and is the story of Robinson's conversion from godless hooker to God-fearing mother and minister. Robinson lets read

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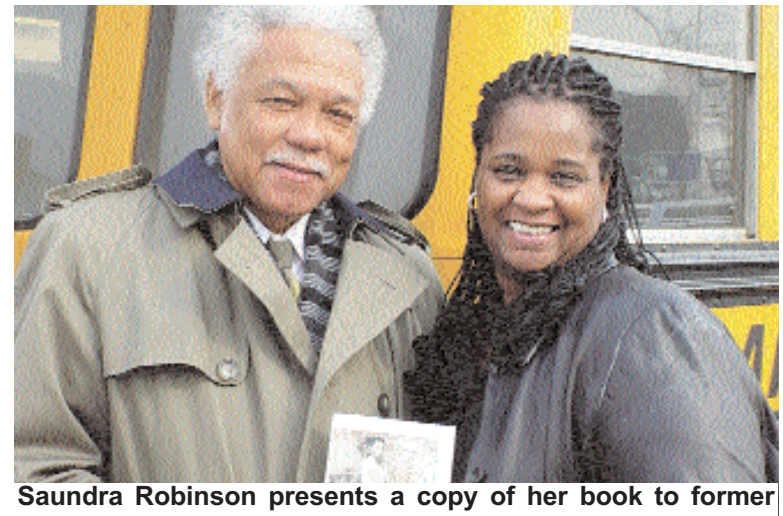

Saundra Robinson presents a copy of her book to former State Senator Hardy Williams.

Kids Learn More Than Basketball at Philadelphia 76ers' PHA Clinic

Children from throughout the city converged in West Philadelphia for an afternoon of fun and a chance to tune-up their basketball skills with a couple of basketball greats. Kids from PHA met Basketball legend Sonny Hill and former 76er World B. Free to not only see the pros but also learn from them.

Sponsored by the Philadelphia 76ers Radio Network, this basketball clinic was held in early April at the West Philadelphia YMCA on Chestnut Street. The young boys and girls practiced their footwork, foul shooting, offense and lay-ups.

But there was much more to learn according to Sonny Hill, "The real reason for the gather

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Computers Bring Seniors Into 21st Century

Seniors are spellbound as they get familiar with the desktops in the new computer lab at Johnson Homes. Mary Jones, Gertrude Dyer, Jean Bullard and Joseph Berry get set for a new adventure.

Seniors are keeping up with 21st century technology thanks to a fund from HUD. For 16 weeks, classes for 50 and over students learn computer basics and more. They learn the operating procedures, how to shut down, login, and surf the web. In addition, each student has their own e-mail address so they can keep in touch with family and friends.

One great learning tool for seniors is playing various games.

(Cont. on Page 5)

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Three Pre-Apprenticeship Graduates Nominated for Award

(Cont. from Page 1)

the finishing touches on the Eagles' new home. She also worked at the Franklin Mint and Temple University.

Tamika Preston speaking at the Pre-Apprenticeship program graduation ceremony. She is now the proud owner of her own business.

Tamika Preston originally wanted to become a carpenter. However, her teachers told her that she did exceptionally well when it came to painting, and she loved to paint. Now, Preston says with a laugh, she gets to show off a little bit. More important than the art behind the job is the pride she has in her work.

Preston is now a "Journeyman" and a business owner. Tamika launched her business last summer with a business development loan from the Philadelphia Community Development Corporation.

"I want to do more with my talents. I want to give people the same opportunities that I had coming in," she says. "I want to give other people a chance to make it and let them know that there are successful people coming from the Pre-Apprenticeship Program…I want to give back."

Preston's business, Philadelphia Quality Paints, hires graduates of the Pre-Apprenticeship Program. She is one of the reasons why PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program is building a legacy of solid, reliable, professional workers.

Marlon Williams

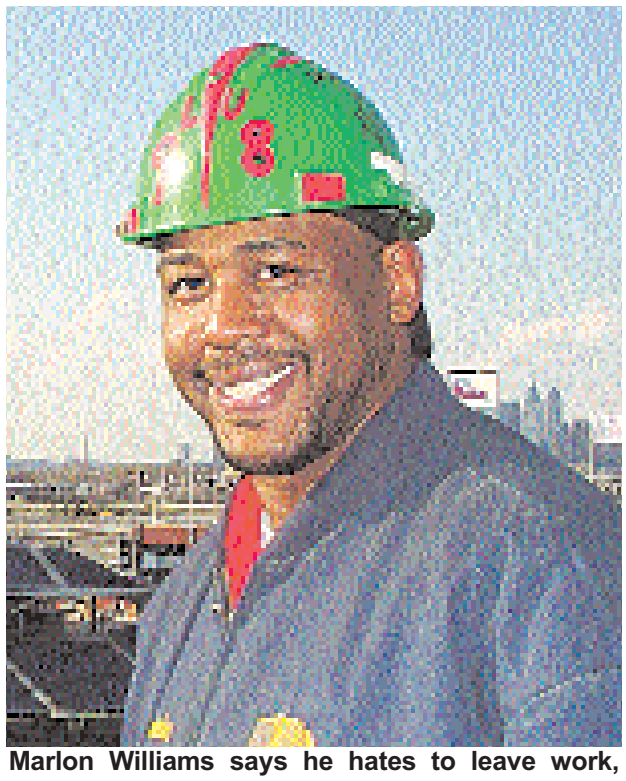
Marlon Williams, an apprentice with Electricians' Local 98, says at some point we all become self realized. He entered PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program giving up a secure, modest paying social service job. Williams, 31, graduated from PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program last June, along with his wife, Lisa Reese, who convinced him to take part in the program.

"I'm a hands-on person. Becoming a union member and doing hands-on work just made sense," he says.

However, Williams never imagined himself as a "blue collar" worker, even though his father is a plumber for the State of New York. Williams says when he told his parents about his decision, they were shocked that it took so long for him to work his way back into his element.

In an age and era when young people are urged to go to college and work with their head, not their hands, Marlon is showing young people that they can have interesting, intelligent, and fulfilling careers in the building trades. What's more, the country needs people such as electricians who can build or fix things.

Williams attended Virginia State University in Petersburg but left after his junior year due to financial hardship. A family man with two children, Marlon has spent his life helping others, mostly children. For 13 years, he worked with the Fairmount Park Commission in their day care program. More recently he was active at Abbotsford Homes, where he incorporated an after school program. After graduating from the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, Marlon worked as a tutor for students who followed him into the program.



Marlon Williams says he hates to leave work, especially when it's a once in a lifetime opportunity like building the new home of the Phillies, Citizens Bank Park.

Marlon Williams passed the building trades union exam with flying colors and had offers from the electricians, carpenters and sheet metal workers unions. He chose the electricians union because he believes "it is the thinking man's trade. I like troubleshooting and it takes a certain type of individual to do the math that goes with the work."

Recently, Marlon has worked with fellow electricians at Citizens Bank Ballpark, the new home of the Phillies. He takes great pride having a hand in building a Major League ballpark. Marlon says he's learning so much on the job, and feels a great sense of camaraderie with his fellow union members.

Lisa Reese

Lisa Reese is currently an apprentice with District 21 of the Painters and Glaziers, working as a drywall finisher. She's halfway through the program to fulfill her dream of becoming a full-fledged member of the building trades. In another 18 months, she'll have her "journeyman's card."

Reese, who's 30, dropped out of Simon Gratz High School in the 10th grade. Her mother was sent to prison following a felony conviction. Lisa went to work to support her two sisters. A series of service related jobs followed.

In recent years, Lisa worked as a cashier at an AMOCO service station, an assistant teacher at a day care center, and as a receptionist at one of PHA's conventional housing developments. It was a far cry from the dreams of a very young woman who belonged to Junior Reserve Officers Training Corp (JROTC) in high school and planned to join the service.

Perhaps one of Lisa's biggest barriers was a fear of driving. She never drove as a teenager and did not get her driver's license until last April, something she'd need to get to work. Lisa also had to overcome other demands of her job including a fear of heights, and making a commitment to being away from her family on occasional holidays.

Entry into the Pre-Apprenticeship Program can present quite an adjustment for some students because instructors have a firm work schedule in place, no exceptions. Lisa Reese, however, saw an opportunity.

"I came with the attitude that you get out of it what you put into it, and I was going to get as much out of it as I could," she says.

Some people may wonder why Lisa chose to join the painters to specialize in drywall finishing. Her answer is simple. She enjoys the drywall work, which she feels is less strenuous than other trades. The job has a lot of variety and its own kind of artistry.

Lisa Reese feels good about her decision to enter the building trades and become self-sufficient. She particularly likes being a member of a trade union and the fact that she has gained the admiration of her 12-year-old son.

"He thinks it's nice to know that Mommy makes an honest living. He'll be able to see that I worked on a lot of different things," she says. "And he knows he can get ahead, too, depending upon what kind of opportunity he wants."

Lisa Reese, who convinced her husband Marlon Williams to enter PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program, likes being a member of a trade union and has gained the admiration of her 12-year-old son.

MTW/Family Services Program

Homebuyers Club Workshops

(Please plan to attend all three sessions when registering.)

Workshop 1 Sponsored by Cittzen's Bank	Workshop 2 Sponsored by Cittzen's Bank	Workshop 3 Sponsored by Fleet Bank
Workshops: 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. **APM Hall** **Asociacion De Puertorriquenos En Marcha** **2319 North 7th Street** Call to register: Ms. Evelyn Aponte at 215.235.6070	**Workshops: 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.** **Strawbridges Building** **8th & Market – 13th Floor Community Area** Call to register: Mr. Gilbert Vega at 215.684.2057 or Ms. Camille Johnson at 215.684.8114	**Workshops: 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.** **FSS Center–North 1516 Judson Way, Suite 206** **23rd & Jefferson Street** Call to register: Mr. Gilbert Vega at 215.684.2057 or Ms. Camille Johnson at 215.684.8114
Wednesday April 28, 2004 **First Time Homeownership Orientation** Learn how to use your Housing Voucher (Section 8) to purchase a home.	**Thursday May 6, 2004** **First Time Homeownership Orientation** Learn how to use your Housing Voucher (Section 8) to purchase a home.	**Tuesday May 11, 2004** **First Time Homeownership Orientation** Learn how to use your Housing Voucher (Section 8) to purchase a home.
Wednesday May 5, 2004 **Budgeting & Money Management** Learn how to define income and expenses.	**Thursday May 13, 2004** **Budgeting & Money Management** Learn how to define income and expenses.	**Tuesday May 18, 2004** **Budgeting & Money Management** Learn how to define income and expenses.
Wednesday May 12, 2004 **Credit Repair** Learn how to establish, maintain and repair credit.	**Thursday May 20, 2004** **Credit Repair** Learn how to establish, maintain and repair credit.	**Tuesday May 25, 2004** **Credit Repair** Learn how to establish, maintain and repair credit.

Kids DARE to be GREAT at Abbottsford

by Cpl. Daniel Richmond

The kids at the Abbottsford Homes are being given a chance to DARE to be GREAT and EXPLORE new worlds in an effort to become better equipped to be successful adults and good citizens.

All of this comes courtesy of the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department, which is running three programs for the children of residents in the Abbottsford housing development and the schools they attend. This initiative has resulted in the implementation of several preventive programs. Officers of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) and EXPLORER'S units are delivering these programs to residents who attend Mifflin, Levering, and Cook-Wissahickon Elementary schools. These schools service the majority of children who live in the Abbottsford Homes.

The Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department has partnered with the School District of Philadelphia to teach children how to make healthy choices for themselves, their family and community through the DARE program. The DARE curriculum is an exciting nine-week program that helps kids recognize and resist the pressures that may influence them to experiment with tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants and other drugs.

In order to qualify and participate in the DARE culmination and earn a certificate, students are expected to complete their DARE student planner, attend school, demonstrate good behavior, write a DARE report, keep their body drug free and assist with a school project. Parent participation is an important part of the DARE curriculum. The kids especially look forward to their parents' support during the culmination program, recognizing their accomplishment in completing the course.

The G.R.E.A.T. program is a cooperative partnership between the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and the School District of Philadelphia. The proactive program is designed to develop students into responsible members of their community. This is accomplished by providing them with a variety of life skills and a sense of personal empowerment necessary to prevent youth violence. The desired result is for students to avoid involvement with drugs, gangs and criminal activity.

Students also learn the importance of establishing goals for themselves, resisting negative pressures from peers, and learning how to resolve conflicts without creating new problems. They understand how drugs and gangs interfere with the peaceful coexistence of their neighborhood. Subsequently, classroom activities create an opportunity for students to discover for themselves the ramifications of gang violence through structure exercises, role-plays, cooperative discussion and interactive learning strategies.

In addition, to the GREAT program, the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department is developing a Venturing Crew in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of America. This program will provide positive experiences for young people at a critical stage in their lives and prepare them to become responsible adults. Venturing is for young adult's ages 14 to 20 of the Abbottsford Homes who are registered with the Boy Scouts of America.

As a result of these cooperative programs police officers, teachers, school administrators, members of the Abbottsford housing development, and other stakeholders join together to prevent drugs, gangs and violence in schools and the community.

Even though this special unit of the PHA Police Department is located at Abbottsford, these programs are run throughout the city and are open to all PHA residents. Anyone interested in any of these programs may contact the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department DARE! GREAT! EXPLORER'S Unit at 215-684-1069.

Debrah Williams helps PHA Commissioner Nellie Reynolds at one of the desktops at the new computer lab at Johnson Homes

Seniors Jump Into Future

(Cont. from Page 1)

This helps especially with moving and double clicking the mouse. After the basics, it's on to letter writing in Microsoft Word and budgeting in Microsoft Excel. Many seniors get so involved they continue during break time or remain after class.

The instructor is Deborah Wilson-Williams who is also the Computer Lab instructor for the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition's E.A.R.N. program.

This senior computer program was initiated by Commissioner Nellie Reynolds and tenant activist Corliss Gray. The program director is Estell Jones. The program is funded by HUD's Top Grant and is administered by Rey Reyes and Ms. Gray and is a partnership between the Housing Association of Delaware Valley, Johnson Homes and the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

Enrollment is underway for the next 16 week class with a minimal fee for new students. Interested senior's can call Mrs. Estell Jones at 215.684.8422.

A Message from the Executive Director

These are difficult financial times for all levels of government.

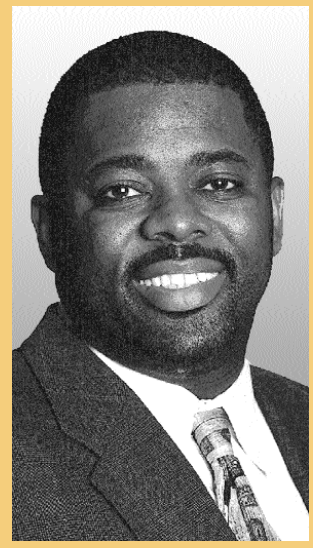
The City is making painful cuts to try to erase a large projected deficit.

Libraries, playgrounds and the arts are all braced for the coming cuts.

Funds are scarce on the state level as well. Workers have agreed to contracts with no pay increases for the next two years and budgets remain very tight in all departments.

Finally, at the federal level (where PHA gets most of its money) the budget deficit has soared out of control. The administration has proposed major cuts in domestic spending, including low-income housing.

I have never been one to panic or try to scare anyone over budget proposals and I don't intend to start now. But it appears that this year Washington is serious about cutting. The HOPE VI program, which helped PHA rebuild Richard Allen, Martin Luther King, Schuylkill Falls and Mill Creek, (now called Lucien E. Blackwell Homes) is just about gone. While money for our other programs won't go the way of HOPE VI, it will take a serious hit if Congress approves the current proposal.



Carl R. Greene

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of taking public officials from around the nation on a tour of PHA sites. They marveled at the way we are rebuilding neighborhoods. But they also shared their concerns over how severe funding shortages could disrupt the positive momentum.

Remember that our elected officials listen when constituents speak up. If you have an opinion on the proposed budget, contact your congressman, senators or even the President.

I have watched the budget wars for a long time. It's difficult to predict the final outcome, particularly in a presidential election year. Housing Authorities and their residents are among many competing interests for the dwindling dollars. I would suggest at the very least that you would want to follow the budget debate in Washington over the summer and into the fall.

The PHA Experience

The Residents' Newspaper

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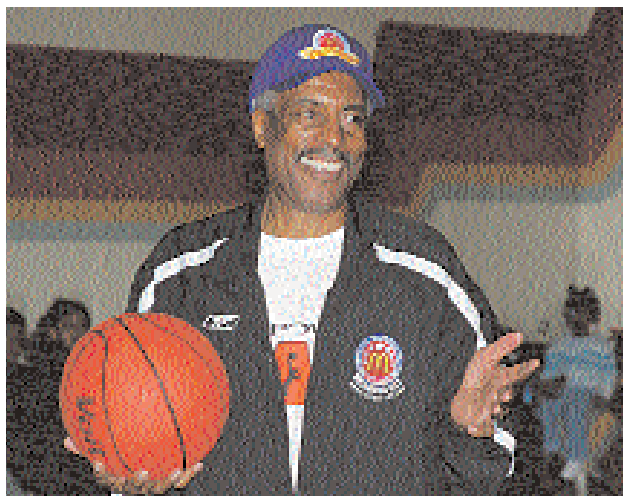
PHA Kids Learn Life Lessons and Basketball Skills at Sixers Clinic



(Cont. from Page 1)

ing is to help set the focus for you young adults, to train your mind and spirit," he told those gathered. World B. Free echoed the sentiment saying, "We want to use sports to show teamwork on and off the court. We want you to transfer this positive energy into the classroom. I owe everything I have to basketball and now I want to help you down the road to success."

PHA executive director Carl Greene commented that he was extremely pleased to be able to work with the Sixers to provide the kind of community activity that families need and deserve. PHA has been using the Sixers Radio Network to promote the agency's Quality of Life initiative. Greene said after seeing what a great time the kids had, "We want to make this an annual event so that even more young people can take advantage of this opportunity." In addition to the basketball training, each participant was given a pair of tickets to an upcoming Sixers game.

...And it looks like everyone had a great time!

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), the nation's leading review organization for health plans, has awarded Health Partners' Medical Assistance plan its highest accreditation status of "Excellent." NCQA is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to measuring the quality of America's health care.

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– Margaret E. O'Kane, NCQA President

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PHA and Faith Helped Her Change Her Life

(Cont. from Page 1)

ers know that prostitution is anything but glamorous. Her book tells women that faith is important for them to maintain their self-esteem.

Robinson held a book signing party at Border's in Bryn Mawr last month. She's in the process of writing a second book and feels that she has a future as an author. Robinson's life and work as a minister at the Rock Dream Center, (66th and Haverford in West Philly), give her the experiences that are the basis for her writing. Her ministry is unpaid.

Robinson, 43, has been married twice and has three children, two girls and one boy. Her oldest child, a 27-year-old woman, is an operating room nurse. She also has a 14-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son.

Saundra Robinson's story will at first shock you, then inspire you. She came from a family she describes as "unaffectionate, distant people." They hardly ever had family gatherings and many of Saundra's relatives died young.

The focus of Robinson's life was her mother, a woman who knew how to hustle and had good business sense. One of her ventures was a full service speakeasy in North Philadelphia. About the time Saundra turned 13, she began learning the business from her mother who had an "after hours" club where people came after the bars closed.

By the time she was 15, Robinson had taken on her first sugar daddy and moved in with him. Eventually, she taught other young women how to sell themselves. Before she knew it, Saundra Robinson says she had her own business. She did not, however, have her mother's respect because she shared some of her earnings with children and seniors in her neighborhood.

Still, it's clear that Saundra Robinson admired her mother for her classy ways and businesslike approach. In her book, she says her mother and minority women like her had limited options and went into prostitution to pay the rent or feed their children. She says they made sure their children did not see or know what they were doing. Today's "mammas", Robinson says, are careless, settle for low-income jobs and housing, do nothing to educate themselves and have children by several different men.

Robinson says her career as a prostitute lasted until her late 20's. She had become addicted to alcohol and cocaine. The glamour and respect that Robinson thought she had turned out to be nonexistent.

"It was the name calling that got me. It brought me to my senses, not to mention that the drugs, the heroin, the cocaine was tearing me up," she says.

Robinson sought help from a local church. Most church members did not welcome her at first, but a few people asked her to stay. They took an interest in helping her straighten out her life. She stayed with that faith community for 11 years, becoming a minister there before joining the Rock Dream Center last year.

PHA housing was critical to Robinson's successful transition. She says the affordable rent allowed her to make the transition to a legitimate job and make plans for the future.

"I thank God. If I hadn't had that low rent, I'd probably have found another way to hustle," Robinson says.

Robinson did odd jobs for several years, training to become a legal secretary and then a barber before becoming a manicurist in 1995, and landing a job at the Four Seasons Hotel in Center City. She now does manicuring on an independent basis. Four years ago, she began driving a school bus for Atlantic Express, a service used by the Philadelphia public school system. Last year, she became a minister at the Rock Dream Center and wrote her first book.

Saundra Robinson believes that people like her need to turn to their faith community, where they can get motivated, have steady lives and see successful people. Ultimately, she says, an individual has to make up their mind to succeed. Robinson's determination paid off in a most special way: she won the respect of her mother before her mother's death in 1998.

Congratulations to the residents of Harrison, Richard Allen and Cambridge for helping me bring an end to the outbreak of violence that we witnessed several months ago. We can and will continue to make a difference thru service and results. Do not forget April 27, 2004.

W. Curtis Thomas
State Representative
181st Legislative District

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Zip Codes: City Wide

Once Homeless, Now She's a Homeowner

Loretta Moore knows what it's like to hit rock bottom. She also knows what it's like to climb a mountain and reach the top.

Moore, 38, once abused drugs and alcohol and lived in a city park. Now, she's successfully employed, close to completing a college degree and, best of all, she's a homeowner.

Loretta Moore found the help she needed in PHA's Housing Choice and Economic Self-Sufficiency programs. She found that a person's dreams will come true, if they're willing to accept the help and opportunities that come along.

Moore became an addict in her teens; her parents had divorced. By the time she turned 15, she lost her mother and another relative who were raising her. Moore also became pregnant with her first son, now 22 years old. To ease her pain, she turned to drugs and alcohol.

One day in 1990, Moore says, she just got tired of her situation. She prayed to God and asked Him to help her remove the drugs and madness from her life.

Moore went to Pennsylvania Hospital in Center City to get help. She spent time in two different shelters while she recovered. Then in 1992, Moore entered PHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program. Moore remembers that, "One day the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program opened up" and several people took her under their wing. They showed Loretta what she could do while she continued her rehabilitation.

Then in 1996, Loretta landed a job at Pennsylvania Hospital's mental health/mental retardation division (at 210 W. Washington Square). She became an administrative assistant and left the welfare rolls. Moore noticed that her employer was short of people who could offer technical support when computer problems occurred; she also saw a career opportunity.

Loretta Moore has every reason to be proud. She overcame homelessness and under-employment. She is now a home owner with a good job and prospects for a bright future.

In 2005, Loretta Moore will graduate from Community College of Philadelphia with an associate's degree in "Computer Information Systems PC." She plans to continue her education at Temple University to gain a bachelor's degree.

"It's kind of fun learning the different software programs and how much the computer can do. What's difficult is learning the programming language, learning things such as Visual Basic. The part I like most is helping people," Moore says.

This past February, Moore passed another milestone. She bought a three-bedroom row home in southwest Philadelphia. She credits PHA's Economic Self Sufficiency staff. They had Moore set up an escrow (savings) account to save money for a down payment on a home, one of the opportunities for qualified residents in the Housing Choice Voucher program. After 8 years she had saved enough money to buy a house.

"I never thought I would become a homeowner because I had a lot of debt," Moore says. "Then, I talked to people at Community Legal Services. They told me I could get a lawyer to reorganize (my debt) under bankruptcy law."

Moore filed her reorganization plan in 2002. She had to be debt free for at least a year in order to get a mortgage. Currently, Moore has a two year fixed mortgage at 8 percent. She plans to refinance to get a lower interest rate as her credit improves.

Loretta Moore says her experience has taught her that a person can't do everything alone. For her, the Housing Choice Voucher program was a stepping-stone. Now, she hopes her story will provide inspiration to someone else.

How to Get Your Personal Experience Into Your Paper

Each of our residents, all of whom are our readers, are invited to tell us about you or your family's "Experience" as a tenant of the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

It's simple and easy. Reach out to your Resident Council or your Asset Managers and tell them about it. We'll send out a photographer to take your picture and follow up with an additional interview and you'll probably be reading about yourself in the next issue of the PHA Experience.

If you like to learn more about the newspaper business, you can also ask about the opportunities to attend journalism classes which the Experience staff will conduct.

It's a golden opportunity, so reach out. It's easier than you think! Call **215-684-8645** or e-mail: ***newsletter@pha.phila.gov***.

I am proud to be working for you in my council capacity and as a member of the Housing Authority Board

Councilwoman

Jannie L. Blackwell

Picturing a New Life

Marian Sharp with her son, Kareem, at St. Christopher's Hospital For Children during a recent visit. Sharp and her son are working on a children's book about his experiences at the hospital's hematology clinic.

The outlook for Marian Sharp has turned a whole lot rosier but it took a near tragedy to set her on the road to a better life.

Marian entered the Housing Choice Voucher program eight years ago, but it wasn't until last year that she learned about the many programs available to help her. A house fire forced Marian and her family out of their home and into a shelter. That's where PHA staff made her aware of what they had to offer.

Sharp has recently signed up to participate in PHA's economic self-sufficiency program. She is filled with optimism because it offers realistic and attainable goals. "If you give people sound direction, they'll respond," she says.

Career options for Marian have been limited to date; she dropped out of high school in the 11th grade. Though Sharp likes art and used to sell some of her work, she could never find the help or direction that she needed. While her friends wanted to run around after school, Sharp just loved to sit at the family dining room table and draw.

Sharp has four children ranging in age from 8 to 17. Her youngest child, 8-year-old Kareem, has sickle cell anemia and needs special care.

Without the help of a husband, Sharp lived for 18 years with her mother. She battled a drug habit during some of those years. The Department of Public Welfare, she says, gave her little help in finding and developing job skills. Sharp felt like she was always getting the run around and was tired of going backwards in her life.

Now, Sharp works part time as a teacher's assistant at Smedley Elementary School in Northeast Philadelphia. She'd like to have a job that makes use of her artistic skills - anything that has to do with art or television.

She's glad that she has a decent place to live. She is looking forward to the self sufficiency program, and learning skills that will help her eventually move out of voucher housing into her own home.

Did you know Scattered Site residents are becoming homeowners?

The Kings have been community leaders for over 30 years. Virginia King has served as the block captain for 10 years and Levi King has served as a ward committeeman for over 20 years. Mr. King states the homeownership program is great for those families that want to stay in the area they are in, and help keep the community intact. Mr. King explained, "It is not where you live, it is how you live." When asked what the hardest part was about becoming a homeowner, he explained that "it took a long time, but if you are really interested, housing (staff) is willing to work with you."

The average time span is one year to complete the process, which includes credit and budget counseling, as well as homebuyer education.

If you are interested in applying for the program, contact the homeownership division at 215-684-8016, and ask for an application for the 5(h) program.

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Fax: 215-221-5933
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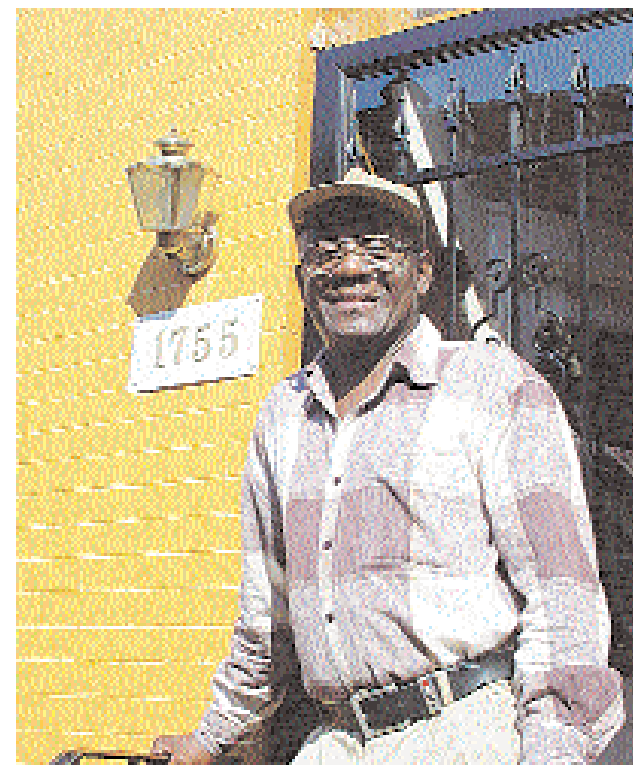
Contact person: Eleanor McDevitt



Levi King in front of his home. "It is not where you live, it is how you live," he says. King and his brother painted the face of the home in beautiful shades of gold, and he has remodeled the entire house, including the basement, making it a comfortable place for family and friends.

A Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway Changed Her Life

Karen Scott remembers the day well. She heard that someone was handing out Thanksgiving turkeys at PHA's Housing Choice office on North Broad Street. So, she went there to pick up her bird, but Scott says she really didn't need the turkey. What happened that Thanksgiving of 2002 changed her life forever.

Scott, a graduate of Martin Luther King High School, had worked at a variety of service jobs. None of them really interested her. They were dead end jobs without a future, offering those who did them no chance to get ahead.

The owners of Top of the Clock, a company that provides security at PHA sites, have a tradition of handing out turkeys to needy residents. A company official asked residents who came to claim their free turkey if any of them would like to work for them. Karen Scott raised her hand.

Top of the Clock recruits and trains its personnel. The company's owner, Greg Stith, likes to hire PHA residents. He's interested in helping people start a career, so they can move on to better paying jobs and a better life. It's exactly what Karen Scott was looking for.

Scott had been in the Housing Choice Voucher program since 1983. She really wanted to live on her own, but could not find a job to let her do that. When Scott graduated from PHA's homeownership program, she knew that a career with a future was the only way to achieve her dream.

Karen Scott began working with Top of the Clock in March 2003 and was promoted to supervisor in December. She's proud of her work record, saying she hasn't missed a day in almost a year.

Scott credits the Housing Choice staff for giving her the incentive to set goals. One of those goals is to buy the home in Logan where she lives.

"I'm determined to do that. I'm hoping I'm going to buy my house by the end of the year," she says. "You cannot be in public housing forever. I shouldn't have been in this long, but it's never too late."

Karen Scott has a new home and a new career. Now she has convinced her daughter to enter the Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

Besides owning her home, Scott plans on becoming a licensed police officer. Getting licensed will open the door to better paying jobs for her. Ideally, Scott would like to end up working for the Pennsylvania State Police. She says she always wanted to be a police officer because she likes keeping people safe and the variety of experiences that policing offers.

Scott believes PHA has a lot of training programs and opportunities to help residents get a job and get ahead. She thinks that people have to help themselves and set an example for others.

"I'm trying to set the line with my three grown daughters. They have to get out there and get a job," she says. "I've been telling them that they won't get anything without a stable job."

One of Scott's daughters got the message. She recently passed the test to enter PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

Low Cost Student Loans

State Rep. W. Curtis Thomas has announced low-cost student loans with no up-front fees are available to eligible students through the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency's KeystoneBEST program.

"This innovative program makes it easier for students to get the higher education that is key to future success," said Thomas. "KeystoneBEST is one of many programs that make the dream of higher education a reality for students who encounter financial barriers when applying for school."

While other Stafford loan programs typically charge up to 4 percent of the loan amount in up-front fees, PHEAA and its lending partners pay these fees on KeystoneBEST loans. To be eligible for a KeystoneBEST loan, applicants must attend a school approved by the U.S. Department of Education. While there are no income requirements, the applicant must be eligible for a standard Stafford loan.

Thomas said students who are interested must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to determine their student aid eligibility and apply for KeystoneBEST. More information, as well as a FAFSA, is available at www.aessuccess.org.

Mayor Street to Become Head of PHA Board

Mayor John F, Street will join the board of the Philadelphia Housing Authority, effective April 22, 2004.

Street, who is expected to be named Board Chairman, said he is looking forward to returning to the board, a position he once filled.

"The Philadelphia Housing Authority makes a strong impact on our communities," Street said. "I will make sure that housing authority continues to move even more rapidly in rejuvenating our neighborhoods."

The mayor originally had no plans to re-join the PHA Board. He had appointed his secretary of housing Kevin Hanna to the post. But resident leaders, citing the mayor's 25-year involvement with the PHA community, urged him to reconsider and appoint himself.

The mayor thought it over for a couple weeks and decided the residents had a good idea. Now when residents turn out for a PHA Board meeting, they can direct their comments directly to the mayor.

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Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

MTW/Family Services Program

How to Manage Money & Credit
First Steps to Homeownership

Facilitator: Mr. Vincent DiGiao,
Philadelphia Council For Community Advancement (PCCA)

- What is credit?
- Types of credit
- Advantages & disadvantages of using credit
- Understanding your credit report
- Learn how to repair your credit & increase your credit scores
- Learn how to avoid credit report scams

- Tuesday April 27, 2004 at 6:00 P.M.

Family Self-Sufficiency–North
1518 Judson Way, Suite 208
23rd & Jefferson St.
Philadelphia, PA 19121

Please call to reserve your seating:
215.684.2057/8114

FSS Program Makes Dreams Come True

Ms. Marsha Cross voluntarily contracted with the Philadelphia Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program on April 1, 1998. At that time, Ms. Cross was receiving public assistance from the Department of Public Welfare in the amount of $8,040.00 per year. At that time her goals were to obtain employment and build a career in the Marriott Hotel chain and homeownership.

Ms. Cross worked very closely with FSS staff to complete her goals. She attended housing counseling at ACORN Housing, worked very diligently with her housing counselor to repair her credit and build her savings toward purchasing a home. Ms. Cross then landed a position at the Marriott hotel in Center City Philadelphia as a housekeeper.

Upon reporting her income to her Housing Choice Representative, Ms. Cross began accruing an escrow account with the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which later grew to over $14,000.00.

A mother of five and grandmother, Ms. Cross returned to the FSS office in August 2001 with tears in her eyes. She was working really hard toward her goal of homeownership, however she felt that she was not making any strides in achieving her goals. She was then referred to the FSS Homebuyer's club that was just developed to assist PHA residents in becoming educated and informed homebuyers.

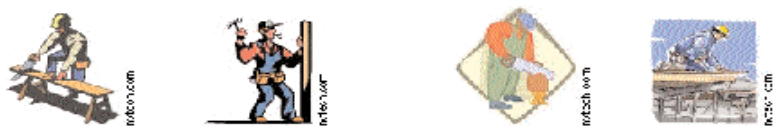
Marcia Cross is both proud and excited about her new home in Southwest Philadelphia. She found out that dreams do come true with hard work and a little help from PHA's Homebuyer's Club.

Ms. Cross attended the then seven-week sessions and has now purchased the home of her dreams as she describes it, in Southwest Philadelphia. Her home is located on a cul-de-sac tree-lined street. Ms. Cross has wall-to wall carpeting, central air conditioning, and many more amenities. Now with the assistance of the PHA Homeownership Program a portion of her mortgage is being subsidized.

Ms. Cross has not stopped with the completion of her listed goals. She now gives back to her fellow PHA residents by giving her testimony of trials, errors and accomplishments to the attendees of the PHA Homebuyer's Club.

The residents love her story because she gives a sense of hope that says, "This is going to be a hard road but, if I can do it, you can too."

OPPORTUNITY... OPPORTUNITY



PHA PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

OPEN HOUSE

WHEN: Wednesday, APRIL 28, 2004
& Thursday, APRIL 29, 2004
TIME: 12:00PM - 6:00PM
WHERE: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER
3003 MOUNTAIN DRIVE **(30TH & TASKER-BEHIND POLICE STATION)**
REQUIREMENTS: *PHA RESIDENT (**CONVENTIONAL, SECT. 8, & SCAT. SITES- MUST BE ON LEASE)** ****POSITIVE ATTITUDE**
*****PHYSICALLY CAPABLE OF LIFTING UP TO 40LBS**

STUDENTS ARE INSTRUCTED IN ELECTRICAL, CARPENTRY, ROOFING, AND PAINTING TRADES. UNION ENTRANCE EXAMS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPANTS.

Program is **math intensive**. Students learn Algebra, Geometry and Basic Math for union exams.

HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO BECOME A SKILLED UNION MEMBER. DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY! QUALIFIED APPLICANTS MUST TAKE APTITUDE & DRUG TESTS PRIOR TO ADMISSION.

FOR INFO CALL 215.684.8049, 215.684.8251, or 215.684.8053

Philadelphia Housing Authority Family Self Sufficiency-North

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EDUCATION:
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ADULT EDUCATION
COMPUTER CLASSES

EMPLOYMENT:
JOB READINESS CLASSES
JOB PLACEMENT
CAREER DEVELOPMENT
EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

HEALTH:
BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH
FAMILY HEALTH CARE CENTER
GROUP FAMILY THERAPY
NARCOTIC ANONYMOUS (NA) MEETINGS

LIFE SKILLS:
BUDGETING AND HOME OWNERSHIP COUNSELING

SOCIAL SERVICES:
COMMUNITY RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
& SOCIAL SERVICES (CRDSS)
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT (PHA)

YOUTH PROGRAMS:
AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM
YOUTH ART PROGRAM
SUMMER YOUTH CAMP

215-684-4416

The Neighborhoods Are Being "Turned Around"

The city is getting transformed, block by block and house by house.

The latest proof of this was the March dedication of 44 new homes in the Ludlow section of North Philadelphia by the Philadelphia Housing Authority. (PHA)

PHA executive director Carl Greene noted this block of houses is not built on PHA property but rather on a regular city street. He lauded the efforts of Councilman Darrell Clarke and Mayor John F. Street's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative for making it happen.

He said, "We know the developments we own, build, and manage have an immediate and powerful impact on the quality of life in the city. In this case, we went off-site and built new homes on a regular city street to try to help transform a blighted area."

Connie Little, special assistant to Mayor Street, attended the ceremonies to enjoy the transformation. "I grew up around the corner", she said. "It's exciting to see what can be done to a Philadelphia street that was once a ruin."

Greene also stated he hopes other developers of affordable housing will follow PHA's lead.

The homes, located on the 2300 block of North 13th Street, are 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms. As part of PHA's commitment to serve the disabled, the agency has built 22 of the homes to be completely handicap accessible. All of the homes feature central heating and air conditioning, wall-to-wall carpeting and other amenities.

The 44 homes unveiled are a part of the 117 off-site homes PHA is building throughout North Philadelphia. Another block of homes opens this month at 25th and College Avenue.

The construction is part of PHA's multi-year billion-dollar program to pump life and badly needed affordable housing into the city. Some of the sites still under construction include the Tasker and Martin Luther King developments in South Philadelphia, Cambridge phases two and three in North Philadelphia, the Lucien E. Blackwell Homes in West Philadelphia (formerly Mill Creek) and Schuylkill Falls phase two in East Falls.

Brian Holmes, one of many new happy residents accepts a gift basket on behalf of all his new neighbors.

Pleased at Philadelphia Housing Authority's increasing its numbers of new housing construction is Executive Director Carl R. Greene who was joined on stage by D.A. Lynne Abraham and Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell.

PHA Senior Programs Special Committee Meetings and Special Events Schedules 2004 (Dates subject to change)

April 28, 2004
Meeting: PHA Senior Performance Ensemble
Abbottsford Homes
10:00a.m.-12:00 p.m.

April 29, 2004
Events: Spring Fling - Play
Abbottsford Homes
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

April 30, 2004
Events: Spring Fling - Play
Abbottsford Homes
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

May 1, 2004
Events: Spring Fling - Play
Abbottsford Homes
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

May 25, 2004
Trip: Sight & Sound/Lunch
Lancaster, PA
9:00a.m.-6:00 p.m.

June 11, 2004
Meeting: Senior Advisory Quarterly Meeting
Holmcrest
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

June 18, 2004
Canvass: Senior Programs Community Canvass Day
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

June 24, 2004
Event: Senior Summit
Abbottsford Homes
10:00a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

June 25, 2004
Event: Senior Summit
Abbottsford Homes
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

July 2, 2004
Trip: Constitution Center
525 Arch Street
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

August 27, 2004
Trip: PHA Senior Day 04
Atlantic City

September 10, 2004
Canvass: Senior Programs Community Canvass Day
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

September 17, 2004
Trip: Shady Brook Farm Hay (ride) tentative

October 15, 2004
Trip: Huntington Theatre

November 19, 2004
Event: Senior Black & White Ball (formal)
Wilson Park
7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

December 3, 2004
Event: Senior Programs Christmas Bazaar
Location T.B.D.

December 11, 2004
Event: Senior Holiday Party
Blumberg
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

December 17, 2004
Canvass: Senior Programs Community Canvass Day
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

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Philadelphia Housing Authority
MTW/Family Services Program

Job Fair

Thursday, April 22, 2004
10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Abbottsford Homes Community Center
3226 McMichael Street
Philadelphia, PA 19129

On-site Interviews
Dress for success, bring a resume,
and a positive attitude

Please call to reserve your seating –
PHA/MTW Resident Participation Job Fair Hotline at
215.684.1115

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