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The PHA Experience

Philadelphia Housing Authority

Vol. II No. 1 (Issue 5) | A Community Newspaper for and about Residents | Winter 2005

Homeownership Program Making History

The Philadelphia Housing Authority is taking a historic step forward with the sale of new homes this spring in West Philadelphia. The Lucien E. Blackwell Homes located at 46th and Fairmount on the former site of the Mill Creek projects are the centerpiece for a massive neighborhood overhaul covering 17 square blocks. By the end of 2006, PHA will have sold more than 200 homes in that neighborhood to residents who are qualified.

Nicole Lockett, who directs PHA's Homeownership Programs, says the agency is encouraging residents to buy their own homes for several reasons: homeownership develops wealth, there are tax benefits, and residents become part of a community in a stable way. She says there are lots of affordable homeownership opportunities for PHA residents to take advantage of across the city, including 5-H (Scattered Sites), the Housing Choice Voucher Program and new housing that PHA develops, such as the Homes at Blackwell Park.

"Many times low-income folks don't know that they can become homeowners. Homeownership in their eyes seems to be the dream of middle class people, and a lot of folks don't consider themselves middle class. At the point where rental payments match a mortgage payment, it's probably time to start looking at homeownership," Lockett says.

Buying a home can seem overwhelming, she says, but PHA has the staff and the programs to help its residents overcome hurdles and become part of the American dream.

Sandy Marenberg, an affordable housing sales advisor agrees that PHA's program is opening doors for

(Cont. Page 3)

Continued from Page 1

Lucien E. Blackwell Homes redevelopment in West Philadelphia.

76 More Graduates Head For Building Trades

Pre-Apprenticeship Class of 2004

The Philadelphia Housing Authority has added 76 more residents to the Philadelphia construction workforce as its Pre-Apprenticeship program graduated another group into the Building Trades Unions.

The six-year-old program gives residents the chance to work in a construction field to industry standards, and ultimately provides them an opportunity to earn a healthy wage. This year's graduates were honored at a commencement ceremony at Temple University's Mitten Hall.

In partnership with many of the city's biggest trade unions, PHA has put 384 men and women to work, with 224 of them passing union exams.

"Students who make it through this program go on to careers, not just jobs,' said PHA Executive Director Carl Greene. "They make the kind of pay they never thought they would."

The graduates go through a vigorous 21-week training course, earning a $5.15 per-hour stipend. Every student then takes their union exam and those who pass begin to climb the union pay scale.

Among the graduates this year are 41 carpenters, as well as plasterers, drywall, electrical and sheet metal workers, glaziers, wallpaper hangers and painters. In addition, two plumber shipbuilders graduated at Kvaerner Shipyard's apprenticeship program. The graduates worked on a number of non-PHA job sites. Among them were the Philadelphia Eagles Lincoln Financial Field and the Phillies Citizens Ball Park.

"I remember the first graduating commencement in a tent at Tasker Homes in South Philadelphia," said Asia Coney, Director of Tenant Support Services Inc.

"Now, just look how far we have come. We'll be going into our 13th cycle this year and I believe it will be our luckiest."

Groovin' at the Wilson Park Senior Center

Walk in to the Wilson Park Senior Center around 8:30 any morning and you're likely to see retired folks shaking and baking to some of your favorite Philly oldies, such as "Hang On, Sloopy" and "Come Go With Me." (If you don't recognize those titles chances are you are slightly younger than this audience.) Who says exercise has to be boring? For the seniors at Wilson Park, it's fun and it's also a chance to socialize.

Seniors at Wilson Park do low-impact exercises, in their chairs and beside them. Shoulder shrugs, head rotations, leg lifts, clapping and many other simple movements help them get the blood pumping, so they can come alive and get their day off to a good start. They follow two videotaped presentations that are played back on the big screen, the highlight being exercises led by the ever-youthful Jack Lalanne, all under the watchful eyes of the Senior Programs staff.

Afterward, seniors can walk over to the book café, next to the lobby, and enjoy a light breakfast (coffee, Danish and fruit) for a small charge. They can pick out a book and read quietly or they can just meet and

(Cont. Page 12)

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Frances Pettijohn and Candina Igartua, in the foreground, exercise with their friends at Wilson Park.

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PHA Homeownership Sales Take Off

(Cont. from Page 1)

home ownership; opportunities at Blackwell are a good example. The sales prices and financing make it possible for renters to purchase a house, with monthly payments that match their rent.

For just $1,000 down, qualified families can buy a home at Blackwell with monthly payments that start at about $660 a month.

People who are employed for two years with incomes between $23,000 and $55,000 a year can qualify for the home buying program. Marenberg says that a special group of counselors will help potential buyers obtain a credit rating and qualify for a mortage.

Lindsay Johnston of Common Ground Realtors in University City, who is also working with PHA, is very excited about the sales taking place at Blackwell Homes. "It's a situation where the stars are in alignment. We have an excellent product. This is a very attractive community and certainly a step up from what was thought of as a decent public housing program as recently as ten years ago," he says.

People interested in becoming homeowners in the Mill Creek neighborhood should call Common Ground Realtors at 215-222-6000. The staff will take some preliminary information from callers and give them the names of lenders working on this program. The lenders will then run a check on potential homebuyers to let them know if they're good to go or have to address some problem areas.

PHA Executive Director Carl Greene says every effort is being made to help people become homeowners.

"We've created this program to say 'yes' to potential homebuyers," he says. "We're not here just to sell houses; we're building a new community within an existing community. Any buyer will benefit from the improvements to their neighborhood and the changes that are taking place, both socially and financially."

PHA Commissioner and City Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, whose district includes the new development, says Philadelphia has become a national model for neighborhood transformation. She says PHA has planned carefully, so that the new developments fit the character of the neighborhoods where they're located. "It's not public housing as we know it. It's modern housing where everything is provided for. We're in the forefront of change," she says.

Blackwell says it's a huge honor to have this neighborhood-changing development named in honor of her late husband and she says it's equally significant that Blackwell is the first PHA-built development to offer residents the chance at homeownership.

Nicole Lockett of PHA says it's important for residents to start working toward homeownership now, no matter what their circumstances. She says there are many paths to homeownership and residents shouldn't feel that they'll miss out if they can't qualify right now. Becoming ready for homeownership is a process and PHA and its partners are willing to help you out.

Even if you miss out on this first round of homes at Blackwell, don't worry. PHA is also building affordable new housing in South Philadelphia at Greater Grays Ferry Estates, at Falls Ridge in East Falls and at Martin Luther King near Center City.

If you have questions on any of PHA's homeownership programs, 5-H, HCV or a development please call 215.684.8015.

Greater Grays Ferry Homes

Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

MTW/Family Services Program
Homebuyers Club Workshops

FSS Center-North 1516 Judson Way
Suite 203-B
Blumberg
23rd & Jefferson St.

Please plan to attend all sessions for each workshop when registering for seating.

Call to register:
Mr. Gilbert Vega, *215.684.2057* or
Ms. Camille Johnson, *215.684.8114*

Workshop 1	Workshop 2
Sponsored by Wells Fargo Home Mortgage **6:00P.M. to 8:00P.M.**	Sponsored by Commerce Bank **10:00A.M. to 12:00P.M.**
Thursday March 3, 2005 **First Time Homeownership Orientation** Learn how to use your Housing Voucher (Section 8) to purchase a home.	Tuesday March 15, 2005 **First Time Homeownership Orientation** Learn how to use your Housing Voucher (Section 8) to purchase a home.
Thursday March 10, 2005 **Budgeting & Money Management** Learn how to define income and expenses.	Tuesday March 22, 2005 **Budgeting & Money Management** Learn how to define income and expenses. and **Credit Repair** Learn how to establish, maintain and repair credit.
Thursday March 17, 2005 **Credit Repair** Learn how to establish, maintain and repair credit.	

Computer Course Leads to Career Opportunity For Hard Worker

By Reginald Seabrook

When the family self-sufficiency program first began, it was with the person you are about to meet in mind. PHA knew the only way to break the cycle of dependency and despair was to place our residents in the driver's seat. Take a few minutes, sit back, and envision a young woman struggling to fight her way through the concrete jungle of Philadelphia. Along her rounds of constant ups and downs with long nights of uncertainty, this woman stands firm with an unwavering posture of strength.

I introduce to you one of the many heroines who graces the walls of PHA. Edwina Young the young mother of two, who is forced to undergo many similar stages of dependency which our city affords many of us who have had to receive subsidies and even welfare to bridge the never ending gaps of needs. Edwina is somewhat special, for when you are first introduced to this smilingly quite reserved person, you are met with an instant eye contact of pride and strength.

With her head held high and her poise ever so humble, you are meeting one of our heroines. Who knows maybe one day she will have a building named after her, maybe she will become Mayor, or even a CEO of a Fortune 500 company. For now, she is comfortable standing in the gap for her family and making her proud stand every day.

Edwina had recently taken two computer courses at the Blumberg Self Sufficiency Center North. Under the direct tutelage of Albert Pham, PHA's stellar computer teacher, Edwina started to flourish. After completing both courses, while searching for employment and taking care of her family, Edwina cut out time within her day to volunteer to help other students in the computer lab. Her eager need for knowledge and the endless well of knowledge from Albert led her to become a non-paid volunteer.

Edwina, being the humble heroin that she is, took on her responsibilities with great pride and dedication. Edwina not only embraced her role, she became a resource to some, teacher to others and an inspiration to all. The reason this article is written with such glee comes with the words told to Albert as he authenticated one of the weekly forms required by DPW. Speaking to Albert, Edwina says, " I hope this will be one of the last times I will have to sign this." Edwina had been on countless interviews over the last 4 months.

Recently, Edwina had interviewed for the position with PHA (Family Self Sufficiency Intake Worker), a position, which requires not only computer skills, but also a myriad of others: commutation, customer service, team work, selfless service to others and above all empathy and a desire to help persons change their lives. As Edwina recalls, "I was so nervous, I don't know how I did. I am praying for this to come through."

As many of us have learned early on, "if you are going to worry don't pray and if you are going to pray don't worry," Edwina's prayers were about to be answered. Early on Monday December 27, 2004, Edwina received a phone call from PHA's Human Resources Department asking whether she would consider joining the PHA family. With a soft sigh and overwhelming glee, Edwina joyfully accepted the position offered to her. Now Edwina has left the welfare roll to take her place on the employment roll of PHA.

Edwina Young worked hard and it paid off.

Edwina Young is one of the many unsung heroines of PHA. She has moved from seeking help to a person who provides help. One of the greatest ways she will do this is through her footprints of success that she has left for others to follow. If ever you find yourself at Blumberg, take a few seconds to stop by the desk of our newest family member. Don't forget to bring your smile, because you will certainly be greeted with a wonderful smile and humble sprit that will help you with your economic self sufficiency needs.

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Philadelphia Housing Authority
Family Self Sufficiency-North

OFFERING THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

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JOB READINESS CLASSES
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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

MAIL BAG

Dear Editor,

My name is Reverend Dr. Kim A. Williams-Gordon. I received my first PHA Newspaper, and I am happy to see so many positive things going on in PHA. I am a Housing Choice Voucher resident in Kensington. Monday thru Friday I attend the Medical Billing Program at the Professional Healthcare Institute 1333 W. Cheltenham Ave. Melrose Park, Pa 19027. This program like many others you offer is a Godsend. I have only lived in this Kensington Neighborhood for 16 months. We moved from Somerton in the far N.E. in Philly and I must admit this was a big change for us.

We went from a quiet and peaceful neighborhood to a block where there was much fighting and shooting, including a shoot out the beginning of summer that took out one of my tires. I tell you at first I could not see why God would place my family and I in such a situation; after all we knew nothing of this area or of the people in this area.

Well after a few tears, and retrieving the bullet from my tire rim and the shock of the shootings, I went into deep prayer and with God's help decided someone had to do something, especially for the children. So I started back having Church Services in my home. At 10am Sunday children come for Sunday school, 11am Worship Services begin. Wednesday evening 6:30pm is Bible Study.

There is a difference on the block and there have been no more shootings. The Parents are happy about the children's involvement with the ministry. Now I need the parents to get more involved themselves. The Children are very involved with the services and I keep them busy. They also have scripture challenges each month, and they have chances to earn gifts.

We went on our first trip last November to a restaurant in Bensalem, Pa. The children had a great time; they loved the food and the video games. In December we had a Christmas party after our morning service and gave away a few holiday baskets with turkeys and the trimmings and some games for children. Besides Sunday school and Trips, the children receive counseling as needed. I enjoy helping the community and anything I can do to encourage children as well as adults I don't mind doing.

They need to realize there's a better way of life then getting high on drugs, smoking, hanging out at the bars drinking, sleeping around with different men and women. Children learn what they live and patterns seem to repeat themselves.

The name of my ministry is ALL FOR CHRIST MINISTRY, "where all we do is for CHRIST. I am the Founder and Pastor. I can't afford my own building, so we are Praying for someone to donate a building to me. We'll be able to invite more people in. Also I like to have an after school program and daycare center. We want to offer meals to those hungry, offer counseling and eventually a building for seniors and the disabled where they can live comfortably.

I have had a few strokes and had to learn to walk a few times, so I know for myself that God did not bring me this far to leave me, and He didn't bring each of you this far to leave you either.

In His Service,
Reverend Dr. Kim A. Williams-Gordon

PHA and Private Market Residents to Live Side-by-Side in East Falls

For the first time, the Philadelphia Housing Authority has divided one of its properties so that residents of affordable housing will live side-by-side with residents of market rate housing.

The location is Falls Ridge, the site formerly known as Schuylkill Falls. PHA has already built 135 units of affordable rental housing on the property and is in the process of building 28 affordable homeownership townhouses.

PHA has sold the remaining 15 acres of the site to Westrum Development Company for $2.8 million. Westrum will build townhouses and condos on that land. PHA will use proceeds from the sale to build more affordable housing elsewhere.

PHA Executive Director Carl Greene calls the arrangement historic and unique. "The arrangement at Falls Ridge marks the first time a private developer will build market rate homes on the same contiguous land as PHA affordable housing. The deal demonstrates the high level of confidence PHA has earned from the private business community," said Greene.

New Homes at Falls Ridge

Falls Ridge sits on a picturesque hill overlooking Kelly Drive.

Dare To Be Great Corner

By Corporal Daniel J. Richmond

"If you want your child to follow in your footsteps you better watch where you place your foot." Kids who learn from their parents about the dangers associated with drugs, underage drinking, and other harmful substances are less likely to use those substances. As a parent you have the power and responsibility to keep your child safe, healthy, drug and violence free.

There are opportunities every day to communicate to your child what is important to you and your family. Educators refer to them as teachable moments. It doesn't have to be a lecture, just a few words to let your children know where you stand. It can occur while eating together as a family, taking your child to school, doing a household chore, or watching a television show.

According to Amelie Ramirez, a doctor of public health and a drug prevention specialist, "most kids don't want to disappoint their families." Parents who send a clear message of "No Drug Use" are setting expectations for their kids, and this will help children to stay away from drugs. Two-thirds of the young adults surveyed stated, losing their parents' respect and pride is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs.

Experts say if you create an environment for open communication, which combines talking with action it's a good first step. Get involved in your children's lives. Know what they are doing and how they spend their time. Praise and reward good behavior, don't take it for granted. Set limits with clear rules and consequences for breaking them. Know their friends and if possible their friends' parents. Remember, in the end it's not pestering, it's parenting.

A Message from the Executive Director

Homeownership used to be a foreign idea for most residents of public housing, but as the front-page story of this newspaper describes, it doesn't have to be that way. At PHA, we have shifted our emphasis away from lifetime residency and toward helping families become independent. This is particularly true in our Housing Choice Voucher Program with its seven-year time limit.

For some families, owning a home is the ultimate sign of independence. If that describes you, the opportunity is here. And that's true whether you're interested in buying a PHA Scattered Site house, buying a home through our Housing Choice Voucher Program or buying one of the beautiful new houses PHA is building across the city.

Carl Greene

Already, hundreds of families have taken homeownership counseling and are on their way. They've learned that owning a home carries with it much more responsibility than renting. But they have also learned that the rewards of homeownership can be great, especially building wealth as the value of their property rises over the years.

We know that homeownership isn't for everyone. Some people who make a good living still prefer to rent, and at PHA professionally building and managing rental properties is still our primary business. But for those of you ready to make that big move the pieces are in place. I invite you to join PHA as we make history together.

The PHA Experience

The Residents' Newspaper

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People You Should Know

Malvin Reyes

Malvin Reyes manages PHA's Homeownership division. He came to the agency over three years ago, with a background in financial services. Nothing gives him more joy and satisfaction than seeing residents get into their own homes.

"I see people who've been struggling for so many years and PHA provides them with great resources to get ahead, purchase a home and live the American dream," Reyes says.

Over 300 residents have begun to live that dream since Malvin joined PHA. He says the biggest challenge is getting people committed to becoming homeowners and staying focused on their plan. For some residents, it takes two to three years to overcome bad credit and change spending habits.

"People need training on budgeting and managing their money to be able to save for a down payment. You can create wealth once you own your home. When you're renting, you're saving for someone else."

Reyes says getting into a home can be a scary process for anyone, not just our residents, but the end result is very rewarding. PHA's Homeownership Program offers support to the family throughout the process.

For more information on homeownership, call 215-684-8015.

Pam Dunbar

Pam Dunbar, Assistant General Manager for Conventional Sites, says she loves a challenge. She has spent over 14 years at PHA, mostly as a troubleshooter resolving a variety of problems at both the conventional and scattered sites. Last fall, Pam played a major role in assisting and relocating residents of Plymouth Hall following a fire at that senior building in Tioga.

Pam says she likes working at PHA because it's a place where someone can really make a difference. She credits Corliss Gray, the resident leader at Queen Lane, with being one of her mentors. Respect for residents and being a good listener are the core values of her humanitarian philosophy.

"When I talk to residents, the first thing they ask me is 'How come someone else didn't tell me that?' I embrace people for what they need. We've come a long way in this agency and we've weathered a lot of storms. I believe in perseverance and I believe what I'm doing is right."

Pam says her biggest challenge is doing things well in rapid fashion with big results. That's her goal.

You can contact Pam Dunbar at 215-684-3344 or call her assistant, Diana Johnson, at 215-684-1417.

Illease Davis

As Supervisory Asset Manager for Scattered Sites, Illease is there to help manage issues you may run into at PHA. If there is an issue with a utility check, or if you have a concern with recertification or maintenance, she can help. She is there if you have a question regarding PHA's policy or procedures. Illease even works with residents, asset managers and the Community Based Management Office (CBMO).

Her various assignments at PHA over 30 years give her the knowledge to assist in these areas. She came to PHA directly out of college and has additional graduate credits in Public Administration and Early Childhood Education. She is a wonderful person to know because even if she doesn't have an answer for you, she can direct you to the person who does.

Another part of her job involves relocation. With PHA rebuilding so many of its developments, residents are constantly being moved. Illease is currently helping in the relocation of residents in the Ludlow and Oxford/Jefferson neighborhoods as well as the Lucien E. Blackwell and Abbottsford Homes developments. Illease says her job requires hard work, but she says it's all worth it. "My job is rewarding because I enjoy working with people. My biggest benefit is watching a family move into a new home for the first time. Or perhaps just seeing a smile on a resident's face I helped out."

You can reach Illease Davis by calling 215.684.4540

Ron Docimo

Ron Docimo, General Manager of Scattered Sites Maintenance, is a 26-year veteran of PHA who knows about home repair from top to bottom. He handles daily calls from residents who need repairs as well as fixing up and restoring vacated homes.

Ron loves his job because of the variety of daily challenges and the service to residents. The repair work done by PHA is a multimillion-dollar business all by itself, and the business has changed dramatically over the years. He says PHA does more work at a higher quality with fewer employees. The use of computers has helped crews keep better track, especially in preventive maintenance.

Ron says residents who need repair work can help themselves in a couple of ways.

"Explain the problem to the Call Center in as much detail as you can. Be sure to leave a phone number where you can be contacted at any time during the day. If there's a question, we can answer it and come to your home with the right repair materials, avoiding any delays."

Residents can also avoid delays by having someone at home to answer the door when repair crews visit. They cannot enter your home unless you are there.

You can place a work order by calling the PHA Call Center at 215-684-4000 or by contacting your Area Manager. (HCV residents should contact their private landlord.)

How to Get Your Personal Experience Into Your Paper

Tell us about your "Experience" as a client of the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Simply give us a call and tell us your story! Our paper reaches all of our residents including: Traditional Sites, Scattered Sites, and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. Join our resident journalism classes which are conducted every other Friday from 10am -12pm; you will learn about the newspaper business and become one of our published writers. Either way, this is a golden opportunity, so reach out. It's easier than you think! Call 215-684-8645 or email anne.martinez@pha.phila.gov.

Team Children Wants Every PHA Family to Have Their Own Computer

Robert Toporek, TeamChildren president points out that being able to use a computer in the safety and comfort of their homes will help all children gain the tools and opportunities to compete in today's digital revolution and turn no child left behind into a reality.

TeamChildren, this region's leading non-profit Community Technology Center is on the front lines helping economically challenged families, schools and organizations throughout our region receive a computer. The staff and volunteers are now prepared to expand the program's reach throughout the Delaware Valley. Having already helped over 5,000 computers find new homes has prepared founder Robert Toporek and his team for the task of helping every family who needs a computer receive one as quickly as possible. Everyday more and more companies and individuals are donating literally hundreds of computers.

Today's digital revolution is beginning to shape every aspect of our culture from education to cooking. Computers are now an essential tool of education and communication in our rapidly changing world. Computer literacy is required in school, in business and in society as a whole. Those without regular access to a computer are in danger of being cut off from opportunities and advancement. If this trend continues, it will affect the economic health of our region. With computer technology changing rapidly, older but completely functional computers are being discarded in favor of upgrades to faster computers with even more technological capability. Those older computers are now being donated to TeamChildren so they can go on to help other families reach new heights instead of ending up in landfills or being stripped for metal.

Generous donations from companies like QVC, Sanofi Synthalabo, SCT, The Philadelphia Housing Authority, Children's Hospital, Methacton and Springfield School Districts are the key to TeamChildren's success.

Another key are the volunteers who make the difference. The amount of work involved in maintaining our rigorous commitment was impossible to find with the sparse funding available. "TeamChildren envisions being able to provide a computer to every child in need thus giving all children in our region this essential tool they need to succeed in the 21st century, global revolution," said Toporek.

Our recipients cover a wide range: Mothers on welfare wanting to better prepare themselves for more fulfilling jobs, single women raising their children without support wanting to give their children an opportunity to succeed in school, schools in Philadelphia who desperately need more computers but can't afford them. Non-profit organizations and social workers, grandmothers, people sick with aids and children with developmental challenges are just a sample of the people Teamchildren has helped cross the digital divide.

Our recipients are offered a hand up not a hand out. We believe that …Each family who needs a computer contributes as well, by writing a letter explaining why they need a computer, and by making a financial contribution. Normally each family is required to contribute $150; but many families face unemployment, illness, and poor education, limiting their ability to afford a computer. However, because TeamChildren is a non-profit organization with little or no funding, it must reach out for financial assistance from families and local organizations. If any family cannot afford the $150, TeamChildren will reach out to area business and community leaders to help subsidize this effort.

As soon as a family's letter is received, TeamChildren responds with a letter that has pick-up instructions. On computer pick-up day, the family is asked to volunteer for two hours in TeamChildren's Community Technology Center, completing tasks ranging from sweeping the floor to helping get computers ready for another family.

For more information on contributing, please visit www.TeamChildren.com. To receive a computer, write your letter and send a deposit of either the full amount of $150.00 or a minimum deposit of $75.00 to TeamChildren, 1920 W Marshall St, Norristown PA 19403.

For questions or concerns call 610-539-8480.

PHA Pre-Apprenticeship Program Open Houses

WHEN: April 6, 7, 20, 21, May 4, 5, 8, 19, June 1, or 2
12:00pm to 6:00pm

WHERE: Workforce Development Center
1905 Vare Avenue (right off of the expressway)

Here is your chance to become a skilled union member. Don't miss this opportunity!

Students are instructed in electrical, carpentry, roofing and painting trades. Union entrance exams available to participants.

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

Qualified applicants must take aptitude & drug tests prior to admission.

For info call:
215.684.8049 or 215.684.8053

The next session will start in July 2005.
This 21-week session will end in December 2005.
Classes are Monday thru Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm.
Applications will be accepted during Open Houses beginning in April 2005.

Applicants must meet the following requirements:

1. Resident of the Philadelphia Housing Authority
   - Section 8/Housing Choice
   - Conventional Housing
   - Scattered Site
2. Positive attitude
3. Physically capable of lifting up to 60lbs
4. 18yrs. of age or older, or 18 before the end of the cycle
5. A high school diploma or GED is required. (If applicants have neither one, before they can be accepted into the program they must have taken steps toward obtaining one.)

Comunity Partners Help PHA M

What is MET?

MET stands for Management and Environmental Technologies and is located in Southwest Philadelphia at 5008 Baltimore Avenue. The company provides a range of self-sufficiency services to residents of the Philadelphia Housing Authority. Those services include life skills development, career guidance, job search assistance, family finance and household management.

Sherrie Davis is MET Program Coordinator. She has a Master's Degree in Human Service from Lincoln University and has worked for foundations and community based organizations her entire life.

Davis says people come into the MET program with different levels of development. She works with them individually as well as in groups. Each person is asked to set three goals. The most common are home-ownership, education and employment.

"I think more than half of our clients have never really thought about setting goals. They allow themselves to be distracted," she says. "They have to learn to use barriers as opportunities."

Davis also says clients spend one year working toward their goals. They are taught to reach their goals one step at a time, one day at a time. So, for example, they may set weekly goals to learn the basic math skills that they need to get their GED.

Sherrie routinely posts motivational sayings for MET clients, such as: "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are" and "Motivation is an action, not a thought."

"It's a matter of letting people know they don't need to go through the process of setting goals by themselves; we're here to provide that support. Opening new opportunities by true statements such as, "Everybody is capable of anything," she says is important too.

You can contact Sherrie Davis at MET by calling 215-747-2781 or through your Family Self-Sufficiency representative.

Robin Proctor-Smith

Robin Proctor-Smith is on a mission to help others by writing grant applications for worthy organizations. But first she had to get help for herself. Robin is a well-spoken, educated woman who's following through on her dream to form her own business as a grant writer. She received training on grant writing from the State Department of Human Services, and has already successfully won a grant for a social services program at her church.

Proctor-Smith, 44, is the mother of three children, two boys and a girl. She has an associate's degree from New York City Technical College and has taken business management courses at Baruch College. Proctor-Smith was married and did accounting for Madison Square Garden, specifically for New York's pro basketball and hockey teams, the Knicks and Rangers. However, family and medical issues arose and Robin moved to Philly to get a fresh start with the understanding that her husband would join her. Instead, they ended up divorcing and she became a PHA client in 1990.

Proctor-Smith says she could never find a full-time job with benefits, only temporary work, as various employers found her overqualified or under qualified. her from working a traditional 9 way to get ahead was to form her learned that MET, one of PHA's C Philly, would help her write a bu

After starting at MET, Procto to a $47,000 grant to fund a tru church, called "A Stronger Found who have been cutting class. It h tutors them in weak subjects, h skills and helps adults work on p

Not only is Robin is a self-er she also works part-time as an Ac ancy program. She works in all the computers, assisting in the o math, English and goal setting.

"Whatever it is that's prevent those are the things that we wo have a lot of children that don't They don't even dream. We teach and that you have to work and ap

Proctor-Smith, who is also rece working on another grant now to Foundation."

"I want to see youth grow. I wan to give them an avenue to change," people realize children are the futu

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Kim Anderson is a 42-year-o smile, a pleasant personality and golden opportunity when she lea

What is OIC?

OIC stands for Opportunities Industrialization Center and was founded in 1964 by the late Rev. Leon Sullivan of the Zion Baptist Church in Philadelphia. As job opportunities began to open up to minority men and women, Sullivan realized that a trained workforce did not exist to fill the positions, and OIC was created.

Today, the organization serves young people and adults through eight different programs, including the Opportunities Inn Hospitality Training Institute. This program has received regional and national acclaim for its innovative training approach.

Barry Isburg, General Manager of the program, says it began with the construction of the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Business leaders realized that hotels would be built, too, and would need a trained workforce.

Isburg says the hospitality industry offers people the chance to work their way up the ladder into good paying supervisory positions with benefits. "It's just the opportunity to give somebody a career that they can grow in. Most people who come here haven't had that opportunity," he says.

Isburg also says OIC tests incoming students to help them find the program that's best for them. Class sizes are small with no more than 20 people, allowing for more individual instruction. Classroom work is combined with tours and "shadow dates" at local hotels, giving students a real worldview of the jobs they'll handle.

Program graduates receive a certificate from OIC, but they can also gain national certification from the Educational Institute, which is recognized throughout the country by the hospitality industry. OIC uses textbooks from the Institute and students are prepared to take the certification exam.

Shaneen Davis moved to Southwest Philadelphia under PHA's Housing Choice Voucher program two years ago. She has been living there with her two-year-old son Rahmik, and six-year-old daughter Nahiema. For some time she has been working part-time jobs to pay the bills, but was finding that meeting her financial responsibilities was becoming more difficult. She wanted more. She needed more. Shaneen felt it was time to learn a skill that would not only put money in her pocket but would also advance her life.

In October she came across an article in the newspaper that offered the chance for Philadelphia Housing Authority clients to learn about the Hospitality Management industry, free of charge through OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center). This training was possible because of a recent arrangement made by PHA with OIC. This successful training program that started six months ago, has already trained 35 people with all participants passing the course. That's a 100% graduation rate. Each person chooses between four areas in the Hospitality Management industry: Front Office, Travel Tourism, Culinary Arts and Housekeeping.

Shaneen chose Housekeeping. This seven-week course held in North Philadelphia met from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday. She stayed the course, followed the instructions and finished just before the New Year. She is now in the intern phase, working several days a week at the Doubletree Hotel in Center City.

She looks at this new job and the training that OIC provided as a beginning and plans to move into a supervisory position soon.

Shaneen says she is grateful to PHA for giving her a chance to advance her life and the life of her family, and she credits OIC for the great training. Shaneen says, "I am not living the dream yet, but knowing my dream can be realized makes me even more determined to reach it."

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Elois Williams lived with her three children in Germantown for 10 years. For most of that time the apartment conditions were poor at best and despite repeated complaints to fix the property nothing had been done. She needed to move and says anywhere would have been better. She had applied for a Housing Choice Voucher not only because of the financial assistance, but because she knew PHA would hold landlords to a higher quality standard through. She moved into a new apa the lower Northeast.

This move made a world of diff family including: 16-year-old Min year-old Precious. Now that decen she is now focused on becoming f

She had struggled at various job

Make Success Stories A Reality

MET Success Stories

Family medical issues prevented
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Community Partners in Southwest
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offered by MET (Management & Environmental Technologies), through PHA's Community Partners Program.

Anderson had been in the Housing Choice Voucher program for 13 years and wanted to find a better job and become a homeowner. She had worked as a physical therapy assistant at Einstein Hospital. Then, seven years ago, Anderson was injured and had to go on disability. Eventually, she lost her job and had been unable to find employment ever since.

PHA's switch to a seven-year time limit for Voucher recipients convinced Kim to enter the Community Partners Program. (That's exactly what the time limit is supposed to do - motivate clients to work toward economic independence.) She learned about the program through The PHA Experience saying that the success stories in the newspaper inspired her.

"It's not that I didn't want to do anything. I was unaware of the help available through PHA and other agencies to help me start a new career," Anderson says.

One of the first things Anderson did at MET was to take computer training and learn how to write a good resume. She also trains on a program called Plato that teaches a person self-sufficiency skills for every area of their lives. Students in the program learn how to document skills they have, but haven't realized that they have them.

"The program teaches you self-esteem, becoming self-sufficient, helps you with parenting skills, the whole nine yards," Anderson says. "Building self-confidence is important. When you have people who are low-income, they lose hope if they don't know what's available outside. They lose their self-worth."

The program at MET helped Anderson set three goals: to get more education, to find a good paying job and to become a homeowner. She has a diploma from Overbrook High School and is a Certified Nursing Assistant (she worked in nursing homes before

Kim Anderson

working at Einstein Hospital).

Now, Kim wants to become a pharmacy technician because it's a job she can perform despite her disability. She says that's the first step toward her ultimate goal of becoming a registered nurse.

Recently, Kim Anderson became a homeowner through PHA's Housing Choice Voucher program. She purchased a home in Southwest Philadelphia after receiving counseling and help from PHA, Met and a Community Development Corporation. Anderson learned about the chance at homeownership the same way she learned about the Community Partners Program, through stories she had seen in The PHA Experience.

"One of my biggest fears was about being put out. Now, I don't have to worry about that. Homeownership helps you become stable."

Best of all, Anderson says, her new home has more space and it's hers!

OIC Success Stories

OIC Program Graduates left to right Elois Williams, Carmen Williams, Shaneen Davis at work on their internships at the Doubletree Hotel.

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were temporary. Elois wanted to train for a position that was more secure. She had been looking for job training opportunities and while at the Housing Choice Voucher office was handed a flyer with the information she had been looking for. The message invited people who were looking for work to consider the Hospitality industry. She had the incentive, OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Center) provided the training and thanks to PHA, it was free. She called the next day and started training the following week.

She says OIC is very straightforward and has a staff that really cares. She passed the Housekeeping course and is now in the intern phase at the Doubletree Hotel. She pats herself on the back for completing the seven-week course but gives credit to the housing authority as well. "PHA really helps people who want to help themselves."

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We can call this family the dynamic duo from Wilson Park in South Philadelphia. They deserve high recognition for working together to launch their careers together. Carmen Williams and her daughter Raina have always been close, but this is the first time they started setting goals as a team.

Carmen has worked various jobs over the years and knew that if she wanted a consistent, weekly income she would need to learn a skill. Her 18-year-old daughter Raina, although a recent high school graduate, was not quite ready for college, but wanted to learn a skill that would produce an income. As luck would have it, her mother read in the newspaper about an OIC training course in the Hospitality Management industry. What made this opportunity ever more attractive was that it was free to Philadelphia Housing Authority residents as part of PHA's ongoing effort to advance the lives of its clients.

This mother/daughter team signed up together and started training on the same day, in two different areas of the Hospitality Management industry. Carmen took the seven-week Housekeeping course. Her daughter decided on Front Office Management which takes 16-weeks to complete. Carmen has successfully completed her course and is already in the intern phase of the program working at the Doubletree Hotel in Center City.

They both say OIC's training program was a wonderful opportunity to acquire the skills needed to start work. "We also know that without PHA behind us 100% this training would not have been possible. When we needed housing, PHA was there. When we did not have the money to pay for training, PHA was there. PHA has been a tower of support for our family."

Computers for Every Family

Receive a computer by completing 4 simple steps

www.TeamChildren.com is this region's leading nonprofit organization helping families and organizations gain access to computers when they cannot afford to buy a new one. Over 4000 families, individuals and organizations have *Bridged the Digital Divide.*

Companies and individuals throughout the Delaware Valley donate their used computers. Our volunteers get them humming again, adding ram, restoring operating systems, installing modems and cd-rom drives. We then make them available to those in need.

1 Write us a letter
Write us a letter and explain why you cannot afford a computer and how having one will help you or your family. We love great letters.

2 Enclose a deposit
Everyone must contribute financially, this is our key to success. We are a small non profit organization without substantial funding. Our volunteers and donors of equipment do their part and we ask each recipient to contribute just $150.00. The full amount or a deposit of $100 must be included with your letter. Everybody who includes a deposit will receive a computer.

3 Volunteer
We never have enough volunteers so everyone is asked to volunteer two hours in our repair center on the day you receive your computer. This could be anything from sweeping the floor to helping match up computers with monitors and keyboards.

4 Follow-up
Everyone is asked to write us a follow-up letter within 30 days of receiving their computer. This helps us document the difference we are making in the lives of our neighbors.

Send your request to:
TeamChildren, 1920 Marshall St., Norristown PA 19403

610-539-8480 • TeamChildren@aol.com

The Importance of Goal Setting

By Antionette Martin

Are you taking charge of your life? Are you making the decisions about what you will achieve, or where you will go with your life, or are you just drifting along hoping that by chance the cherished things you want in your life will come along?

Many people want to be employed at a job where they earn a living wage, make a real contribution to society doing a job they enjoy. The people who succeed tend to be people who set goals. In 1973, a survey on goal setting was conducted at Yale University. The survey revealed that the students who wrote down their goals and formulated specific plans to attain them had greater success than students who didn't write down specific goals. This proves the point of the importance of setting goals.

Think of goal setting as going on a trip to a specific destination, with a road map guiding you. When you think about it, everything of significance is planned out. Couples getting married, colleges planning curriculums, and successful entrepreneurs plan out and have set goals, because they want their weddings, programs and business plans to be successful.

Goals are defined as specific things you need to accomplish within a clearly defined time frame. The American Heritage Dictionary defines goals as a desired result or purpose or objective; and the Roget's College Thesaurus explains that the words object, end, aim or ambition could be used to replace the word goal.

Goals are verbs that describe our actions. They are our heart's desires in action because they have the ability to transform our lives. And only actions can transform, not just thinking or wanting. Goals are stepping-stones to our vision of where we want our lives to go. Goals are also the specific details of any vision that guides you to your desired destination; they are the road map of your vision helping you to make your dreams a reality.

If you are performing what is necessary to attain the goal, it does not mean, "I have done everything, but I did not reach my goal, I give up." It is saying keep going until you attain your goal because it will surely come. An explicit clearly written goal will bring about clear explicit results. On the other hand, an unclear half-baked goal will bring about half-baked results.

A study at the University of Michigan on setting and accomplishing goals found that there is a connection between high self-esteem and a general satisfaction with life. The study found that setting and accomplishing goals leads to a feeling of well-being.

Teach your children goal setting skills and put them on the road to success. Goal setting will raise their self-confidence, self-worth, self-esteem, and make them achievers.

Once a child is on the right road you have opened the door the good Lord designed us all to walk through, the door of success. It is an invaluable skill that will serve them into adulthood. We all know that most champions have a "can do" attitude. By teaching your children how to set and achieve their goals, they too can become champions.

Be realistic about goals, so that they are attainable. Break one large goal down into manageable steps that are comfortable and attainable. Have realistic expectations about what you can achieve. You know, we all crawl before we walk. Know why you want to achieve a certain goal. Decide how the achievement of this specific goal will benefit you and your family. Write down your thoughts; they will become the basis of your plan.

Set up your lifestyle to support the success of your goals by scheduling your tasks at a time you will have good results. If you are a morning person, schedule your tasks for the morning and if you are an afternoon person, schedule your tasks for the afternoon.

There will be obstacles to overcome. Stay focused on your goals. Our Creator let's us know with him all things are possible. He tells us to acknowledge Him in all our ways and he will direct our paths. Believe Him! Have faith! You are worthy of reaching your heart's cherished dreams. You are good enough! When you reach for your goals, you will shine inside. This will make you a more satisfied person and a better spouse, parent, student and neighbor. May the Lord bless you in all of your worthy goals.

"Journey"

Born so open and absorbing to the world around us,
Wanting love and understanding, comfort of belonging,
Our journey just beginning we are eager for more,
Later climbing hills and mountains,
Sometimes valley's deep and long,
Sometimes battling storms with strong instincts to survive,
Sometimes sailing peaceful oceans on clear, bright sunny days,
Learning, changing, growing, these the paths to knowing,
Life's experience and lesson's become our wisdom at the end.

A Poem by Valerie Manlove

New Van Service Inspired By PHA Experience Story

By Valerie Manlove

Lynne Frye was inspired. She had just read an article in a recent issue of the PHA Experience entitled "Livin' free ain't what it's cracked up to be." The story described the challenges faced when living in a low-income neighborhood without an affordable supermarket and no means of transportation to shop elsewhere.

Lynne immediately knew there was an opportunity, a chance to do good and possibly make some money. She and her husband Daniel decided to start a van service to address the problem. While pondering a name for their new business, they considered many, but finally they decided "A Personal Touch" was the perfect name.

A Personal Touch Van Service, which opened last August, operates between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Customers are picked up from their homes, transported to the desired supermarket, and then returned home. The driver assists with bags and packages as needed. The Frye's are charging reasonable fees. Their personal van is the initial transportation for "A Personal Touch". Their service is licensed, registered, inspected and insured.

Empathy for those less fortunate than Lynne spurs her enthusiasm and sincere commitment to this project. Having been a single mother before her marriage of 13 years, she's never forgotten the hardships; she wants to ease the burden of others.

Lynne is deeply involved with her church and vividly recalls a sermon by Bishop Johnny Golden where he quoted the bible verse" Help ye one to another." The verse touched her deeply. "The lord said Serve ye one to another, and that's what I'm going to do." Within her church, she is the only female driver for their 16-passenger van. The members depend on her pleasant, safe driving skills to and from church. Helping senior members with shopping errands, cleaning and cooking is another way she practices her favorite bible verse.

Lynne Frye and her Personal Touch van service are a result of reading a PHA Experience story detailing the need for a way to get seniors to and from supermarkets and other shopping destinations.

Lynne is 35-years-old, married and the mother of nine children. One of her children is adopted. Ms. Frye didn't graduate from high school, but didn't give up. She went back to get her GED, and then continued her education at the Site Business School, where she majored in computers. Soon after completing her nine-month course, she landed a job at the Public Utility Commission. Lynne left the PUC after being hired at a larger salary by the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, where she enjoyed working with seniors.

Recently Lynne battled with leukemia, but is now cancer free. Lynne has a nurturing spirit and is actively involved with her family and church, but she has more to give. Lynne's husband Daniel says he supports Lynne "110 percent." He said, "She's always on the go, helping someone." Lynne has felt and lived through the harshness of being a low income single mother, and knows how hard it is for seniors to get around. After realizing PHA residents needed transportation, a service she was already offering for senior church members, she called some of the numbers listed in the Experience offering her plan for a Van Service for site-based, Scattered-Site and Housing Choice Voucher residents.

A Personal Touch will allow many residents to go to such places as BJ's and buy items in bulk. Lynne says her service is reliable, safe, timely and affordable.With her own dedication, with family and church solidly behind her efforts, A Personal Touch is sure to be a phenomenal success.

For more information or to reserve your ride with A Personal Touch, call Lynne at 267-977-3373.

The Greater Grays Ferry Estates complex located at
3001 Moore Street, Philadelphia, PA 19145

Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

LIFE
at Greater Grays Ferry Estates

Living Independently For Elders
Living Well with Dignity

To learn more about LIFE, please call 215.339.4747

Groovin' at the Wilson Park Senior Center

(Con't from Page 1)

socialize. Simple activities such as these make a world of difference in the quality of life and the longevity of seniors.

Charmaine Morton, Senior Programs Asset Manager, says the book café was created when the staff realized that some seniors were not eating breakfast and taking medication on an empty stomach, or not taking it at all. That behavior can have serious consequences for older folks, especially if they're frail.

"In delaying your meds, especially if it's for high blood pressure or diabetes, you can have episodes," Morton says.

The breakfast program at Wilson Park is funded through a variety of sources, notably a grant from Shop-Rite, local vendors and contributions from the Senior Programs staff. The cost of the items served range from 15 cents to a dollar. Initially, there was no charge, but Morton says some residents felt that was disrespectful while others really took advantage of the situation.

Senior Programs staff at Wilson Park in the book café. Seated (l-r) Gwendolyn Bowie, Nyla Jones, Anna Badie, Charmaine Morton, Doris Greene. Standing (l-r) Edward Rudow, Albert Swann, Nasya Monk, and Fred Clark.

Mildred Branham, a perky 71-year-old with a great smile, can't imagine a day without morning exercise.

"It invigorates you. It brings you together (with friends). It gets your mind and body working," says this former crossing guard who's also Vice President of the Resident Council.

Branham believes that without the exercise program, some seniors would never leave their apartments. She says the book café gives residents something else to do besides watch reruns and reality shows on TV.

"Sometimes, you just want to read in a quiet place outside your apartment," she says. Other times people just want to meet. What better place than the book café?

Charmaine Morton says she and her team plan to improve the senior program at Wilson Park and make it a model that can be extended to other PHA developments. Other senior sites have exercise programs, but the style of the program varies. The Senior Center Advisory Council and the Senior Programs staff developed the program at Wilson Park.

"When a senior looks at you and they tell you 'you are making my last days my best days' I think that's more rewarding than my paycheck," Morton says. "I'm giving what I want to be given when I become elderly."

Cherry Family - A Special Club

The seniors who live at Katie B. Jackson in North Philadelphia were so pleased with a visit from the Cherry Family Club last Thanksgiving that they want them to come again.

The Club treated seniors to a very nice Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings and door prizes during the event last November in the community room.

Thomas Friend, Resident Council President at Katie B. Jackson, says it truly was a special occasion.

"We would like them back here, but there are no guarantees because they move around from year to year," he says. "The best part of the celebration was the hospitality and the raffle for the door prizes featuring items the residents can use in their apartments."

The Cherry Family Club has been providing charity contributions and hospitality across Philadelphia during the holiday season for the last five years. The Club has just over 50 family members and was started by Lora Rogers, the first daughter of Nellie Hester. The mission of the Club is to "spread our love and contributions throughout the city."

Gwen Jackson, daughter of the late Katie B. Jackson, was present for the celebration and thanked the Club members for their love and kindness. She noticed that even the youngest members of the Club, ages 9 to 16, were around to serve and honor seniors on this special day.

Senior Programs Events...

March (Domestic Relation Month)

March 11 — Senior Advisory Board Monthly Meeting
Blumberg Apts.
10:00AM 12:00PM

March 16 — Senior Town Meeting
Wilson Park Senior Center
1:00PM - 3:00PM

March 18 — Spring Fling Fashion Show Extravaganza
Abbottsford Homes
10:00PM 12:00PM

March 25 — Domestic Relations Fair
TBA
10:00AM - 12:00PM

April (Volunteerism Month)

April 8 — Senior Advisory Board Monthly Meeting
Katie B. Jackson
10:00AM 12:00PM

April 15 — Senior Day — Annual Volunteer Luncheon
Wilson Park
11:00AM - 2:00PM

April 20 — Senior Trip (TBA)

May (Older Adult Month)

May 6 — Ladies Day Health and Fitness Fair
Wilson Park
12:00AM 4:00PM

May 13 — Senior Advisory Board Monthly Meeting
Wilson Park
10:00AM-12:00PM

May 18 — Senior Town Meeting
Cassie L. Holly
1:00PM 3:00PM

May 20 — Senior Day — Annual Rainbow Tea
Wilson Park
12:00AM - 4:00PM

June (Music Appreciation Month)

June 3 — Annual Senior Prom
Cannstatter's Banquet Hall
11:00AM - 3:00PM

June 10 — Senior Advisory Board Monthly Meeting
Holmecrest Apts.
10:00AM-12:00PM

June 15 — Senior Town Meeting
Emlen Arms
1:00PM - 3:00PM

PHA Offers New Elder Care Services Program

Qualified PHA seniors can receive new services through a unique program at the new community center at Greater Grays Ferry Estates (GGFE), located at 3001 Moore Street.

The program is called "LIFE" (Living Independently For Elders). The service helps participants to live as independently as possible while keeping them out of nursing homes and hospitals.

To qualify for the LIFE program, PHA residents must be at least 60 years old, need help with daily activities, and meet financial eligibility.

PHA is offering LIFE in partnership with St. Agnes Continuing Care Center.

Residents can receive a wide variety of services including: Medical care, Recreational and social programs, Prescribed medication, Rehabilitation, Nutritional counseling, Personal emergency response systems, Caregiver relief.

The program also offers breakfast and lunch at the center and, in some cases in-home personal care and chore services.

Qualified residents at GGFE will enjoy immediate access to LIFE services on the premises in South Philadelphia. However, LIFE services will not be restricted to residents. Qualified participants who live within the LIFE program service area will receive transportation to and from the LIFE center at GGFE by wheelchair-accessible buses and vans. Service will be available to residents at:

- Cambridge Plaza
- Cassie L. Holly
- The Courtyard at Riverview
- Martin Luther King Plaza
- Richard Allen Homes
- Spring Garden Apartments
- Wilson Park

Please call 215-339-4747 to apply for the LIFE program or to learn more about this unique service. To inquire about living at Greater Grays Ferry Estates, please call 215-684-7088.

PHA Wins Grant to Make Housing Choice Properties Healthier

If you are a participant in the Housing Choice Voucher Program - and have children age six and under - you may be hearing from a surveyor soon. PHA has become the first housing authority in the nation to receive a grant to study and repair conditions in HCV properties that could lead to health problems in young children.

The federal government calls it a "Healthy Homes Demonstration Program," and is providing $1 million to conduct the research make the repairs and evaluate the impact of the repairs.

PHA Executive Director Carl Greene says what makes this program unique is that until now, PHA never intervened in the maintenance of a Housing Choice Voucher property. That was left to the landlord - the owner of the property. But for this study, PHA will get involved with making repairs at 200 homes.

"PHA's goal is to show that it can cost-effectively reduce conditions in HCV properties that trigger ailments such as asthma, lead poisoning and allergies," said Greene.

The program will take place in several steps. First, Tenant Support Services, Inc. (TSSI) will hire residents to work as surveyors. Drexel University will train the surveyors in data collection and evaluation. Graduates of PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program will help make the repairs. Once all the repairs are complete Drexel will study whether children who live in these houses are healthier.

PHA will make repairs costing $5,000 or less. Landlords will make repairs costing more than $5,000. The grant allows PHA to set up a rotating loan fund to help landlords with those costs.

Carl Greene says PHA will share the results of this study with the Phila. Health Dept and other housing authorities around the nation. "We're very excited about having been chosen for the demonstration program. We hope that families and landlords will know and recognize unhealthy conditions and have a sense of urgency about getting them fixed."

Eagles Green Friday

PHA Headstart Program at Bartram Village held a party for the kids to show their enthusiastic support for the Eagles before the Super Bowl.

Living With Special Needs Children in PHA Housing

By Sydney Richburg

The representative at the Social Security office told me, "Your son has been accepted for SSI." With tears in my eyes I answered, "But doesn't that mean something is wrong?"

As a teenage parent learning that my newborn baby would require a lifetime of specialized services, I had no idea of the uphill struggles ahead of me. In high school, I wanted to become a successful fashion designer or an inventor; my head was full of ideas. Then all of a sudden I was an 18-year-old parent, living on welfare with a special needs child.

I had so many questions? How will I gain skills for employment? Who will watch my child while I become self-sufficient? I overcame my initial fears and by the time my child was 2 years old, I was employed. My employer was so cooperative. They accommodated every shift change I requested. It wasn't easy though; I went through six babysitters in eight months. Eventually I realized that my first job was motherhood, and made arrangements for a leave of absence.

During the next four years I became a fulltime mom/caretaker, but I hated relying on welfare. My resources were limited and after giving birth to another special needs child I applied for residency at PHA. When I was told that a unit was being prepared for me, the happiness I felt was a sense of accomplishment.

At the first tenant's meeting, I expressed a concern of resident pride and unity and was invited to become floor captain at the development. This was the beginning of learning new skills and gaining experience with PHA. A relocated resident from Raymond Rosen changed my life. She showed me that sharing life's experience with my children outside of the home was more important than staying home to avoid the negativity.

I started participating in PHA events and seeking resources throughout the city. I became a speaker for Family Preservation, raising funds and speaking about the group. A confidence was forming. The manager at my development helped me face a new reality by discussing my future dreams for my children. She instilled in me life altering common sense decision making. Along the way, I attended college and was hired for a part time social service position at PHA. Here I received a tremendous amount of experience and learned skills in various areas.

I came to PHA with a high school diploma. Today I am a proud participant in the journalism workshop. Through PHA I've entered a world that I had given up on a long time ago. I still want more out of life, but in the meantime I'm leading a fulfilling life, building a sound resume without compromising my children's needs.

Resources for families with special needs

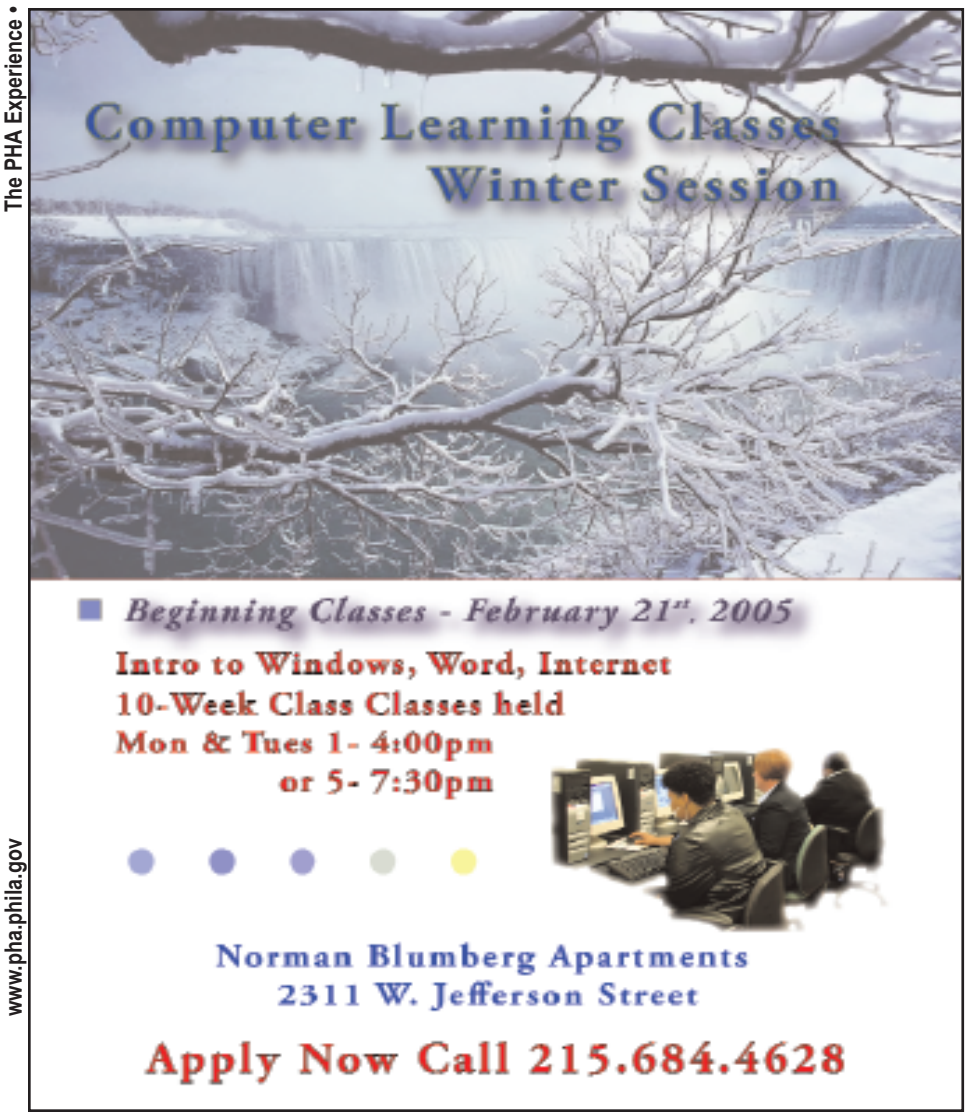
• PHA provides case management for senior and disabled residents. Call 215-684-8782.

• Philadelphia Mental Retardation Services handles intense case management family service plans, meeting and updates on the special needs population. For info call 215-685-5900.

• The Carousel House is a City recreation center that serves the disabled. The use of their facilities (including a heated indoor pool, weight room.) Dances are offered six times a year for $5 per person including dinner! Other activities include "Movie Night". Currently released movies are shown on Thursday nights with popcorn and soda for 50 cents. So, give them a call and enjoy a night out. The facility is wheel chair accessible. For more information call 215-685-0160.

• The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation provides services to the special needs population whose needs affect employment and disabilities. Services may include diagnosis, counseling and guidance, comprehensive medical, psychological, training, job placement. No charge, find out more about services 215-560-1900.

• Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services offers a wide range of services including referral for training, vocational counseling and job placement. Contact them at 215-560-5700.



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Educational Data Systems Inc.
100 South Broad Street Suite 1210
Philadelphia, PA 19110

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Contact: Al Williams - 215- 684-8052
American Community Partners
1905 Vare Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19145

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Contact: Sherrie Davis - 215-717-2727
MET
5008 Baltimore Avenue, Suite B
Philadelphia 19143

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Professional Healthcare Institute
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Philadelphia, PA 19121

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ABO Haven
42 South 15th Street, Suite 500
Philadelphia, PA 19102

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Contact: Debra Williams - 215-535-2957
CORA Services Inc/ Neumann Program
1000 Orthodox Street
Philadelphia, PA 19124

GED (adults 22 & older) & Housing Counseling
Contact: Anne Marie Schulz - 215-455-8033
CORA Services Inc/Beacon Center
Grover Washington Jr. Middle School

Home Maintenance Repair Program
Contact: Bonnie Kaye 215-728-4712 or
Dennis Zimmer 215-728-4725
Orleans Technical Institute
1330 Rhawn Street
Philadelphia, PA 19111

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Contact: Aaron Jones - 215-236-7700 x324
Opportunities Industrialization Corp. Inc.
1231 N. Broad Street, 4th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19132

Pharmacy Technician, Medical Billing Assistant, Certified Nursing Assistant
Contact: Dorothy Jones - 215-684-8250
Professional Healthcare Institute
1333 West Cheltenham Avenue
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