

# The PHA Experience



Philadelphia Housing Authority  
Building Beyond Expectations

Issue 19

A Community Newspaper for and About Residents

January 2009

## Nellie Reynolds Garden - movin' on up

"I feel like a member of the TV show 'The Jeffersons.' I'm moving on up!" That's how Yvonne Williams, one of the first new residents at Nellie Reynolds Gardens, described how she feels about her new home and PHA's newest seniors apartment building.

The building, named in honor of PHA's long-time resident leader, features 64 apartments, and an Adult Daily Living Center, scheduled to open in the early part of this year. NRG will eventually contain an assisted living facility once PHA gets needed licensing from the state.

Another new resident, Earline Pankey, calls her new home "a dream of mine come true." Like Williams, Pankey moved from Johnson Homes, right across the street. "I like it, I like it, I like it," she said, as she and hundreds of other guests sat under the sparkling glass atrium for November's grand opening ceremonies.



PHA Commissioner Nellie Reynolds is joined by HUD Secretary Steve Preston (left), PHA Executive Director Carl Greene, and Holly Glauser-Abel of the PA Housing Finance agency at the ribbon cutting for the new senior development.

"The grand opening was beautiful but what makes the environment great are your neighbors and the serenity. I

liked where I lived at Johnson Homes, but this is exceptional," Pankey said.

The building is the first of its kind for PHA, not only because of its architecture, but also for its environmental features, most notably a "green" roof. The roof is carpeted by hundreds of plants that absorb rainfall and prevent water from running off into the sewer system. The plants also insulate the building, keeping warm air inside in winter and out in summer. That means energy savings year-round. The carpeting in the building, as well as the paints and primers used, are all eco-friendly, meaning they give off less indoor air pollution.

PHA Executive Director Carl Greene hosted the grand opening, saying that completion of the building sends two strong messages. "This facility exemplifies PHA's commitment to help our senior residents live with the kind of dignity they've earned. It also underscores how seriously we take

*continued on page 14*

## Resident leaders cheer new MTW agreement

Resident leaders saw reason to cheer on October 16 when PHA and HUD reached agreement on a new ten-year Moving to Work Plan.

The signing of the agreement ended a battle that lasted almost two years, sparked a lawsuit by PHA against its parent agency and prompted the resignation of HUD secretary Alphonso Jackson.

"I was extremely happy that [PHA Executive Director] Carl Greene and his staff and TSSI stood up to HUD," said Rose Bryant, resident leader at Liddonfield Homes.

"We will not lose the programs that they fought so much to get to help the residents become more self-sufficient."

Moving to Work allows PHA to break away from one-size-fits-all public housing rules from Washington to create programs that work best for Philadelphia. For example, PHA is able to use Housing



Rose Bryant, resident leader at Liddonfield Homes.

Choice Voucher funds to create new public housing or to provide job training for clients, something not permitted under standard public housing procedures.

*continued on page 15*

## Katrina survivors celebrate Christmas in new home

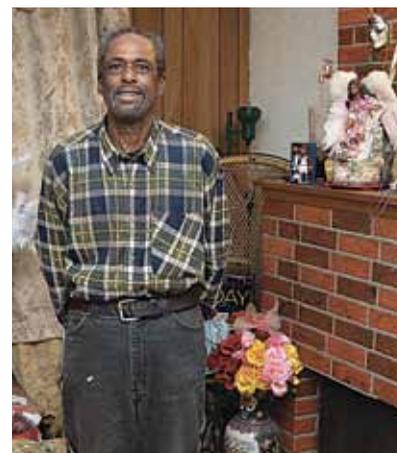
For Richard Washington, his wife, Annie, and their kids, the 2008 holiday season was very special. They became homeowners again, three years after arriving in Philadelphia in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Katrina destroyed their home in New Orleans' 7th ward. The city bulldozed it and other homes in the neighborhood.

Richard Washington remembers the day Katrina hit the city.

"When I woke up at one o'clock in the morning, I was stepping in water," he said. "I walked in water chest high, and my daughter was on my shoulders and I had my two step-kids (in tow). And I had a four by four walking through the water so nobody would fall; they had something to hold on to."

The Washington family ended up in Jefferson Parish, sleeping on the sidewalk for six days. "We didn't know



"By the help of the Good Lord we made it," says Richard Washington, now the proud owner of a home in West Philadelphia.

what we're going to eat," he said.

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## After 40, there's something else that good friends should talk about.

**Y**ou've known each other since high school. You've always been the best of friends and now, both of you have reached the wonderful age of 40.

Congratulations!

Over the years, the two of you have shared stories about relationships, children, and ambitions — in both good times and bad. But now it's time to add “**breast cancer screenings**” and “**mammograms**” to the list of things to discuss. One in eight women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime, but when the disease is diagnosed early, the five-year survival rate is 98%.

But don't leave it at the talking stage. After the conversation, both of you should make an appointment for a mammogram **today**.

At Keystone Mercy, we believe every one of our female members over the age of 40 should have a mammogram **once a year**.

We also believe that one good way for that to happen is to talk about it.

Members who need help scheduling an appointment can call **1-800-521-6860**.

**KEYSTONE MERCY**

A Program of Keystone First and Mercy Health Plan

Coverage by  
**KeystoneFIRST**  
Independent Licensee of the  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



# Digital TV is finally coming in February – be ready to convert!

## Mark February 17, 2009 on your calendar!

At the stroke of midnight on that day, your analog television set will not self-destruct, but it will stop bringing you your favorite programs and start bringing you static. Unless you prepare now.

The U.S. government is requiring all major television stations to begin broadcasting digital rather than analog signals effective Feb. 17. Which means that unless you have cable or satellite TV or have purchased a digital TV in the past four years, your TV will not work without a digital converter box.

For less than \$70,

you can buy a converter box that will enable you to see digital programs on your old TV. These boxes are available at stores like Wal Mart and Target – almost any store that also sells televisions.

## Get your coupons here!

### DIGITAL DATA

To receive your \$40 coupon to buy a converter box:

Call 1-888-388-2009

Order online at:

[www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov)

For more information:

Go to [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov)

Call 1-888-225-5322

*Note: Check your television's owner's manual. If you purchased your set within the last four years, it probably has a digital tuner and requires no conversion.*

Until March 31, you can receive a \$40 coupon from the U.S. government to buy a converter box. A household can receive up to two coupons. Coupons can be ordered from [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov), a web site created by the FCC to guide people through this transition. Or you can call 1-888-388-2009.

Lauren Kravetz, an FCC representative who educates consumers



*Dave Dombrowski of the FCC demonstrates the proper way to hook up a digital converter at a DTV event at Germantown House.*

about the upcoming digital rollout, points out: "if you call, you will get a confirmation number that will enable you to track the coupon." Online, you will receive a receipt.

The coupons take three to six weeks to arrive, so it is smart to apply now. They have a 90-day expiration date – and they start ticking from the time they're mailed. Once you receive the coupon, don't wait too long to make your purchase – you can't get another one or renew an expired coupon. The expiration date

is printed on the coupon, which looks like a credit card.

Converters run between \$39 and \$70, says Kravetz, and she admits she doesn't see any difference between the cheaper and more expensive models. She recommends that whichever converter you buy should feature "analog pass through" so you can still capture any analog signals sent by small stations like Channel 65. These stations are not required to go digital, although Kravetz adds that many will.

## Get more channels

Digital, explains Kravetz, is a more efficient way to broadcast. Using the same channel space, stations can broadcast on five stations instead of one. Once the converter box is installed, viewers will find they have channels they didn't have before. For example, in addition to Channel 10, there may be 10.2 and 10.3, broadcasting different types of programs, such as weather programs or vintage television shows. The picture will also be sharper than the old analog one, but it will not be a high definition picture unless you purchase a High Definition TV.

The converter box is simple to install, says Kravetz. It attaches to both the TV and the antenna. People may need to purchase a better pair of rabbit ears to get a better picture, says Kravetz, but any television, no matter how old, can be converted.

Since all new televisions are now digital, eventually the converters will be as obsolete as analog TVs, Kravetz points out. So the prices will not go down if you wait to purchase them.

# Pre-Apprenticeship program to celebrate 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

What a difference a decade makes!

Ten years ago, Carl Greene had a vision for PHA residents: a program that would give them the opportunity to have careers in the building trades.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Program began in February 1999 in four small rooms at what was then known as Tasker Homes. The rooms were supposed to be converted into a Laundromat for residents, but resident leader Asia Coney shared Greene's vision and agreed that the space should be used for the new program.



*The Pre-Apprenticeship program started in these cramped rooms in Tasker Homes.*

Unlike previous PHA efforts to train residents for the construction industry, the Pre-Apprenticeship program benefited from an agreement between the agency and four trade unions – electricians, painters, glaziers, carpenters and plumbers – that brought union instructors to the training site.

"The biggest challenge in getting this program off the ground was the need to build credibility with the trade unions," Greene said. "We were telling the union leaders that this program would produce men and women with apprentice-level skills and an understanding of work responsibilities. We began the program with only a couple unions on board, but once the first graduates were successful, more unions signed on, and now we have them all."

## Union partners create opportunities

George Johnson, the program director, says eight other locals signed on as time passed. He says the program is currently negotiating with the bricklayers and pipefitters' unions. Having more unions as partners creates more opportunities.

"Once we started placing people in the trades, residents began asking about other unions as they entered the Pre-Apprenticeship program," Johnson said. "It gave us the opportunity to explore other areas. The residents are the foundation of the success of the program."

The program has expanded beyond construction. PHA graduates have found work at Boeing Helicopter, Aker Shipyard, Gamesa Windmill, PECO, PGW, and Green Energy Initiatives.

## A heavy investment

PHA invested heavily in the program. The agency opened a spacious, new training center at Greater Grays Ferry Estates to house it in September 2004.

The Work Force Development Center (as it's formally known) has every bell and whistle imaginable. The new facility expanded the scope of hands-on training with, for example, better power equipment for carpentry training and a computer lab for instruction. More recently, programs in welding, environmental safety, building maintenance and repair, and commercial driving were added. So was a video library on construction techniques.

"The training center you see today reflects the evolution of PHA," Greene said. "We have evolved into a company dependent on technology. We train students for 21st century jobs in a 21st century facility. That's the way it has to be for PHA and these graduates to compete."

Women have been a part of the program from the outset. Of the 552 graduates, Johnson said, 250 are women. In some classes, women outnumbered men. A number of women have achieved journeywoman status as carpenters, sheet metal workers, and electricians.



*Student carpenters have plenty of space to learn their craft in the new Work Force Development Center.*



# MOVING FORWARD

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS TRAINING PROGRAMS



### Administrative Assistant Job Readiness Program

Community College of Philadelphia  
1700 Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
215.496.6125

### Home Maintenance Repair Program

Orleans Technical Institute  
2770 Red Lion Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19114  
215.728.4725

### Personal & Financial Development

MET  
3801 Market Street Suite 2002  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
215.747.2781

### Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Medical Billing Pharmacy Technician

Professional Healthcare Institute  
1333 West Cheltenham Avenue  
Melrose Park, PA 19027  
215.782.8810

### Hospitality Training Programs

Opportunities Industrialization Corp. Inc.  
1231 N. Broad Street 4th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19132  
215.236.7700 x324

### Self-Employment Program

Enterprise Center  
4548 Market Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19139  
215.895.4078

### Commercial Drivers License Customer Service Training Environmental Services Training

New Wave Resources, Inc  
42 S. 15th Street, Suite 1600  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.496.9388

### Job Placement/Job Coaching

Educational Data Systems Inc.  
42 South 15th Street Suite 300  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.564.0015

To register, please contact your Economic Self-Sufficiency coordinator (see page 12). Tuition is free for PHA residents.



Philadelphia Housing Authority  
Building Beyond Expectations



## PHA residents express real pride in election of Barak Obama

The upcoming inauguration of Barak Obama as the 44th President of the United States will mark a historic moment that is personally touching the lives of many PHA residents.

Although most residents will not be able to attend the inauguration, they have strong opinions about Obama and his place in history.

Sadie Harvey, 76, was almost brought to tears when she heard that Obama would become President of the United States.

"I was born in North Carolina, a place where we couldn't eat at Woolworth's, or go to the bus station with whites. Obama being African American and coming from a humble background seems to understand what blacks, the middle class and poor people are going through."

On January 20th, President-elect Obama will become the first African American to hold this office. Most of the residents at Holmcrest Homes in the Northeast think Obama is the right person at the right time.

"Pushing that lever was a push for the future" says 72-year-old Jacqueline Lofton. She thought she would never live to see this nation elect an African American president. "This moment in history would have made my grandparents so proud. To see a competent, intelligent person of color President."



Jacqueline Lofton



Sadie Harvey



Walter Nicholson

### Negative thoughts about race pushed aside

When Jacqueline was growing up, she saw a lot of racism, "in the schools they would find a reason to hold you back. At work it's much the same. You don't get what you should and when you complain you are given a title that you're a bad person. It will take time, but old negative thoughts about race will slowly be pushed aside because of Obama."

"Unless you are Black, you have no idea what it means to see an African American elected President" says 76-year old Walter Nicholson. "So much discrimination and hatred has existed against us over the centuries. Even today we are viewed as incompetent — portrayed as second-class citizens in magazines, in the newspaper, in the movies and on television. In that voting booth I had to stand there for a minute and enjoy the reality that America only now realizes the leadership, intelligence and power of our people."

Walter enjoys living with other seniors, both black and white, at Holmcrest Homes. "We discuss many things and are not often on the same page. One thing we agree on is that President-elect Obama gives us, our children and grandchildren pride and hope for the future, a future even the rest of the world sees as a chance for America to save itself."

## Residents learn how to trim utility bills

Cassandra Houston has seen the light. She was among 71 residents who attended a PHA Energy Conservation Fairs held in November at the John F. Street Community Center.

The fairs are part of an ongoing effort by the agency to help residents become more energy efficient and save money, for themselves and PHA.

Houston, the mother of two, was pleasantly surprised that PECO and PGW would help residents learn how to read and better understand their bills. Houston said charges from both companies were putting her in a financial hole.

One of the first things Cassandra did after the fair was to install compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) throughout her six-bedroom Philadelphia home.



"Saving energy is more important than ever," Carolyn Carter told PHA residents at November's Energy Fair.

"They give you enough light in every area of your home," she said. Houston noticed about a \$40 difference in her bill after installing the new bulbs.

Cassandra said it has taken her more than a year to pay off gas bills to PGW that she ran up at a previous residence. The state's energy assistance program (LIHEAP) and PGW's Customer Responsibility Program (CRP) helped her climb out of the hole.

Residents were able to sign up for those programs and PECO's CAP Rate program at the fair.

"Saving energy is more important than ever, as utility costs spiral and we operate with reduced funding," said Carolyn Carter, PHA's Assistant Executive Director for Operations. "In addition, we are preparing for the end of rate caps in 2010, which will dramatically increase utility costs."

Shirley Cesar of Southwest Philadelphia said she came to the fair to deal with her ballooning gas bills, which sometimes reached \$500 a month. My gas bill was so big I couldn't afford it," she said. "I was doing my best with it, but it was too much for me."

Cesar learned how to use plastic bags at the foot of her doors to keep the cold air out. She said it's too early to notice changes in her bill, but she's anticipating some savings. For Cesar and other residents like her, that's money in the bank they can use for other things.

### A message from the Executive Director



The start of a new year is always a time to look ahead with hope, and for PHA and its customers there is good reason for optimism.

We have a new president coming into office, and all signs indicate he has the intellect and energy to take on the nation's daunting problems. Barack Obama's record and his statements indicate he understands the affordable housing crisis that our nation faces and that he intends to aggressively address the issue.

**"One very important area where we can all play a role is in energy conservation."**

The point that I want to emphasize is that no one, not even a president for whom most have high expectations, can make enormous changes without our help. If we want to maintain and increase the availability of quality affordable housing, we have to contribute by acting responsibly.

One very important area where we can all play a role is in energy conservation. A tremendous portion of PHA's budget is devoted to utility

bills - gas, electric and water. For its part, PHA has made physical changes in our properties such as using only compact fluorescent light bulbs and toilets that use less water. But we can't change people's habits. It's up to you to turn the lights off when you leave a room or turn the thermostat down before you leave the house. You will hear more about our conservation efforts in the months to come.

Another area where we can do better is in the care of our properties. If you see a neighbor damaging property or throwing trash on the ground, let them know that's not the way we want to treat our communities. PHA doesn't have

as large a staff as we did just two years ago. We depend on residents more than ever to keep PHA neighborhoods strong.

I wish you all the best in 2009.

Thank you,

Carl R. Greene



## What is your New Year's resolution?



### Anthony Bradshaw

- Abbottsford Homes  
"Lose at least 100 pounds."



### Beneather Ealy

- Abbottsford Homes  
"To work at seeing my daughter soon. We have been apart too long. It is time we work at being a family."



### Norreen Jones

- Abbottsford Homes  
"Our community, all communities need help. Society has lost its way. I want to help bring it back together."



### Valarie Matthews

- Abbottsford Homes  
"For the upcoming year I want to change my environment. The goal is to place myself in a position to make my life and that of my family better."



### Tamie Miller

- Abbottsford Homes  
"My goal is to make it to another year. I need to keep my health and finances in check. Need to cut back on my heating bill to save energy."



### Pedro Rodriguez

- Abbottsford Homes  
"Save money by cutting back on electricity, heat and driving less."



### Tania Rogers

- Abbottsford Homes  
"To help make my environment a better place. Hopefully the new president will inspire a new attitude."

[www.PHA.PHILA.gov](http://www.PHA.PHILA.gov)

## Neighborhood Network Computer Labs

There are four Neighborhood Network Computer Labs offering eight-week computer classes on an ongoing basis.

These classes cover basic computer concepts in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. **SIGN-UP TODAY!**

### Classes Locations:

**Bartram Village** - Thursdays 10:00am - 11:30am  
5405 Gibson Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19143

**Blumberg Apartments** - Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00pm - 3:30pm  
2311 W. Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

**Hillcreek** - Wednesdays 10:00am - 11:30am  
5573 Hillcreek Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19120

**Johnson Homes** - Thursdays 10:00am - 11:30am  
25th & Norris streets, Philadelphia, PA 19122

**Spring Garden** - Mondays & Wednesdays 1:00pm - 2:30pm  
715 Brandywine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

**Westpark** - Mondays & Wednesdays 3:30pm - 5:00pm  
300 N. Busti Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

**White Hall** - Tuesdays & Wednesdays 10:00am - 11:30am  
4749 Tackawanna Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124

**Wilson Park** - Thursdays 9:00am - 11:00am  
2500 Jackson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19145

### Computer Labs Also Available At:

**Harrison Plaza** - 1240 N. 10th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122

**John F Street Center** - 1100 Poplar Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

**Norris Apartments** - 1915 N 11th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122

**Workforce Center** - 3200 Vare Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19145

## To Sign-Up Please Contact:

The Neighborhood Network  
Coordinator at **215-684-4628**



**Philadelphia Housing Authority**  
Building Beyond Expectations



## Voucher resident publishes poetry collection

2006 was not a great year for Rosetta Cousin.

“I was wore out from my job, I was robbed waiting for the bus, and I was having problems with someone at my job,” Rosetta, a Housing Choice Voucher recipient, recalls.

Most people would just whine or complain, but Rosetta took her pain and began writing poetry. On January 3, her first book of poems, *I Cry, You Cry*, was published by Publish America. The book contains about 50 of Rosetta’s poems – only a small portion of the poetry she has been collecting in a large book at home.

“They are sad,” she admits. “They talk about my life, my relationships with men. I overcame a lot of stuff.”

Rosetta has five children, ages six to

11, and she says they were her first inspiration. She wrote a poem one night at her kitchen table and shortly after saw an online poetry contest. She entered the poem and was surprised to get a positive response.

“They liked my poem. And ever since then, I’ve started writing poetry.” She says that writing the poems helps her manage her life.

“I’m a quiet shy, person. My poetry is like my best friend. I can just write whatever is one my mind.”

Last year, she took a class in medical billing through one of PHA’s community partners, Professional

Healthcare Institute.

“There was a girl in my glass who told me about an older lady who wrote poems. She told me about this publishing



Rosetta Cousin turns tears into poems.

company that didn’t charge you a fee.”

Rosetta went online to Publish America’s site and submitted her poems.

“They said it was good, and I went into a contract with them. We designed the cover of my book, and I’m working with them now trying to get my book into bookstores.”

After submitting her poetry online, Rosetta says that she was approached by several other publishers who

offered her packages she could buy to publish her poems. Publish America, however, did not charge her a fee.

“Once your book starts selling, they get a percentage,” she notes. She has enough poems in her big book at home to publish a second volume, but she says the publisher suggested that she wait a few months.

*I Cry, You Cry* can be ordered from the publisher’s web site, [www.publishamerica.com](http://www.publishamerica.com).

### LOVE ME

You say you love me  
But I find it hard to believe  
Yeah you love me alright  
Got me swinging in the trees  
Then maybe way down deep  
You really love me  
Or

You’re just trying to please me

From *I Cry, You Cry*, published with permission of the author.

## Voucher helps former sailor find her land legs

Rashida Childs thought she’d “join the Navy and see the world.” Instead, she spent most of four years on a ship parked off the Iraqi shore. After her discharge, she reunited with her daughter and, with help from the VA, began attending college fulltime. But the single mom could not afford to rent an apartment – until she learned about PHA’s new program with the VA to provide vouchers for 105 homeless vets in Philadelphia.

“This voucher is wonderful,” said Rashida, who received the voucher with five other vets at a special ceremony on Veterans Day. “I tried to find housing on my own, but it wasn’t possible. I’m not working because I’m trying to stick to school right now.”

“This is a blessing. PHA is there to help you get on your feet. But it is not someplace to stay forever,” she added.

Rashida is studying business administration at the University of Phoenix in Center City. Her dream is to open a multi-ethnic hair salon and spa.

“You know, every neighborhood has



Rashida Childs, shown with Carl Greene, received her Housing Choice Voucher at a ceremony on Veterans Day.

its own ethnic hair salons. I’d like to have one place that services everyone. I’d like to offer spa services and have a restaurant to serve healthy food,” she said.

At 17, Rashida saw enlisting in the Navy as a way to advance herself, and, in some ways, it did. “When I went in, I was timid, shy and quiet.

Now I have a voice,” she said.

But from the outset, it was not what she expected. The recruiter, also a single mom, told Rashida that after she finished her basic training, she could have her three-year old daughter with her at her first location. But when she arrived at Norfolk, Va. after training, she was

told she was going to sea in 15 days, and she could not have a child on a ship.

For the next four years, she was only able to see her daughter on leaves and holidays. Her mother cared for the child, now 7 years old.

“I’ve been through a lot,” Rashida said. She described ship life as “a big high school.” There was no privacy. “You are with your shipmates 24/7. There was no individuality – you’re a sailor and that is what you are.”

Rashida also opposes the war; an unpopular opinion if you are serving in the military. She suffered from depression while at sea, which hindered her advancement. Her final rank was petty officer.

Now, voucher in hand, she is looking for an apartment for herself and her two daughters. She now has a five-month old baby.

“I’ve been through a lot, but this is a new beginning. You can overcome these difficulties, and it makes you stronger as a person.”

## Landlord enjoys “people business”

Earle Greer says he’s been interested in real estate for as long as he can remember, but his path into the industry and the Housing Choice Voucher program might surprise you.

After receiving a bachelor’s degree in economics from East Stroudsburg University, Earle worked as a salesman for the Coca Cola Bottling Company for 20 years. During that period, he began buying properties and finally decided to become his own boss and go into real estate full time.

Greer, who owns and operates Spring Valley Real Estate Development, says his company manages 65 properties in the city and leases to a mix of PHA residents and private residents. He has taken part in the HCV program since the mid-1990’s.

“The business has its ups and downs, but I enjoy it. It’s a people business,” he says. “The most challenging part is trying to keep as many people happy as possible.”

Greer, 46, says two things attracted him to PHA’s Housing Choice Voucher program: residents who are responsible in meeting their obligations and the agency’s timely payments of rent each month.

“I encourage people (other landlords) to get involved,” he says. “With the HCV program, you get the bulk of your rent on time. I find that residents involved with the program for the most part handle their responsibilities. Most people want to keep their voucher.”

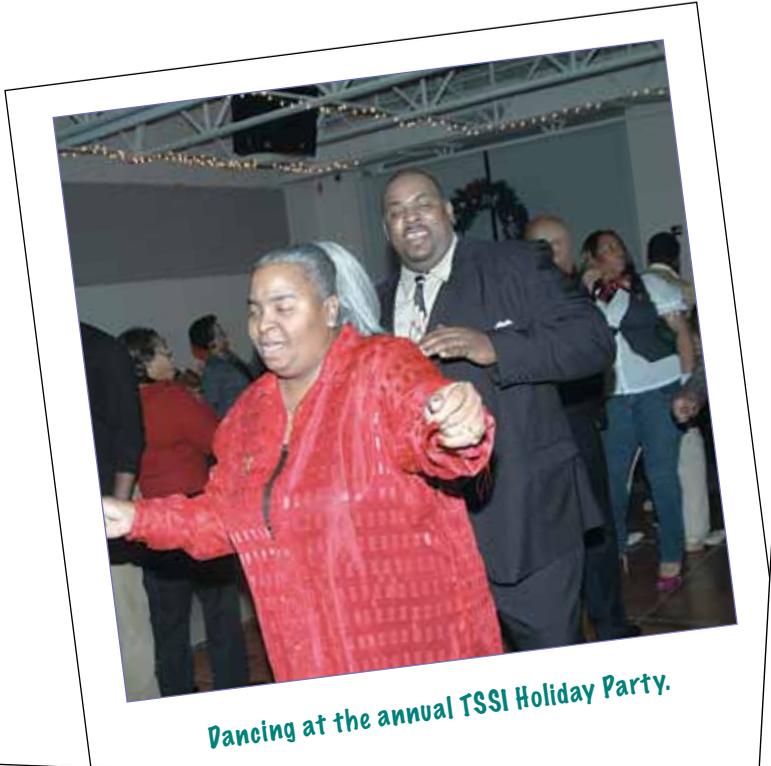
Greer believes the agency’s inspection process is helpful, saying it keeps his properties in good, working condition, while improving their value. For him, it’s another benefit for his business as well as PHA residents.

**You can contact Greer at: 215-868-0481.**



# We captured the holiday

*The holidays are gone but not forgotten. We captured many of*



*Dancing at the annual TSSI Holiday Party.*



*Commissioner Nellie Reynolds enjoying the TSSI Holiday Party.*



*PHA's Carolyn Carter (far left) and TSSI's Asia Coney (far right) join Toys for Tots sponsors, Nellie Reynolds and Santa.*



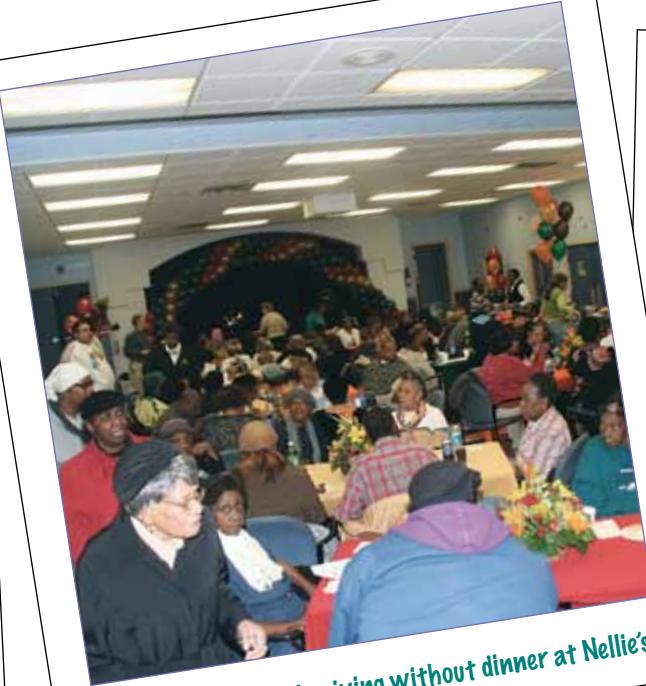
*Tree lighting at Holmcrest Homes.*

# spirit at PHA developments!

*PHA's fun-filled events in photos. How many do you remember?*



Enjoying a great party dinner.



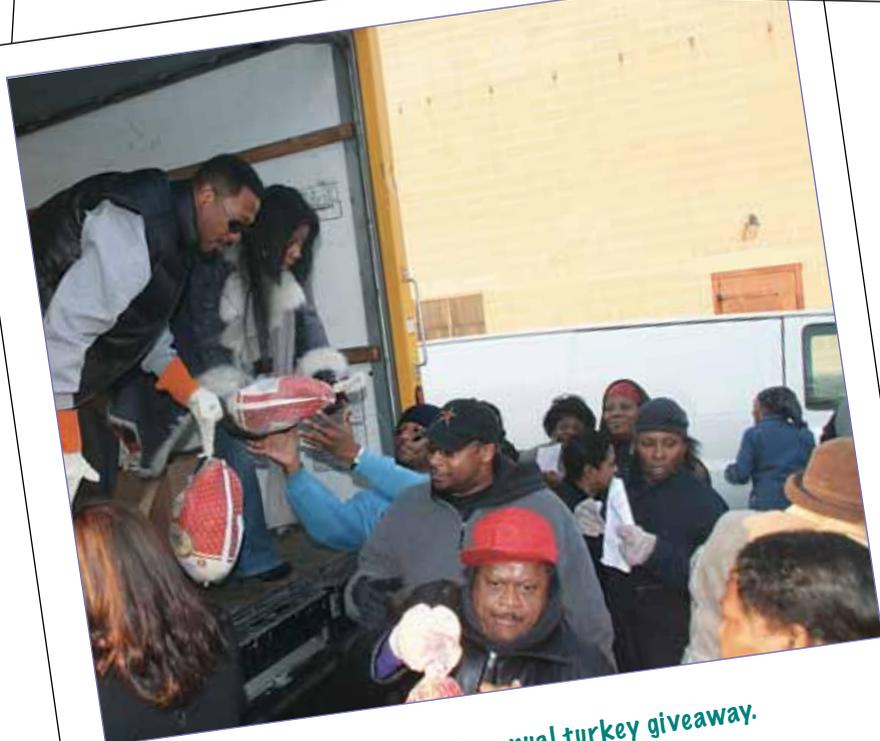
It wouldn't be Thanksgiving without dinner at Nellie's.



The holiday party raised money so that children, like this one on Santa's lap, could receive toys for Christmas.



Tree lighting at Suffolk Manor.



TSSI sponsored their annual turkey giveaway.



## PHA MTE Family Services Program

# Homebuyers Club Workshops

### WORKSHOP 1

*Sponsored by Citizen's Bank*

#### **Strawbridge Building**

8<sup>th</sup> & Market sts. 13<sup>th</sup> Floor

Community Area, 19123

**Wednesday, February 11 &**

**Wednesday, March 11**

**from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

First Time Homeownership Orientation

Budgeting & Money Management

**Wednesday, February 18 &**

**Wednesday, March 18**

**from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Credit Repair / Home Inspection

### WORKSHOP 2

*Sponsored by Wachovia Mortgage Corp.*

#### **John F. Street Center**

1100 W Poplar St., 19123

**Saturday, February 21 &**

**Saturday, March 14**

**from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

First Time Homeownership Orientation

Budgeting & Money Management

**Saturday, February 28 &**

**Saturday, March 21**

**from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Credit Repair / Home Inspection

To register call Mr. Gilbert Vega at 215.684.2057 or Ms. Barbara Stewart at 215.684.3124.

**Please plan to attend both sessions when registering.**



### WORKSHOPS DESCRIPTION

#### **First Time Homeownership Orientation**

Learn how to use your Housing Voucher (Section 8) to purchase a home.

#### **Budgeting & Money Management**

Learn how to define income and expenses.

#### **Credit Repair / Home Inspection**

Learn how to establish, maintain and repair credit, and tips on how to pass home inspection.



Philadelphia Housing Authority  
Building Beyond Expectations



# PHA resident Juwanne Polite says YES to opportunity

Juwanna Polite dropped out of Strawberry Mansion High School last February. She was in the 11th grade and very unhappy.

“The environment wasn’t for me. There were too many people in the classes. I couldn’t focus,” she says. “There was too much commotion. Safety was an issue.”

But while one door was closing, another was about to open. Juwanne’s mother learned about Youth Environment

Services (YES), a program that reaches out to school dropouts with unique programs and subject matter.

YES is funded by the city’s Department of Human Services and

the Philadelphia Youth Network. The agency helps students get their GED and develop job and social skills. YES gets dropouts back on track by teaching subjects that are meaningful to teens, such as music recording and computer programs like Photoshop.

“It’s building on that capacity that they have and the interest that they have, so that they have a satisfying, creative, growthful experience,” says educator Taylor Frome, founder of

the YES program.

Through YES, Juwanne, who lives at Johnson Homes with her family, has developed her artistic talent. She has worked on canvas and talks excitedly

about a mural she worked on at Hartranft School in North Philadelphia.

“When I first came here (to YES), I was really irritated and had a bad attitude problem,” she says. “I changed that. In the classes, I’m learning how to draw.”

Juwanna, who’s now 18, adds she has received more than just an education at YES.

“I’ve learned how to control my anger, how to focus more in classes, and to get along with new people,” she says.

Frome says the program gives students emotional as well as physical safety. She says emotional abuse that kids face is often the greatest obstacle to their success. The YES program builds on interests and skills that students already possess while helping to restore their self-esteem.



Juwanna Polite is developing her artistic talent and earning her GED at the YES program.

Juwanna thinks she’ll get her GED by next summer. From there, she’d like to become a Licensed Practical Nurse or study for a real estate license.

For more information on the YES program, contact Keith Donaldson at 215-769-0340 ext. 235. The program is located at 1231 N. Broad Street.

# Skills for Life helps teens reach academic potential

Najah Harris, a freshman at the Arts Academy at Benjamin Rush, has always had high hopes for her future. Those hopes have been boosted by her involvement with PHA’s Skills for Life program at the Lighthouse Youth Services site. “My older sister was a part of it and she told me about it,” Najah explains.

A budding theatre major, Najah has benefited from the educational field trips. “They take us to places like Temple University—I found out that they have a good theatre department.” She learned about the relationship between immigrants and government

finance on a trip to Harrisburg to participate in a protest.

Najah praises counselor Ariel Arnau, saying, “he helps a lot...we’re reading short stories and he taught me how to do citations.” Writing and literature have been a core part

of the program for Najah. “Last year we worked on a magazine, and we’re continuing it this year. We presented our magazine at the convention center and won second place.”

The Skills for Life program encourages students to reach their potential at one of the most critical periods of development. Students enter the program at the age of 14, improving and developing their skills throughout their high school years. Skills for Life

“It’s changed my direction in life.”

Jamal Byrd



Jamal Byrd

has ten sites where trained counselors offer students tutoring, workshops, and practical advice for continued success after graduation. Students receive a stipend and a SEPTA Transpass to attend the program every day after school. Daily attendance is required, which gives some students pause.

Jamal Byrd, remembers being hesitant to start Skills for Life, but now he admits, “as time moved on it really started to help me out and I started to like it.”

Jamal started the program as a sophomore at Paul Robeson High School for Human Services. Over a year later, Jamal says, “it’s changed my direction in life, I’ve met new friends, and my grades have improved.” Now a junior, Jamal’s goals were inspired by a Skills for Life guest speaker. “When I graduate high school I plan on going to college and taking up a career in law or business,” he says.

When Jamal’s grades started to slip, he says, “Skills for Life taught me a lot of things about how to get them back up.”

“Right now we’re working on reading a novel” Jamal explains, “we apply it to real life situations and write a book report about it. We do a lot of projects and we take trips too.”

For students like Jamal, Skills for Life is a community of support. Jamal says, “We talk about things, and anything we need help with. They’re there for us.”

## Prison Runs

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## Help Sherry get her dream



Housing Choice Voucher resident Sherry Tucker still needs your support to compete in the reality show “Hustle for Your Dreams.” Sherry is competing for \$1 million in prize money on the show, expected to air in November. Sign on as a friend to her MySpace page at HFYDPA90758 and give her more status on the show.

### WHAT’S YOUR STORY?

Have you become a new homeowner? Started your own business? Graduated from college or a professional training program?

The PHA Experience would like to share your story with our readers. To get your story into the Experience, call Nadine Bonner at 215-684-8645 or send an email to [nadine.bonner@pha.phila.gov](mailto:nadine.bonner@pha.phila.gov)



Najah Harris



## Ten musicians and singers who lived in public housing



**Luther Vandross**  
Alfred E. Smith housing,  
New York, NY



**George Harrison**  
Liverpool, England



**Marvin Gaye**  
Washington, DC



**Elvis Presley**  
Memphis, TN



**Thelonius Monk**  
Amsterdam Houses,  
New York, NY



**Lady Sovereign**  
Chalkhill Estates,  
London, England



**Jaheim Hoagland**  
Memorial Parkway Homes,  
New Brunswick, NJ



**Bootsy Barnes**  
Richard Allen  
Philadelphia, PA



**Frankie Valli**  
Stephen Crane Village,  
Newark, NJ



**Flo Ballard**  
Brewster-Douglas Housing,  
Detroit, MI

## PHA Self-Sufficiency Contacts

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Computer Technology Coordinator  
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**Barbara Stewart**  
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**Gilbert Vega**  
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**Audrey Hickmon**  
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**Team C**  
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**Team D**  
**North Philadelphia Office**  
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**Team E**  
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ESS Coordinator  
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Zip Codes: 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 24, 35, 36, 37, 49, 52, 54

# Vacancy reduction program gets boost from Pre-Apprenticeship grads

PHA properties are in demand. To make homes ready for move-in faster, the Vacancy Reduction Program was started to complete repairs and inspections on empty apartments. Graduates of PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program have been drafted to work on the vacant properties, which is a win-win for the students and the agency.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Program has helped Douglas Freedman advance in a career he enjoys, and in return, he helps rehab properties for PHA residents. "I love working with my hands and being able to keep moving," Freedman said.

Six years ago, Freedman was sitting at a tenant meeting with his Mom when "they started talking about this apprenticeship program, and it woke me right up," he recalls. "I was actually unemployed at the time. This was right up my alley." Freedman graduated from the program and joined the Carpenters Union in 2002.

Contemplating a bright future, Freedman said, "My number one goal is getting into real estate—I'm going to take what they've given me and use it."

Gary James, a 2003 graduate, took advantage of his chance to make a difference. "I chose carpentry thinking that when I buy my own house I want to know how to fix it up from head to toe," James recalls.

James is now employed at a PHA vacancy reduction site. The Pre-Apprenticeship program, "gives you experience, higher expectations, and teaches you so much," said James.

At work, James says, "we do whatever we have to do to get the unit up and running again and get people to move in." His ambitions for the future are, "to learn everything I can about carpentry, and eventually get my own company."

PHA residents are happy to see

Katrina Garfield when she comes to do repairs. Graduating from PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program in 2004, Garfield is now a fourth year carpentry apprentice working at PHA's senior buildings.

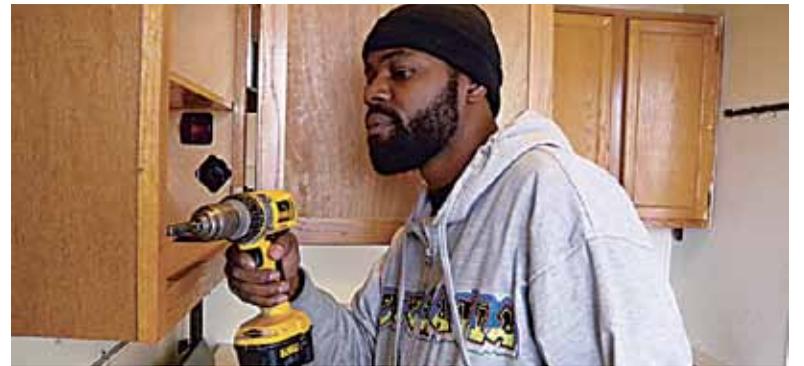
"Mainly I look forward to helping the elderly," Garfield noted. "I used to hear about contractors that scam people...and it really burned me up. I wanted to make a difference." And that's exactly what she does.

Previously employed as a financial counselor, Garfield found her true calling through the Pre-Apprenticeship program. "I like to start from scratch and build something new," she said. "Seeing the finished product is a great accomplishment."

Thanks to PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship program, Garfield said, "I've been able to increase my income, pick up more skills, and work on my own house without hiring someone else."

As for the future, "I see myself owning my own business, union bound of course," Garfield adds, "I love helping other people who started out just like me."

**The Pre-Apprenticeship program, "gives you experience, higher expectations, and teaches you so much." Gary James**



Doug Freedman repairs kitchen cabinets in PHA's Queen Lane apartments.



Gary James renovates a bathroom in a PHA property on 59th St.



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A PHA COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM

**The PHA Pre-Apprenticeship Program, is now accepting applicants for its 21<sup>st</sup> cycle beginning in January.**

**Classes are free, but only PHA residents are eligible.**

Interested applicants can apply in person Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At the PHA Workforce Dev. Center, 1905 Vare Avenue, 19145.

**For more information, please call George Johnson at 215-684-8049.**





## Pick the Specter building contest

### Winner will meet the Senator

As Pennsylvania's senator for almost 30 years, Arlen Specter has been a good friend to public housing. Most recently he, along with junior colleague Bob Casey, worked tirelessly to help PHA and HUD resolve their differences so PHA could remain in the Moving to Work program.

Now PHA would like to honor Senator Specter by naming a

building after him. And we're asking you to help us chose which building. Tell us in 50 words or less which PHA building you think should be named after Senator Specter and why. The winner will shake hands with the Senator personally at the building's dedication.

Mail entries to Caitlin Garrity, 12 S. 23rd St, 6th floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103 or send an email to: [caitlin.garrity@pha.phila.gov](mailto:caitlin.garrity@pha.phila.gov).



Senator Arlen Specter

## Philadelphia Housing Authority SENIOR CALENDAR

### JANUARY - WINTER HEALTH CARNIVAL MONTH

- 16th** Winter Health Carnival  
*Suffolk Manor (1416 Clearview Street) – 10:00 a.m. to noon*
- 30th** Winter Health Carnival & Super Bowl Party  
*Holmcrest (8533 Erdrick Street) – 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.*

### FEBRUARY - NATIONAL HEART MONTH

- 4th** Senior Advisory Board Quarterly Meeting  
*Wilson Park (2500 Jackson Street) – 10 a.m. to noon*
- 13th** Red Dress Tea - Honor of National Heart Month  
*Germantown House (5457 Wayne Avenue) – 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.*  
*Liddonfield Older Adult Center (8800 Jackson Drive) – noon to 2:00 p.m.*  
*Wilson Park Older Adult Center (2508 Jackson Street) – 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.*
- 20th** The Annual Wilson Park Senior Choir Black History Community Concert  
*Wilson Park Resident Council (2508 Jackson Street) – 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.*

### MARCH - WOMEN'S MONTH

- 6th** Women's Health Workshop  
*Wilson Park Community Center (2500 Jackson Street) – 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.*  
Call 215.684.1183 or 215.684.1194
- 20th** Caregivers Workshops  
*Wilson Park Community Center (2500 Jackson Street) – 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.*
- PHA's Senior American Idol Contest Try-outs\*  
*Location to be determined – 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.*

All events dates are subject to change. Look for flyers and reminders of all events on bulletin boards and in your mail.

### \* Do you have talent as a singer, dancer or comedian?

Then sign-up now for the PHA's Senior American Idol Contest! **Deadline for sign-up is Feb 28.** Try-outs will be held in March, and the contest will be held in April.



## Katrina Survivors in Philly

*continued from page 1*

### One hurricane was enough

Fast forward to Thanksgiving 2008 – the Washingtons closed on the classic West Philly rowhome they had been renting with their Housing Choice Voucher since arriving in Philadelphia. They had completed PHA's Homeownership Program, which enables residents to use their voucher toward mortgage payments for up to 15 years.

Annie Washington said one hurricane was enough for her. She's originally from Philadelphia, as is Richard, and they plan to stay in their new home for a long time.

"We've just been blessed," Annie said. "Through the experience with PHA and the process they took us through, I learned even more than about buying a

house. It sharpened my skills on saving"

Annie says homeownership training taught her how to save and plan. The couple is building up a reserve to cover any emergencies that may arise at their new home.

The Washingtons are busy with home improvements. Richard is putting down a new hardwood floor in the living room and dining room. He plans to take down a wall to expand the size of the kitchen, repaint it, and install new floor tiling. Eventually, the Washingtons want to finish their basement and make it into a family room.

Annie says the investment in time and money that she and her husband make will be worth it. And yes, she'd encourage other Housing Choice recipients to take advantage of the homeownership program, work hard and change their lives, too.



Hurricane Katrina destroyed the Washington's old neighborhood in New Orleans.

## Nellie Reynolds Garden

*continued from page 1*

our role as custodians of the environment," Greene said.

Others on hand to pay tribute to both the building and the woman for whom it is named included City Council members Darrell Clarke and Jannie Blackwell, District Attorney Lynne Abraham, former mayor John Street and keynote speaker Steve Preston, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.



Earline Pankey

Nellie Reynolds Gardens becomes the third PHA senior building to offer both public housing and enhanced services in the same building. (The other two are Germantown House and the

Pratt building at Greater Grays Ferry Estates.)

The building's name is a natural. Nellie Reynolds managed a community garden on the land for many years. When PHA decided to build the new facility on the site, the agency named the building as a tribute to Reynolds' 40 years of leadership in the movement for public housing residents' rights and responsibilities.

Earline Pankey said the day belonged to Ms. Reynolds. "This building is a good tribute to Nellie Reynolds because everything she has tried to do, she has done. And she always thinks about the seniors; the senior citizens are important to her and that's what makes this building our home."

# PHA and Bartram's Garden talk about reconnecting

Two historic sites in Southwest Philadelphia that are separated by a cavernous railroad line may be reconnected, just as they were years ago.

PHA's Bartram Village is actually linked to Bartram's Garden by a footbridge that has long been closed. But PHA and Garden

officials have begun talking about replacing and reopening the bridge. It's part of a larger plan by America's oldest botanic garden to expand and improve the visitor center at the site and to create more natural walking paths.

Few residents of Bartram Village

probably know that their homes were once part of Bartram's Garden before the land was developed for public housing during World War II.

Louise Turan, Bartram's Garden Executive Director, has been working to improve the Garden's relationship with PHA and its residents. She says residents face a hazard when going to the trolley stop because they have to cross the driveways for both the Village and the Garden. So, another goal is to move the trolley stop to a safer location; maybe in front of the Village.

"Children and families come on the weekends, and they have picnics on the grounds," she says. "In addition to the historic part of the site, we also have open public park land and recreation areas."

PHA architect Michael Johns says the idea of reconnecting these locations excites him.

"Every time I've gone to Bartram Village I've had the feeling that few people knew that this wonderful garden was behind the site. This is



In July, PHA was one of the sponsors of the 5th Annual Community Day at Bartram's Garden that featured crafts for children and an outdoor barbecue. Three children shown here are taking part in a leaf printing exercise.

a great opportunity to make a great asset a part of the community," he says.

Johns also says that Bartram's Garden hopes to make a better connection to Bartram Village by developing a greenway and landscape areas.

In July, PHA was one of the sponsors of the 5th Annual Community Day at Bartram's Garden that featured crafts for children and an outdoor barbecue. Turan says they want to encourage visitors to grow their own garden in addition to learning more about nature each time they visit.



PHA's Bartram Village is actually linked to Bartram's Garden by a footbridge over a cavernous railroad line. The bridge has long been closed.

## New MTW agreement cheered

*continued from page 1*

"The ten-year agreement is really awesome," said Carolyn Warren of Herbert Arlene Homes. "It's really an excellent thing."

Warren agreed with Bryant that helping residents achieve self-sufficiency is an important MTW benefit.

Corliss Gray of Queen Lane pointed out that Moving to Work has enabled PHA to improve the quality of its construction. "Moving to Work has done a lot for the City and the developments," Gray said. "We're the best-looking things in town."

She added that the program has also helped many residents become homeowners and move out of public housing. "If we didn't have MTW, that wouldn't be possible."

You would think that such a great program would have been automatically continued, but it wasn't that easy.

When it came time to renew the original plan, HUD insisted on making changes. PHA fiercely objected to a provision called "asset management," which, in effect, says each public housing site must make a profit.

Next, HUD declared that PHA did not provide enough wheel-chair accessible housing. PHA filed suit over this finding, saying HUD was using the accessibility issue as an excuse to punish PHA. Executive Director Greene had refused to give land at the Martin Luther King site to a private developer favored by HUD Secretary Jackson.

Jackson resigned under investigation in April, and the new HUD secretary, Steve Preston, was determined to resolve the problem.

"Reaching this agreement took much longer than it should have, but under the circumstances we had to take the actions that we did. We were not going to be strong-armed into giving away public land or agreeing to rules designed to put public housing out of business," said Greene.

For Rose Bryant, this was a team effort and the better team won.

"When you all work together for one common goal, you can't do anything but win," she said.



PHA Executive Director Carl Greene signs the new Moving to Work agreement while Assistant Executive Directors Dianne Rosenthal (left) and Carolyn Carter (right) look on.

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