

The PHA Experience



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

Issue 25

A Community Newspaper for and About Residents

May 2011

New PHA Board up and running

On March 4, the PHA Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution to turn over control of the housing authority to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for at least one year. The agreement was made between the PHA Board, Mayor Michael Nutter, City Controller Alan Butkovitz, and HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims.

“This is a necessary step in PHA’s recovery,” said Deputy Secretary Sims. “We’re putting the residents and their best interests first. HUD will be working in partnership with PHA to restore confidence and faith in the agency.”

HUD appointed Michael P. Kelly, who has served as PHA Interim Executive Director since December 6, to a new post as Administrative Receiver. He will continue to lead PHA and oversee its day-to-day operations.

Estelle Richman, HUD Chief Operating Officer, took over the responsibilities of the board. Her previous positions include Pennsylvania Secretary of Public Welfare and Managing Director for the City of Philadelphia.



HUD Chief Operating Officer Estelle Richman was appointed to serve as the new PHA Board. Ms. Richman and PHA Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly are pictured at a PHA Board meeting.

Mr. Kelly and Ms. Richman are working together to develop and implement a transition plan designed to eventually restore PHA to local control and management.

HUD and PHA assured residents that they will have a voice in PHA operations and the

development of new policies. Mr. Kelly and Ms. Richman continue to hold Pre-Board meetings with resident leadership so they can discuss resolutions before the formal Board meetings.

In addition, long-time resident activist and former Commissioner Nellie Reynolds

continues her work on behalf of residents by serving as resident liaison to the new board.

The new board meeting format is more open and informative. A brief explanation of each resolution is given and a question and answer session held before Ms. Richman votes on whether or not to adopt the resolution.

During her first Pre-Board meeting, Ms. Richman provided resident leaders with an overview of her background and her objectives for the next year. “My first concern is for PHA residents. My goal is to listen and to understand; to know your issues,” said Ms. Richman. “I want to keep conversations going with an emphasis on listening. But at the same time, I’m focused on moving to the future and making PHA strong, not looking back to the past.”

“We’ve gone through a lot of changes in the last few months, but I want residents to know that we’re listening to their concerns and that we’re being responsive,” echoed Mr. Kelly.

Rosen resident shifts gears, finds a new career

For 32-year-old Eric Coleman, finding a job that paid enough to support his family was like trying to go “up” on a “down” escalator. The father of four children had a good job with a well-known waste management company and was making pretty good money when he was laid off in 2005.

Over the next five years, Coleman really had to scramble to get enough money to put food on the table and pay his rent to PHA. He worked a variety of odd jobs, but “it wasn’t career money”—just enough to get by. At the time of the layoff, he had to file for welfare benefits because his wife was expecting their fourth child. It was hardly what Eric had in mind for his family.

“I bumped around for a few jobs, but there were no career jobs,” he said. “There are jobs and then there are careers.”



Eric Coleman received his CDL through a PHA Community Partners Program. He now works for Coca Cola as a driver. The Coleman family is working towards getting their own home.

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PHA meets with residents about proposed changes to the lease

In April, PHA held several resident meetings at various sites to discuss proposed changes to the public housing lease. PHA managers and staff presented the suggested policies to those in attendance and encouraged them to submit any comments or concerns to PHA or the Resident Advisory Board.

The public housing lease was last revised in 1992. PHA wants to update the agreement to reflect the current market. The proposed changes would not affect voucher recipients or residents who live at tax-credit sites, which are managed by PAPMC and have different leases.

One of the new proposed policies covers late fees and nonpayment of rent. The change is designed to encourage residents to pay their rent on time.



Residents asked questions during a meeting to discuss proposed changes to the public housing lease that would affect rent, tenant obligations, termination of lease and surrender of premises if approved.

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215.684.0393

or see your manager



PHA to replace Norris high-rise with green development

On March 25, PHA began demolishing the Norris Apartments high-rise and several adjacent low-rises by wrecking ball. The event marked the first time PHA has used the lower cost conventional demolition rather than implosion to take down one of its old high-rises. PHA's recently appointed Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly led the countdown to the first ceremonial wrecking ball hit into the main building.

PHA demolished Norris Apartments, which dated back to the early 1950s, because they were inefficient and did not meet today's building standards.



PHA will replace the development near Temple University, which dated back to the early 1950s, with the agency's first-ever LEED certified development.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) is an environmentally oriented building certification program. LEED standards are nationally accepted for the design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings.

Michael Johns, PHA's General Manager of Design and Community Development, said the Norris high-rise was in physically poor condition with antiquated physical and mechanical systems. He also said the interior design of the high-rise did not lend itself to today's building standards.

The density of the new Norris will be much lower. The agency will demolish 179 units, most of them in

the high-rise, and replace them with 51 low-rise units in a mix of walkups and townhomes. The design resembles PHA's Mantua Square development in West Philadelphia. It includes a small pocket park in the center courtyard that will provide residents with green space while limiting rainwater runoff into the city sewer system.

The new homes will also have solar hot water panels on the roof, Energy Star windows, equipment and appliances, low flow plumbing fixtures, compact fluorescent light (CFL) fixtures, and native landscaping. The design of the new development also uses cross ventilation.

Johns believes that PHA will save at least 20 percent in energy costs at the new homes because LEED standards are so high. Those standards also require the agency to buy locally made materials as much as possible. This reduces PHA's "carbon footprint" by

reducing the amount of energy needed to transport building materials to the site.

"The LEED label shows that we're eco-friendly developers at the forefront of green design and that we spend the taxpayer's money wisely," he said. "We're taking time to make sure that we're buying [products] locally. We're taking time to make sure that we reuse materials on site to save money."

The new Norris also fits in with building plans by Temple University for its campus and the surrounding neighborhood.

"This is a plan that is forward looking. PHA is maintaining established affordable housing in a neighborhood that is on the rise," Johns said.

Construction of the new homes began this April with completion expected in April 2012.

Former Norris residents react to demolition

Several former residents of Norris Apartments came to the demolition to say goodbye to the place they once called home. While they reminisced about the good old days, they also looked to the future. Many left with some of the bricks knocked down from the first swing of the wrecking ball as a souvenir. Here are some of their reactions.

Ronald Armour

We've seen a lot of development in the area. I've lived here since 1943. Norris was built in 1952 and people started moving in in 1953. Four generations of families lived in Norris. We're the last historical folks.

The demolition is a historical moment. Being here today brings back so many memories. We welcome growth and change and development. I hope former tenants have an opportunity to come back.

Dorothy Chambers

I wanted to cry a little when the wrecking ball first hit the bricks.

My family moved to Norris in 1953. The new building then was beautiful. We were all one big happy family—we still hold reunions every year. I drive by and people are sitting on the steps and know who we are. It was a loving environment—everyone was very respectful. The housing authority provided for us and there were places for children to play.

I attended the community meetings PHA held to inform residents and neighbors of the plan to revitalize Norris. I think it's wonderful. My sister wants to apply for the new houses—she'd like to have the same address we had when we were growing up. But I will come by to see whatever they replace Norris with.



PHA Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly meets former Norris residents at the demolition held on March 25.

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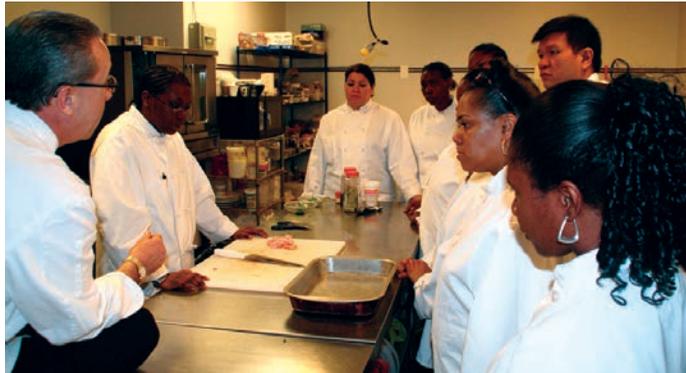
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● **Job Placement/Job Coaching and Career Advancement**

Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI)
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Philadelphia, PA 19110

● **Self-Employment Program/Entrepreneurship**

Enterprise Center
4548 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139

● **Human Services**

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Philadelphia, PA 19104

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Philadelphia OIC, Inc.
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Philadelphia, PA 19122

● **Call Center Training**

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Philadelphia, PA 19107

● **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)**

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● **Pharmacy Technician**
Professional Healthcare Institute
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Melrose Park, PA 19027

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Philadelphia, PA 19137

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PHA leader emphasizes “back to basics” during Listening Post events

Residents will play an important role under the transition plan recently unveiled by PHA Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly.

Mr. Kelly began meeting with PHA residents in January to get their feedback on the transition plan. The events are called “Listening Posts,” after an old tradition that PHA is reviving under the new leadership. Residents had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Kelly in an informal setting and share ideas.

PHA staff took down the names and sites of residents who spoke at the Listening Posts and a description of



Residents from several PHA sites took full advantage of the opportunity to speak with Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly during a meeting at the Raymond Rosen Community Center. Mary Hayward, a member of the resident council at Rosen, makes her point as other residents wait their turn.

their complaint or comment. Issues brought up at the Listening Posts so far have all been addressed by PHA.

“We’re aware of the concerns that tenants have when it comes to safety and security, maintenance, and the capital needs at different sites. Those are definitely important cornerstones of the transition,” said Mr. Kelly. “Moreover, residents want to know someone is listening and there is responsiveness to their concerns. PHA is committed to delivering both.”

During the meetings, Mr. Kelly emphasized a “back to basics” approach to property management as part of the transition plan. PHA will be looking at safety and security needs and targeting improvements for older developments. Mr. Kelly said that the success of it depends upon the participation of PHA residents.

“We’re adjusting our priorities in terms of what we’re doing about the modernization of our sites,” he said during a meeting at the Raymond Rosen Community Center. “As you know, PHA has been very, very successful in tearing down and rebuilding public housing. The new developments are really nice and reintegrate with the communities. But we just don’t have the money to do that everywhere.”

Kelly said he’s committed to reconsidering the number of maintenance and management workers at each site and responding to work orders and vacancy turnarounds in a more timely fashion. Residents were eager to share their concerns during the meeting at Raymond Rosen.

Tuesday Wells, who lives at Rosen, wondered what PHA could do about trash control at the development. She also said the lighting at the site was inadequate. Mr. Kelly told her that maintenance personnel will take a survey on the lighting and the agency’s engineering department will come up with a solution.

Another resident asked for more police at Johnson Homes, but Kelly explained that there is not enough federal money to provide more policing. On a more positive note, maintenance staff will be increased at the site (PHA’s oldest development), the boiler tanks and pumps will be upgraded, and the security system will be replaced.

Some Johnson Homes residents also expressed concerns about trash pickup, but site manager Elyse Arrington-Burgess reminded them that the site already has collections three times a week while private housing has it just once a week. She also said it’s important



PHA Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly emphasized a “back to basics” approach under the transition plan in place for the agency during his meeting with residents from several sites at the Raymond Rosen Community Center. The plan includes lots of meetings like this one and plenty of input from residents.

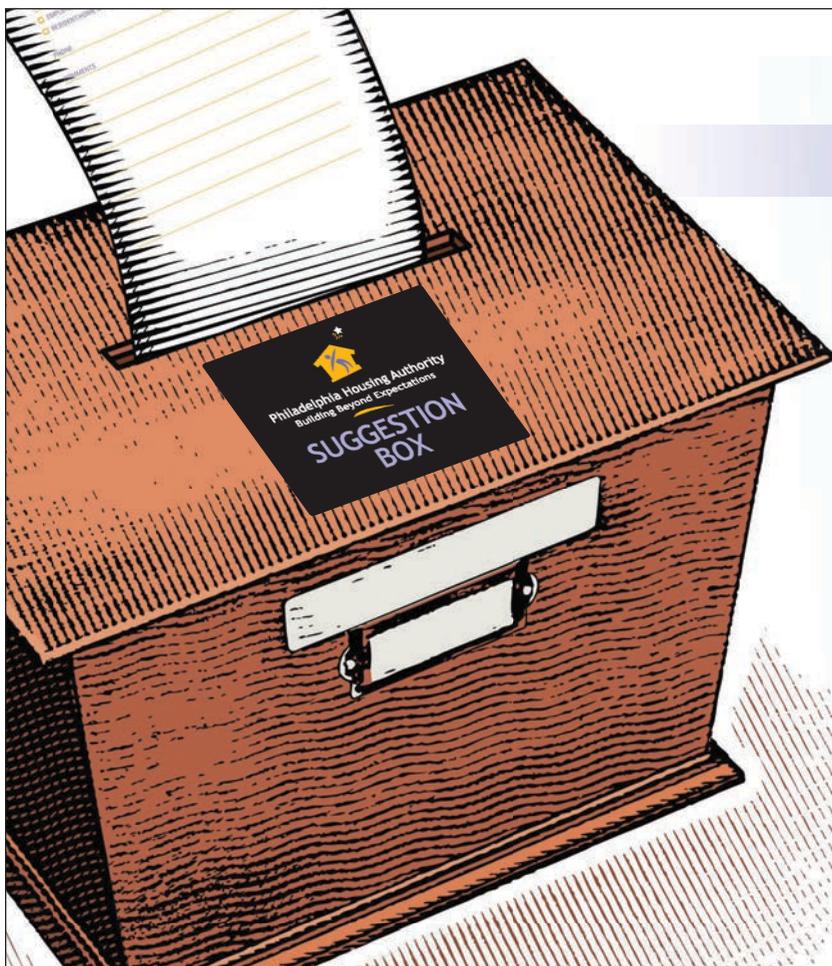
for residents to remember to put their trash out the night before the collection days, which are Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday at Johnson.

Mr. Kelly did emphasize a shared responsibility between PHA and its residents to keep properties up and take ownership of them until “we’re in a situation that we can do something different with them.”

Lamont Greer, the vice president of the tenant council at Blumberg, agreed.

“It takes the residents to make things work,” Greer said. “We have to come together to make it work. And you have to work through the tenant council and through your manager.”

Kelly has plans to hold more Listening Posts in the near future. Residents will see notices posted at their management offices, so they can make plans to attend and deliver their ideas. He also told the crowd that they can write him at his agency e-mail address or use the suggestion boxes located at site offices.



SUGGESTION BOX LOCATIONS

As part of ongoing efforts to foster a culture of respect and encourage an open dialogue among staff, residents, and management, PHA has installed suggestion boxes at the following sites. To help us address your issues and concerns promptly, please remember to put your name and contact information on your suggestion card.

CONVENTIONAL AND PAPMC LOCATIONS

Abbottsford Homes
Bartram Village
Bentley Hall
Champlost Homes
Emlen Arms
Fairhill Apartments
Germantown House
Gladys B. Jacobs Manor
Haddington Homes
Harrison Plaza

Hill Creek Apartments
Holmestown Homes
John F. Street Community Center
Johnson Homes
Katie B. Jackson Plaza
Lucien E. Blackwell Homes
Morton Homes
Mt. Olivet
Nellie Reynolds Gardens
Norman Blumberg Apartments

Oxford Village
Queen Lane Apartments
Raymond Rosen Manor
Spring Garden Apartments
Suffolk Manor
Warnock Village
Westpark Apartments
Whitehall Apartments
Wilson Park

SCATTERED SITE LOCATIONS

3417 Spring Garden Street
3226 McMichael Street
400 W. Huntington Street
1821 Vineyard Street
3218 W. Susquehanna Avenue

ADMISSIONS OFFICE
712 N. 16th Street

HCV LOCATIONS

Team A (South Philadelphia) - 1172-74 South Broad Street
Team B (West Philadelphia) - 5207 Walnut Street
Team C (Northwest Philadelphia) - 5538 “A” Wayne Avenue
Team D (North Philadelphia) - 2850 Germantown Avenue – area 1
Team E (Northeast Philadelphia) - 4346 Frankford Avenue
Team F (Project-Based) - 2850 Germantown Avenue – area 2



Bartram resident earns GED through strength and determination



Pam Pinder, an instructor for the Center of Literacy, teaches a GED class for PHA residents at the John F. Street Community Center through the Community Partners Program.

Mirian Wertz, 33, knows what it's like to be out in the cold, literally.

Even though she was working, Wertz found herself homeless and pregnant after a relationship failed. She ended up in transitional housing until coming to Bartram Village one year ago when her son, Almir, was born. It was there that Mirian made up her mind that things were going to change for her and her little boy.

Wertz had left high school after her junior year at Simon Gratz and never obtained her diploma. She dropped out to attend classes at the Job Corps and become a licensed Certified Nursing Assistant. What followed was a series of odd jobs in retail and service industries.

Mirian said her favorite job was with Diamond Services at the University of Pennsylvania, but she was laid off in 2005 and could not get hired back. So, she used her CNA license in the private health care industry, serving elderly people in their homes, something that gave her satisfaction.

"I find that the elderly need the help and it gives me a good feeling when I help someone else," she said.

Yet, when she tried to go back to work after having her son, Wertz found a job market that was wracked by recession with employers who were much more demanding.

"To get a permanent job today, you need a high school diploma," she said. "Some [employers] demand that you at least have a high school diploma or GED. So, I felt that I couldn't succeed or get a promotion without it."

Mirian decided to finish what she started several years earlier by going back to school via PHA's Community Partners Program and getting her GED certificate. She began classes at the Center for Literacy in June and received her certificate November 1st.

The program helped Mirian greatly with her reading and writing skills, which have been a struggle for her for as long as she could remember.

"Mirian seemed determined to complete the process that she had started several years earlier," said Pam Pinder, Mirian's instructor for the GED course. "In all, Mirian showed great strength, determination, and passion in completing her journey of passing the GED examination. She set a goal, took charge, and today has a brighter future."

To say that Mirian felt a sense of accomplishment is putting it mildly.

"I'm happy that I got my GED because that was one of my goals. And when I had my baby, that just made me want to go forward and get it," she said.

Wertz is also happy that she has a home at Bartram Village.

"When I was pregnant, I was living in transitional [housing] and I couldn't take my baby there. So, I'm grateful that I have a place. Regardless of where it is, you still have to make a home."

Mirian likes her neighbors and the trolley service that runs by Bartram Village and makes it more convenient to get to work.

Now, in addition to looking for work as a CNA, she plans on taking homeownership classes. And when her son gets older, Mirian said she'd make sure that he stays in school. She'll take part in graduation ceremonies this June.

For more information about the Center for Literacy's GED/Adult Basic Education course, please call your Economic Self-Sufficiency Coordinator or the Community Partners Program at 215-684-0393.



There are nine 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 - Fridays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

5405 Gibson Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19143

Blumberg Apartments - Mondays 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

2311 W. Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Blumberg Seniors - Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 pm

2311 W. Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Harrison Plaza - Mondays & Thursdays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

1240 N. 10th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122

Hill Creek - Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

5573 Hillcreek Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19120

John F Street Center - Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

1100 Poplar Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Johnson Homes - Mondays and Thursdays 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

2630-D Norris Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19122

Spring Garden - Tuesdays 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

715 Brandywine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Westpark Apartments - Fridays 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

300 N. Busti Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

White Hall - Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

4749 Tackawanna Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124

To Sign-Up Please Contact:

Jerel Brooks, Computer Technology
Coordinator at **215-684-0393**
or Jerel.Brooks@pha.phila.gov



Philadelphia Housing Authority
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Residents learn about healthy food choices



Deborah Winans, a nutrition education advisor from the Penn State Cooperative Extension Center, teaches residents of Norman Blumberg Apartments how to make skillet lasagna, a healthy and inexpensive dinner. Penn State's "Nutrition Links" program will run for five weeks at different locations.

Long ago, someone coined the phrase "You are what you eat."

So, PHA is partnering with other agencies to help residents make healthy eating choices, find out where their food is grown, and learn how they can become urban farmers.

"We want to improve our residents' lives through awareness and education of how to eat healthy and be healthy, and then provide access to those things," said Enrico Crispo, PHA's General Manager of Workforce Development.

Crispo points out that good diets and healthy choices affect self-sufficiency and your success in life. The push for making healthy choices and access to good food started with First Lady Michelle Obama. It picked up steam at the state level and now, PHA has become involved in this initiative.

The Penn State Cooperative Extension Center located in West Philadelphia has already brought its "Nutrition Links" program to PHA. Suzanne Weldon, the Nutrition Educator for the extension service, said the program gives residents the basic tools for making healthy food choices.

"There's a lot of information out there," she said. "I think it comes down to getting an understanding of what the basic foods are. In other words, how do you make sense out of a nutrition label? What does that really mean?"

Nutrition Links began at Raymond Rosen and then spread to Norman Blumberg Apartments. Every class has a cooking demonstration, so residents who take part have a chance to learn some new healthy recipes. They can also learn how to buy good produce that is in season and fits into their budget.

The course, which will run 5 weeks at different locations, has helped participants to lose weight, lower their blood pressure, and improve their sugar test for diabetes. The program encourages and teaches simple physical activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle in addition to improving people's diet.

Residents will be able to get hands-on experience growing their own food, too. The Federation of Neighborhood Centers through its Teens 4 Good program has two farm plots in North Philadelphia near Richard Allen Homes and Cambridge Plaza. One of the growing sites is located at 8th and Poplar while the other is at 12th and Parrish.

Jamie McKnight, Director of Teens 4 Good, said many parts of the city are "food deserts," neighborhoods without

stores that offer healthy food choices. The program directs people to the food they should be eating, how it's grown, and even teaches them how to market it to the community.

"There's such a disconnect, especially with the youth that we work with, with the food that they're eating or should be eating. They don't really understand where it comes from," she said.

Knight said some of the food grown at the North Philly plots will be used

during cooking demonstrations at community events, where residents can get some hands-on training.

Also, Penn State has donated a "hoop house", similar to a big greenhouse, for use at the farm site at 8th and Poplar. Adults and kids can learn how to do container gardening and grow healthy food products from seeds.

For more information about nutrition programs at PHA, please call 215-684-3959.



Penn State Nutrition Links Schedule

Johnson Homes

Tuesdays from 6/7 to 7/5, 10am – 12pm

West Park

Wednesdays from 6/8 to 7/6, 2:30pm – 4pm

Spring Garden

Thursdays from 6/9 to 7/7, 2:15pm – 4pm

Bartram

Thursdays from 6/9 to 7/7, 11am - 12:30pm

Don't offer a drink to a mouse or a roach - report leaks and water damage



Residents should report leaks in their units, which can lead to pests.

can be fixed. If you notice a leak or water damage in your unit, call PHA and place

a service order or reach out to your landlord.

Pests and water damage can cause serious health problems for your family. They are both asthma triggers—common household hazards that may cause asthma attacks or make symptoms worse.

The link between water damage

and the presence of pests is just one important message that PHA's Healthy Homes Program is promoting.

Healthy Homes is a research program designed to help PHA families identify and reduce asthma triggers in the home. Asthma triggers include pests, water damage, pesticide use, incense or candle burning, secondhand smoke, warm-blooded pets, the presence of upholstered furniture or carpet, the use of a gas cooking appliance, and mold.

Healthy Homes is a collaborative effort between PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program, Tenant Support Services Inc. (TSSI), Drexel's School of Public Health, and the Department of Public Health. The program is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. PHA is currently halfway through the grant.

Participants must be a Housing Choice Voucher Participant or live in PHA Scattered Sites. They must also have a child who is 6 years old or younger with clinically diagnosed asthma living in the household.

For 6-8 weeks, trained outreach workers visit the homes of participating families and discuss ways to reduce asthma triggers with residents. Participating families also receive items to help them address asthma triggers and make their homes healthier such as a water filter, adhesive caulk gun, pillow and mattress covers, cleaning supplies, and carpet removal and tile installation in the child's room. Whether or not you qualify for the program, PHA encourages all residents to take the following steps to help maintain a healthy home for their family:

- Maintain a well ventilated home

- Wash bedding every week to kill dust mites
- Eliminate insects and pests
- Report water leaks and water damage promptly
- Report peeling and deteriorating paint
- Clean hard surfaces in your home with a wet mop or rag to prevent dust from spreading
- Teach children to wash their hands often, and always before eating
- Stay away from renovating or remodeling work areas
- Air out new carpets and furniture
- Avoid smoking in your home and car and never smoke near children

To learn more about the Healthy Homes program, please call the AIR staff at 215-684-8109.



This past spring was filled

The spring of 2011 is over, but it has left us with memories of fun-filled activities.



Senior residents at Wilson Park celebrate Easter and hold a memorial for friends and neighbors who have passed away in the last year.



Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly, Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, and Resident Liaison Nellie Reynolds present keys to new Markoe residents Melvia Powell-Hamms and Courtney Billingsley.



The Federation of Neighborhood Centers, through its Teens 4 Good program, has two farm plots in North Philadelphia. Shown here are children preparing a planting bed at one of the plots at 8th and Poplar Streets near the John F. Street Community Center. Learn more about new nutrition programs at PHA on page 7.



The Markoe Street Homes represent the latest segment of this neighborhood's renewal, with 17 totally rehabilitated homes and 6 new homes.

with memorable moments!

families working for families day



PHA held the first-ever Families Working for Families Day on April 29.



Residents and employees took part in cleanup and beautification efforts at 14 different sites.



Families Working for Families Day activities included sweeping, cleaning, raking, and planting.



"The event is part of PHA's commitment to get back to the basics," said PHA Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly. "It's important for both employees and residents to work together to maintain our homes and communities."



Philadelphia Housing Authority

Individual Development Account (IDA) Matched Savings Program

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- Once you are ready to complete the purchase of your home, your savings will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$2,000 for individuals or \$4,000 for a family.

For more information, call:

PHA COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM

215.684.0393

or

PHA HOMEOWNERSHIP DIVISION

215.684.8018





Formerly homeless vets a step closer to homeownership

PHA resident Junius Ransom is one step closer to owning his own home thanks to a Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership workshop for formerly homeless veterans that was held at the Philadelphia VA Medical Center.



HCV resident Junius Ransom is a formerly homeless veteran. He is now working toward homeownership. "It is the American dream to find a house and call it yours," Junius said.

It seemed like an unlikely dream for Junius at first. Years ago, he lost his job, then his home. Eventually, he had to move to a shelter. He was able to acquire a Housing Choice Voucher from the Philadelphia Housing Authority and move into an apartment of his own through the Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) program, which helps homeless veterans with their housing needs.

"It's rough out here. [I had] few friends, little money and times were bad," Mr. Ransom said. "Things are beginning to feel much better."

VA staff called the workshop one of the most innovative and exciting seminars they have held at the VA in 30 years. HUD, VASH and PHA staff along with five vendors counseled more than 125 formerly homeless veterans, bringing veterans with vouchers into the realm of homeownership.

This seminar was very similar to the one presented to PHA residents on a regular basis. At these group sessions, realtors, bank representatives and others guide applicants through the

process of buying a home, even if the applicant has little or no experience searching for a home, lacks knowledge on how to obtain a loan, has a bad credit history, or cannot afford a down payment.

The workshop showed Junius Ransom how he could shift the way his voucher is used. Instead of using the voucher to help pay rent for his apartment, he could use it to help pay for a house.

"It is the American dream to find a house and call it yours," Junius said. "It's better to own a home than to pay someone rent for the rest of your life."

"All of the folks here are eligible veterans," said Frank Maguire, who coordinates the HUD/VASH program with PHA. "Some of the ladies and gentleman were on the streets homeless or living in shelters. They didn't think they would have their own apartment. Now they are going further into homeownership."

Another resident, Robin Collins, also attended the VA homeownership workshop.

"There are many reasons why I want my own house," said Ms. Collins.



Supervisory Asset Manager Malvin Reyes provides formerly homeless veterans with an overview of the PHA homeownership program.

"The most important reason is that a home would give my family a foundation. And it now seems likely that I will own a home by the fall of 2011. This is a wonderful reality, going from homelessness to becoming a homeowner."

If you are considering buying a house, PHA has an excellent

homeownership program. Even if you think that you are ineligible to own a home, PHA's staff will work hard to make this dream come true. For more information, please call the Homeownership Division at 215-684-4375.

Second time is the charm for Pre-Apprenticeship grad

Ebony Cole believes in second chances. The Richard Allen resident actually graduated from the Pre-Apprenticeship Program back in 1999. She took the exam for the electricians union and passed, but never heard back about an interview so she started looking for other opportunities.

Since then, she has had hard times over the years. She has worked in finance, particularly payroll and accounts payable, but the jobs weren't permanent.

The lack of steady work prompted Ebony to come back to the Pre-Apprenticeship Program. She started up again in February 2010, determined to make this time really count. For Ebony, this was a career choice, not just a job.

"At times, I felt that if I had done the right thing in the beginning, I'd be further ahead and more stable," said Ms. Cole. "Coming back felt like a last chance. I was either going to make it or not."

Ebony has been drawn to electrical work since the first time she signed up for Pre-Apprenticeship. Students receive training in every module including basic carpentry, painting, plumbing and roofing, but the electrical component is the one Ebony liked the most.

The electrical test is also one of the hardest tests and the electricians union is one of

the hardest unions to join. But Ebony was determined.

"Becoming a member of the union is like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Ebony said. "I knew getting into Local 98 [the electricians union] was a possibility and I knew that obtaining that goal would be a great thing for me and my family."

Ms. Cole passed the union test in July and started boot camp with Local 98 a month later. She also enjoys the many perks of being a part of the union including networking opportunities. She describes the union as a family outside of your family.

Ebony started working with PHA on December 1 as an electrician apprentice working on scattered sites. She says her coworkers within PHA accept her as a woman in what has traditionally been a man's world and are eager to teach her.

"The job is so far, so good. I'm hanging in there and learning new things. Every day is another lesson learned," she said.

Ms. Cole is also looking forward to sharing her knowledge and teaching someone else when she is done with her apprenticeship.

"Once I become a journeyman and have an apprentice of my own working for me, I'll show them what was shown to me," Ebony said.



Ebony Cole came back to the Pre-Apprenticeship Program last year. She is now an electrician apprentice with PHA and a member of the electricians union.

Ebony's five-year goal is to finish her apprenticeship and have enough money saved up to buy her first home. She believes it will give her children a better opportunity.

She's enthusiastic about the Pre-Apprenticeship Program and how it has gotten her to where she is now and highly recommends it to others.

"I love the Pre-Apprenticeship Program. It's one of many great programs PHA has. It's a great thing for men and women alike," said Ms. Cole. "The program keeps people off the streets, keeps them occupied. Pre-Apprenticeship teaches students values and a good work ethic."

For more information about the PHA Pre-Apprenticeship Program, please call 215-684-8049.

PHA's SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM

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Program starts June 22nd and ends August 26th

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Angelique Martez is a graduate of the PHA Community Partners Program for Human Services and a PHA Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator. "I love working with residents and guiding them in the right direction," she said.

PHA's new Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator, Angelique Martez, knows what her clients are facing because she has been on the other side of the table herself. Ms. Martez is a Housing Choice resident and a graduate from the PHA Community Partners course in Human Services. She lives in the Frankford section of the city with her 3 daughters.

PHA resident helping other families reach their goals

From the beginning, she was drawn to helping others. Ms. Martez started working with Frankford Group Ministry as part of the Welfare-to-Work program shortly after Section 8 came into her life. Later, she moved to the Frankford Beacon Center where she worked for PHA's Skills for Life Program. Her responsibilities included mentoring participants, tutoring, and conducting job preparation training.

While she was there, Angelique worked on getting her GED. She tried to go to school, but found it difficult to work and do that at the same time. So she bought books, studied and succeeded in getting a GED on her own.

"Afterwards, I wondered why I waited so long to do it. I just didn't motivate myself enough," Angelique said about getting her GED. "Now, I motivate myself to do everything. Nothing's out of my reach."

Things in her life hit a snag when she was laid off from her position due to funding

cuts. Right away, she went to see her FSS Coordinator for assistance.

With her experience and interest in helping others behind her, Angelique signed up for the new Human Services program offered by JEVS-Orleans Technical Institute, a long-time PHA Community Partner. She started the course in February 2010 and finished in August 2010.

The human services program teaches participants counseling and case management skills and prepares them for jobs in social work or the human services field. It was a great experience for Angelique and she met a lot of friends while taking the course. She also praised the instructors for being helpful and encouraging.

"Sometimes you wanted to give up, but they said 'we're not going to let you quit, you can do this. Just stay focused,'" recalled Angelique.

Angelique would recommend JEVS' program for anybody who is interested in working in human services or social work. She is a people person so the program was a good match.

After she completed the Human Services course and her externship, Angelique saw that PHA had posted a job opening for a Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator on its website. She was eager to be able to use her skills and help people so she applied for the job and landed the position. She has been an FSS Coordinator since December.

"It feels good just to be able to talk to people. I love working with residents and guiding them in the right direction," said Ms. Martez. "[The work] is satisfying for me. If I can just help one person, I'm happy."

And Angelique is planning for the future. One of the advantages of the JEVS Human Services program is that it counts for college credit. Graduates can transfer credits to one of 3 universities: Philadelphia University, University of Phoenix or Community College of Philadelphia. So Angelique is already halfway to her Associate's Degree. Now that she is employed, she is thinking about going back to school by next year.

She also wants to work on completing the other major goal she set when she first started working with her FSS Coordinator four years ago—buying her own home.

For more information about JEVS-Orleans Technical Institute's Human Services program, please call PHA's Community Partners Program at 215-684-0393.

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Enterprise Center CDC promotes nutrition and business in West Philly

The Enterprise Center was established in 1989 to help grow businesses and create jobs in the Philadelphia area. For years, the organization has offered classes in entrepreneurship to PHA residents as part of the Community Partners program.

But that's just one of the many programs and initiatives the Enterprise Center runs to benefit the community and improve the quality of life for residents in the area.



Neighborhood youth are hard at work tending fruits and vegetables grown at the Walnut Hill Community Farm at 46th and Market Streets. The farm is one of the many food-related programs offered by the Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation.

One of its affiliates, the Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation, is a non-profit organization dedicated to making investments in the Walnut Hill neighborhood of West Philadelphia.

"The CDC is interested in education, community empowerment and economic development," said CDC Managing Director Greg Heller. "Recently, we've focused on food-related programs."

The Enterprise CDC is partnering with Common Market to operate the Share Program. Under this program, families can sign up to purchase healthy, fresh food and have it delivered directly to them. The program targets areas with limited access to grocery stores and fresh food.

As part of this effort, the CDC is also working with Penn State Expansion Center to bring cooking classes to the community. Residents will learn how to cook healthy, nutritious meals with the produce they have available to them.

"We're doing an educational component so it's not just about getting the food, but learning about what's in the box," Heller explained.

The CDC's biggest, most visible initiative is a real-estate development project that is both food and business-related. They are hard at work converting vacant supermarket space at 48th and Spruce into Philadelphia's first food business center. Upon completion, it will be a boon for the many aspiring entrepreneurs who want to run a home-based catering business, but need a commercial-certified kitchen.

"We realize that entrepreneurs often need more than just space—they need business development skills, capital, and assistance landing contracts," added Heller. "To help them get started, the CDC will offer a comprehensive business incubator program that will provide both the facilities and educational programming."

Another large CDC food and nutrition project is the Walnut Hill Community Farm, which is tended by youth in the community. The farm, which is going into its second growing season, is located at 46th and Market Streets, right next to the Market-Frankford El stop and across the street from PHA's West Park Apartments. It is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



The Enterprise Center is also building a farm stand so neighbors can purchase fresh produce directly from the Walnut Hill Community Farm. It will begin operating in late spring.

The Enterprise CDC plans to open up a farm stand next to the community garden in late spring and sell produce to Walnut Hill residents. The farm stand is also managed by Philly Rooted Growers and staffed by youth who live in the neighborhood so they can get hands-on business experience. To increase access, the farm stand will accept EBT as form of payment.

"We wanted to bring produce to low-income areas and make prices affordable," said Bryan Fenstermaker, Food, School and Community Program Manager for the CDC. "The farm stand will offer a permanent location for people in the community to buy fresh fruits and vegetables."

The farm is actually the result of resident input. The CDC operates a street team and works with the neighborhood to determine its needs. Street team members are residents themselves. They canvass, conduct outreach and connect people in the community with social services, volunteer opportunities, and more.

The site for the community farm was a vacant lot for 10 years. The Street Team asked neighbors what they wanted the space to become and came back to the CDC with strong support for a garden. Residents also had input on the design, which will incorporate a pocket park and seating area.

"The street team's a great way to learn more about neighborhood issues," said Imanni Wilkes, Managing Director. "The street team shares information with residents and brings information back to us. Their work connects neighbors and increases social interaction making the community a friendlier place."

College grad is looking to the future and encouraging others

Blumberg resident Brett Jackson graduated from West Chester University on December 19 with a degree in psychology. His dream is to become a guidance counselor and encourage kids to go to college, particularly African-American students.

"The fact I did it made me realize it's possible for more African-Americans to do it," said Brett. "We just need more resources and people to encourage us to go that far. If I can do it, anyone can do it."

Brett attended George Washington Carver High School for Engineering and Science. He started looking at colleges his junior year. He credits his guidance counselor for motivating him and other students. Before her, Brett didn't have concrete plans for going to college.

"School was something I enjoyed, but after 12 years [of school], I was kind of tired. I thought I wasn't ready to spend more time in school," Brett said. "She made going to college something we all

had to do. I still thank her and I thank God for pushing me."

Brett applied to a number of schools. Ultimately, he chose West Chester University because he had a friend who went there who spoke highly of it. Brett also fell in love with the university when he visited. It was also close enough to go home every once in awhile.

Financial aid was a factor in his decision. Brett received loans, grants, and scholarships to pay for tuition. He said it wasn't that hard to get the money, though you have to pay back the loans. No matter what, he believes the experience was worth the money.

College was a culture shock at first. West Chester and its primarily Caucasian population was completely different from Brett's high school, where a majority of the students were black. It was a different experience for him. He describes college as a roller coaster with a lot of ups and downs, but he met some of his life-long friends there.



Blumberg resident Brett Jackson, who recently graduated from West Chester University, is eager to get back to school and encourage others to go to college as well.

"I met different types of people who had a different mindset than most people I had been around before," Brett said. "I was on my own, trying to make myself. I didn't have anyone to push me. I made it so I developed those relationships with brilliant people like

faculty and staff. I also made friends and got a great experience through my classes."

Graduating was a very good feeling. Brett was excited to complete something this meaningful and important. His mother, older brother and grandmother are proud of him too.

"They didn't have a chance to graduate from college so they're living the dream through me. They supported me and stuck by me 100% and help me through my journey."

As a college graduate, Brett feels like he is part of an elite group and that he did something not everyone gets to do. But he doesn't plan to stop with a bachelor's degree. Brett wants to go back to school for his master's in higher education or public health and work in counseling. He will probably go back to West Chester in the fall of 2011. Until then, he hopes to get a job in rehabilitation or probation and gain some experience in the field helping people.

PHA resident wins athletic scholarship



PHA resident Cierra White, a track star at George Washington Carver High School of Engineering and Science, has won an athletic scholarship to Texas Tech University. White, who is the high school indoor 200 meter national champion, was featured along with her mother, Zakia, in the November edition of the PHA Experience. Texas Tech's web site describes her as a "dynamic sprinter." She's also a star in the classroom, taking advanced placement courses and being named to the high school's Beta Club that honors students for their academic achievements.



Rosen resident earns CDL, finds a new career

(continued from page 1)

And the picture only got worse as the Great Recession really took hold.

Last January, Eric's luck began to change. He went to work for the Philadelphia School District as a bus driver.

"They trained me to get my Class B [commercial driver's license] for free," he said. "My plan was to move on eventually because it wasn't a real good salary there, but it looks good on your resume."

The other problem was that once schools let out for the summer, Eric was

unemployed again. His family was facing possible eviction from their home at Raymond Rosen because they were short of money and were unable to pay the rent. He stopped by the manager's office and noticed an ad posted on the wall offering free truck driving training for residents through Smith and Solomon, a company that trains people to get their Commercial Driver's License (CDL).

Eric had heard about training offered through the Community Partners Program, but was skeptical at first. He needed a little more information.

"Can I go to this? Is it free?" he asked one of the managers.

She said yes. He called to make arrangements and was in class in less than a week. The day before he was supposed to go back to work for the school district, Eric passed the test for his CDL. His instructor, Bruce Marshall, said Eric was an "awesome" student who would be a great asset wherever he went. He had a good sense of precision and he was constantly trying to improve his performance.

By late October, he landed a job driving for the Philadelphia Coca Cola Bottling Company.

"The pay is a whole lot better," he said. "I'm a delivery driver, so I deal with different customers every day. I came in as what you call a 'route jumper', which means I cover vacations and call-offs, so I'm never really in the same area every day. It takes strong character to be at a job like this."

Eric believes that his job at Coke is a career opportunity that's stable and will let him and his wife pursue their next goal—getting their own home. The Colemans are working with Habitat for Humanity to build up "sweat equity hours" and assist in the construction of their own home and others so they can make their dream of homeownership come true.

"If you want change to happen, you have to make change happen," he said. "And there's some luck involved and a lot of prayer, but if you don't get up and do anything and make change happen, nothing's going to happen."

Eric Coleman saw the opportunity through Community Partners and took it. He encourages other PHA residents to grab it, too. For more information about Smith and Solomon's commercial driving course or other Community Partners programs, please call 215-684-0393.



Senior Calendar

JUNE

Alive & Blessed - Fish Fry Fundraiser

Emlen Arms June 3, 2011, 11am

Alive & Blessed Day Trip & Lunch Outing - Willow Grove Mall

Emlen Arms June 6, 2011, 10am

Health and Wellness Foreign Missions Initiative

Holmecrest June 13, 2011, 10am

Father's Day BBQ

Emlen Arms June 17, 2011, 12pm

Senior Summit

Wilson Park June 21, 2011, 10am - 12pm

Annual Wheelchair Race and Senior Fun Day BBQ

Wilson Park June 23, 2011, 10am

JULY

Independence Day Celebration

Emlen Arms and Wilson Park Senior Center July 1, 2011, 10am

Alive & Blessed
AND
at 55+
The New Generation of mature adults...



Alive and Blessed Senior Program
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am to Noon

Offering computer classes, bible study, crafts, indoor exercise and much more. Program is open to the community.

For more information, contact Senior Programs at
215-684-1183

Indoor class gets Emlen seniors moving

You need a good workout all your life. And seniors at Emlen are taking that message to heart.

Five days a week, a group of residents start off their day by meeting in the community room at 9:30, putting on an exercise DVD and warming up. The sessions last about 45 minutes, but it goes by quickly. Before they know it, the seniors have finished walking 3 miles without ever leaving Emlen.

The indoor walking sessions are part of Emlen's Alive and Blessed program, which PHA staff created with the new generation of seniors in mind. The goal is to get residents out of their apartments and socializing with other seniors. Participants in the Alive and Blessed program also hold Bible study sessions with a pastor from the neighborhood, a computer class, and bingo games. But the program is open to holding any activities that the seniors want to do.

Emlen resident Anita Caffee was the first to suggest the indoor walking exercises. Like most of the residents, Ms. Caffee does not drive. When she first decided that she wanted to get in shape, Anita found that taking the bus to the gym wasn't ideal. So, she bought some workout DVDs to use at home. But she loved it so much that she wanted to bring it downstairs and share with her neighbors.

"I thought that if I felt this good after doing it, that others would feel good too," Ms. Caffee explained.

The indoor walking sessions have only been in place for a month but many have already noticed improvements in their health. Residents who come are more active and are more conscious of the food they eat.

"We're cutting back and enjoying smaller meals," said Ms. Caffee. "Before, I ate nothing but junk food, but now that's gone. It has also helped me get off my high blood pressure medication and feel more together,



Emlen residents participate in an indoor walking class in the community room. At the end of each session, the seniors have walked 3 miles. The exercise is improving both their health and spirits.

mentally and emotionally. I'm not stressed like I was before. I have a goal in mind."

The participants are all enthusiastic about the classes. They tell neighbors about it because it is something they love and enjoy and it has created friendships at Emlen.

"The walkers support each other," said Tyana El-Bedawi, a PHA Service Coordinator at Emlen. "When they first started out, they used to stop after 1 mile. Now they're encouraging each other to keep going and watching out for those who feel tired and need a rest."

Resident Rosa Howe calls the indoor working class a blessing.

"I thank God for it. Now we don't have to go to the Y," said Ms. Howe. "I'm 75 and I move better than my grandchildren."

Emlen participants hope that activities like their indoor walking class will spread to other senior sites.

For more information about Senior Programs, please call 215-684-1183.

The accidental inspector finds her calling

Sometimes, the best things in life just happen.

Take the case of 37-year-old Adrean Thomas, a single mother of two who lives at one of PHA's scattered sites in Southwest Philadelphia. She had done office and building maintenance in Center City for 10 years when, all of sudden, life as she knew it changed.

"Unfortunately, in September of 2008, I got laid off," she said. "I figured if I went back to school for engineering, then I could easily get into that line of work."

Adrean had two challenges: getting more maintenance skills and getting her high school diploma. She also had to find more work to support her family while trying to reach those

goals, but there was none to be found in the tough economic climate.

Unemployment benefits carried Thomas and her family for six months. In March 2009, she dipped into her savings and began attending a local trade school to become certified in basic residential plumbing, painting, carpentry, and electrical work. During the same six-month period, Adrean attended night school to get her high school diploma. Meanwhile, she still had to take care of her son and daughter, now 12 and 18 years old respectively.

"I had done that [old] job for 10 years. I said 'I need some more tools' and the next job I get, I want to keep," Thomas said.

By September 2009, a year after she was laid off, Adrean had completed her trade school courses and received her high school diploma. There was still no job, but she hung in there and kept her home and family together.

Eight months later, in May 2010, Thomas' home was due for inspection by PHA. She began chatting with the inspector, hoping to gain some job leads, mentioning all the new certifications she had to her name. The inspector mentioned the PHA Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

Adrean got the number and called, and eventually filled out the application for the program. She was accepted into the class that began in June and graduated in November

2010. At the same time, an inspector's job with PHA opened up. After an interview, Adrean landed a new job 27 months after her old one had disappeared.

So, this past year was special for Adrean Thomas and her family. After lots of sacrifice and hard work, she has an interesting job with good pay, benefits, and a future, not to mention her plans to save and possibly buy the PHA home she has lived in for the past 13 years. Life is good!

Adrean Thomas was unemployed when she signed up for the Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Now she works for PHA as an inspector.



PHA meets with residents about proposed lease changes

(continued from page 1)

If the new policy is implemented, tenants who fail to pay their rent by the fifth day of the month may be issued a 30 day Notice to Vacate after the fifth business day of the month. Under the current policies, PHA may issue a Notice to Vacate after the 15th business day. Late fees for rent payment will also increase from \$10 to \$50.

"Rent collection is very important to both PHA and its residents," said Administrative Receiver Michael Kelly. "That money directly supports our maintenance efforts and other critical services. It's important for PHA staff and residents to work together on this matter and ensure that the agency can continue to serve its clients well."

Some residents expressed concerns during the meetings that their incomes come in at different times during the month which affects their ability to pay rent by the first. PHA Executive General Manager for Operations Keith Caldwell encouraged all residents to work with their managers and budget so they can meet their obligations and avoid late fees. Modifications or exceptions to policies may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Other proposed changes include:

- **Timing of Lease Termination Notice:** PHA may give 30 day Notice to Vacate after the business day of the month for nonpayment of rent. PHA may give less than 30 days Notice to Vacate if

the health and safety of other residents, PHA employees, or persons residing in the immediate vicinity is threatened; if any member of the household has engaged in any drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity; or any member of the household has been convicted of a felony. For all other reasons, PHA will give 30 days notice of lease termination.

- **Temporarily and Permanently Absent Family Members:** Individuals who are absent from the unit for more than 30 total calendar days in a year will be considered permanently absent and no longer a family member. The existing policy is 180 days.
- **Family Absence from the Unit:** The family may not be absent from the unit for a period of more than 30 total days per calendar year in any circumstance or for any reason or PHA will terminate the lease for good cause. Families must also notify PHA when all members will be absent from the unit for a period greater than 30 calendar days. They must notify PHA within 10 business days of the start of the absence.
- **Guests/New Family and Household Members Requiring Approval:** Guests or any person not on the lease can remain in the unit no longer than 15 consecutive days, or 30 cumulative days within a 12 month period. After this period, the individual no longer qualifies as a guest. Requests must be

made in writing and approved by PHA prior to the individual moving in to the unit. The current guest period is no more than 30 consecutive days or 90 cumulative days.

- **Timely Reporting of Changes in Family and Household Composition:** PHA will require families to report interim changes in family and household composition within 15 days from the date the change occurred. The current policy is 30 calendar days.

The lease revisions are still in the proposal phase and have not gone into effect. After reviewing comments from residents, PHA will negotiate with resident leadership before presenting the final suggestions to the PHA Board and implementing a new lease. If you are a conventional or scattered site resident and have questions, please see your manager.

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 Nancy Loi at 215-684-8645 or send an email to nancy.loi@pha.phila.gov

Summer job applications available for youth!

Are you between 14 and 21? Apply for a job or internship through the Philadelphia Youth Network's 2011 WorkReady program. It only takes 10 minutes to submit the online application.

Visit <http://www.mypyn.org/wrApp.html>



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Have you visited www.pha.phila.gov lately?

PHA has launched a new user-friendly website with up-to-date information that residents care about!

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