

The PHA Experience



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

Issue 27

A Community Newspaper for and About Residents

February 2012

PHA hires new head of resident services

PHA's new Deputy Executive Director of Community and Resident Services, Dr. Samuel Little, is excited to lead the agency's efforts to promote resident self-sufficiency.

Dr. Little has directed resident services at the Housing Authority of Baltimore City and the District of Columbia Housing Authority. He is also the founding president of the National Alliance of Resident Services in Affordable and Assisted Housing (NAR-SAAH), a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting employees of resident services and resident councils in public housing. Most recently, Dr. Little was an assistant professor at Howard University's School of Social Work in Washington, DC. He holds degrees from the University of Maryland, the University of Pennsylvania, and Morgan State University.

"We are very lucky to have a person of Dr. Little's caliber join PHA," said Michael P. Kelly, PHA Administrative



PHA has hired Dr. Samuel Little, an accomplished human services administrator and professor in social work, as the Deputy Executive Director of Resident and Community Services.

Receiver/Executive Director. "The delivery of quality training and support services to residents is crucial to our mission of helping residents become self-sufficient and independent."

As the new Deputy Executive Director, Dr. Little oversees PHA's resident services department and resident programs including the Community Partners Program,

the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, homeownership, senior programs, and youth programs.

He describes his new position as "an exciting job at an exciting phase of evolution for the housing authority."

Dr. Little added that he wanted to come to Philadelphia because of the great resident programs PHA offers and because of the resident leaders who are committed to empowerment.

Under Dr. Little's leadership, the department is currently conducting a comprehensive review of PHA's resident programs to determine their effectiveness and expected outcomes. They will also look at cost reasonableness and determine what programs and services are in high demand by residents.

Resident Services staff will also reach

(continued on page 15)

Scattered Sites Homeownership Program is an opportunity for long-time resident

Mitchell Hughes was born and raised in a PHA scattered site home in North Philadelphia. His grandmother was the original head of household. When he was 19, she passed away and he took over responsibilities for the house.

Now, he's the proud owner of the home that's been the center of his family's lives for so long.

A couple of years ago, his site manager, Jacqueline Jamison, told him about the Scattered Sites Homeownership Program, which helps qualified PHA scattered site residents purchase the home they currently occupy.

Mr. Hughes thought of the program as a great opportunity.



Mitchell Hughes purchased his childhood home through the PHA Scattered Sites Homeownership Program the same year he completed his Associate's Degree.

(continued on page 15)

PHA and PhillyRising launch youth music program at Wilson Park

On January 21, the Wilson Park Community Center was filled with music lovers and the Sound of Philadelphia.

It will soon be a regular occurrence, thanks to the launch of the Philadelphia Youth Music Program, a free, six-week program that will teach youth between the ages of 12 and 17 marketable skills in music recording, engineering, sound setup and production. The program will be based at Wilson Park's music production studio.

To celebrate the program, organizers held a kick-off concert featuring a variety of local artists and singing groups. Mayor Michael Nutter, City Councilman Kenyatta Johnson and PHA Administrative Receiver/Executive Director Michael Kelly also



PHA and the Philly Rising Collaborative hosted a kick-off concert for the Philadelphia Youth Music Program. Tatiana Barbosa, a local singer/songwriter, was one of the performers.

(continued on page 13)

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 6868
PHILA, PA



Community Partners
Page 04



Healthy Heart Program
Page 7



Winter Photos
Pages 8-9

INDEX

Pre-Apprenticeship...	04
MLK Day.....	05
Section 3 Jobs.....	10
Homeownership.....	11



Sign-up for:
**FREE HELP
WITH
YOUR
FINANCES.**

CLASSES STARTING NOW. CALL TO REGISTER!

PHA FINANCIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

For families who want to learn how to properly manage their home budget, no matter how small or large.

All participants will receive a certificate of completion at the end of the program.

Classes are offered Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings at the John F. Street Community Center, 1100 Poplar Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123.



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

FOR MORE INFO, PLEASE CALL

215.684.0393

or see your manager

Community Partners

Community Partners adds new & improved services for residents

PHA's Community Partners Program has added five new training agencies as well as some new programs with existing partners that are designed to improve the level of service to PHA residents.

The PHA Board of Commissioner approved contracts for the new partners and services at a special meeting on January 6th.

"Our approach is to provide three levels of Community Partners," said Enrico Crispo, General Manager of Workforce Development. "One is the foundation, where residents have GED and Adult Basic Education support. Secondly, we provide them with access to a skill set that is marketable and in demand. Third, we make sure there is a way for them to connect to jobs."

New Partners

As part of its commitment to providing more business opportunities to residents, the housing authority has hired Entrepreneur Works as a new Community Partner. This non-profit organization is focused on growing businesses and jobs in the community. They will educate PHA residents on planning, development, marketing, finance, and the legal aspects of forming a business. In addition, Entrepreneur Works will offer individual support and

connect startup businesses to firms with capital.

The goal is for residents to successfully start their own business and be in the position to take advantage of contract opportunities at PHA under the Section 3 program, which gives priority to businesses that are primarily owned or staffed by low-income residents.

PAT School, another new Community Partner, will offer residents a 40 hour introductory course in welding as well as a 360 hour advanced course in welding that comes with a certification. The school, located in Northwest Philadelphia was founded on the idea that education programs should focus on finding their graduates jobs. The median wage for certified welders in Pennsylvania is \$16.89 an hour.

The other new partners will train residents for jobs in the medical field, which is a growth area in the Philadelphia job market.

P & A Nurse Aid Training Program and Services will prepare residents to become Certified Nurse Assistants.

Pathways PA Inc. will offer certification in phlebotomy and train residents to become specialists who collect and process blood samples. These professionals work

in doctor's offices, hospitals, blood clinics, research laboratories, and health clinics across the country. The demand for trained phlebotomists is expected to rise by at least 20% in the next decade. The median wage for phlebotomists is just over \$18 an hour.

Additional Services

Three existing Community Partners will offer new services.

Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI) will tailor its career counseling services to residents' needs. Some participants will need a complete 4-week course on resume writing, interview skills, and conducting a job search. Others may need help in just one area. The company will also bring a number of career planning and development workshops to PHA sites.

JEVS Human Services will offer a heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration program (HVACR). Residents who complete this 6-month course will gain full certification, so they can take advantage of a growing job market.

Smith & Solomon will expand its commercial drivers' license offerings to include CDL-B, a license that allows people to drive buses and trucks without hitches. A one-day forklift training program will also be offered, so that participants have an



One of PHA's newest Community Partners is the PAT School which will train residents in welding. The median wage for certified welders in Pennsylvania is \$16.89 an hour.

added skill that makes them more attractive to employers.

Crispo said the choices for Community Partners were based on job market needs, resident participation in existing programs, and feedback received from residents at special meetings.

PHA holds the Community Partners accountable by placing market

standards on all training programs. Their job placement results are also measured.

For more information about the Community Partners Program, please call (215) 684-0393 or contact your Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator (see page 12).



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
Holmcrest 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

Pre-Apprenticeship students celebrate graduation

There were still a couple of days left before Christmas, but students in the PHA Pre-Apprenticeship Program received their hard-earned gift early.

On December 23, PHA staff and instructors from the Pre-Apprenticeship Program joined the members of the 26th cycle to celebrate their graduation and mark an important accomplishment in their lives.

PHA's Administrative Receiver/Executive Director Michael P. Kelly had nothing but praise for the graduates' dedication.

"These residents took hold of an opportunity to advance their lives so they could take better care of themselves and their families," Mr. Kelly said. "The skills they learned to become carpenters, electricians, plumbers and more can last a lifetime."

Wanda Edwards is one of the happy graduates. She found out about the program through a PHA manager. Her father, who was in the building trades, also inspired her.

"I plan to become a homeowner and fix up my own house," Wanda said. "I will recommend this program to other residents and tell them to get all you can out of it. It is a good thing that will benefit you in the long run."

Isaiah Stokes worked various odd jobs around the city to support himself, but wanted more. When he heard about the Pre-Apprenticeship Program from another resident, he took the initiative.

"Becoming an electrician is my direction," Isaiah said. "Before I started this program, I wouldn't go near electricity. With the skills you learn here, you can apply anywhere. I hope to eventually join the union."

Since the program began 12 years ago, 850 students have graduated after acquiring useful skills that could lead to high paying jobs in construction and other industries. Many graduates join one of the 11 participating unions that work on sites throughout the area, including new construction efforts at PHA.

George Johnson is the training coordinator and has been with the program since it started.

"God bless the 26th graduating class," Mr. Johnson said. "The more people we help from the housing authority with this program, the better life gets for them and it helps PHA promote better programs."

Twenty-eight students graduated and received certificates. During the ceremony, two special awards were handed out. Sidney Young received the

Valedictorian award for his exceptional hard work. David Murray received the Against All Odds award because of the tremendous obstacles he had to face in the military and in life.

These Pre-Apprenticeship students have not only worked hard in the classroom, but also answered the call whenever help was needed. They assisted in preparing and serving food for the computer graduation class cook-out. In addition, they pitched in to serve PHA seniors for the Thanksgiving dinner and for the holiday tree lighting ceremonies.

The December graduation was also one of the first events attended by the new Deputy Executive Director of Resident and Community Services, Dr. Samuel Little. He gave high praise for the program.

"Congratulations to the 2011 graduating class," said Dr. Little. "We hope many more residents will take advantage of this outstanding Pre-Apprenticeship Program."

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



PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program for Construction and Building Trades celebrated the graduation of 28 residents in late December.

Former West Park resident sets the stage for success

A former West Park Apartments resident has found success as a playwright.

Bryana Michelle has written two plays. Her second, "The Repast," debuted in September at the Adrienne Theater as part of the Philly Urban Theater Festival and received a positive review in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

Urban theater focuses on city life and the minority experience. Many young writers and actors self-produce their work by renting out theaters and putting on their own pieces.

Michelle's plays are inspired by both her personal experiences and her observations of others. Her childhood at West Park influences her writing as well.

"Growing up at West Park opened me up to a lot of things in terms of real life and struggles," Bryana said. "I think I have an understanding of all different types of people. It makes my characters richer and gives them different dynamics. I know what it's like to be down and out."

After she graduated from West Catholic High School, Bryana earned an associate's

degree in communication-theater arts from the Community College of Philadelphia and a bachelor's in theater from Temple University.

Initially, she was interested in acting and performed in many stage productions. Writing came later, but after seeing the impact her work had and her audience's reactions, Bryana decided that writing for the theater is what she really wants to do.

It wasn't easy to juggle motherhood, a full-time job, and working on her first play, but Bryana is proud of how she stuck to a project and saw it through from start to finish.

"It's amazing to accomplish something of a significant magnitude," Michelle said. "Writing and producing a play ranked up there with graduating from college for me. It really inspired me to keep going on to the next thing."

Her most recent play, "The Repast" focuses on 4 generations of a family. Conflicts arise between two sisters after their mother, the matriarch, passes away.

Gentrification is also major theme of the play: the family home is the last house left on a block that has been bought up and rebuilt by developers. The question of what's going to happen to the home now drives the story.

Bryana's day jobs in real estate influenced that aspect of the piece, but it is also rooted in her experiences living in Philadelphia and seeing neighborhoods like Temple change dramatically over the years.

"It looks very different from when I was a student. The neighborhood looks better, some say they feel safer, and there are more things to do," she explained. "But I also wonder about the families who used to live there. How did they adjust, where did they move? I try to remember how neighborhoods use to be and consider how we make it better through revitalization while taking into consideration adverse effects."

Bryana is very proud of the play and the positive feedback she received from her audience. She believes it has a lot of depth and explores serious social issues.

Her shows are still in demand; people still call to learn about future productions. She hopes to put "The Repast" on again in the spring either in New York or Philadelphia. She is also working on turning her plays into screenplays. Because film and theatre are different, she's educating herself and learning the process so it can be done the right way.



Local playwright Bryana Michelle was born and raised at PHA's West Park Apartments.

Bryana feels blessed and lucky to have a supportive family and fiancé who step in to help when she's working on her productions. She frequently visits West Park to see her mother who still lives there and other family and friends. Many residents and neighbors came out to see the plays and support Bryana.



Michelle's second play, "The Repast," debuted in September at the Adrienne Theater as part of the Philly Urban Theater Festival. The play focuses on family conflict and the issue of gentrification.

PHA celebrates MLK Day with service

PHA's Dr. Martin Luther King holiday activities were a resounding success as 10 organizations and 247 volunteers from Philadelphia and New Jersey joined hands for a day of service.

Nearly 1,000 canned goods were collected and sent to Philabundance and two homeless shelters. Over 2,000 books were collected, sorted, and sent to the libraries PHA is building up at the Raymond Rosen and Norman Blumberg community centers. The donations came

from PHA employees, residents, and members of the community.

Volunteers and donors included Laborers Local #332, Watoto After School Care, Foundations, Inc. (EDSI), Drexel University, and Frankie's World Day Care. Health Partners, Mercy Health, Dr. Morgan, and Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church were also represented on-site at the John F. Street Community Center.

"It's really important to look at social justice as the message of Dr. King and also something that becomes the unifying goal for all of us to attain," said PHA Administrative Receiver/Executive Director Michael P. Kelly. "When he talks about the content of character, he means how we can spend every day making someone else's life better."

Kelly said that's why he chose a career in public housing.

Deyne Rogers of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church said without service, MLK Day wouldn't mean a thing.

"It means a lot to serve for someone who fought for so much for us," she said.

Marsha Ryder, a retired postal worker, volunteers her services every year on MLK Day. She brought her grandson with her because she believes it's important for children to learn the meaning of community service.

"If we don't have service, then nothing gets done," she said.

Members of the Boys & Girls Clubs worked on art projects that promoted timely messages such as "No Flash



Over 2,000 books were collected and sorted during the MLK Day of Service at PHA and sent to the Raymond Rosen and Norman Blumberg community centers.

Mobs" and "Think Before You Send." Ariel Golding, a coordinator and after-school counselor for the club, said the idea behind the projects was to emphasize that actions and words have consequences.

The children who worked on those drawings are members of the Boys & Girls Club's Torch and Keystone Service Clubs. Once the kids finished

the project, Keystone Club members Tiyonna Lanier and Brianna Boone made a presentation on being responsible with your words and actions to the entire gathering at the Street Center. Tamir Hooper, a 7th grader in the Torch Club, also performed a rap about ending flash mobs. It was a perfect ending to a day dedicated to a leader who emphasized nonviolence.



Students worked on art projects that said "No Flash Mobs" and "Think Before You Send" to emphasize that actions and words have consequences.

Community Outreach gives back to Rosen neighborhood

Over 15 years ago, residents of Raymond Rosen Manor in North Philadelphia started Community Outreach, an organization dedicated to improving their neighborhood.

Their philosophy is that you have to take care of your own home, but there are also things you have to do for your community.

One of the group's leaders is Alfonso Glenn, who was born and raised at Rosen and still lives there with his wife and children. Over the years, he has seen the community struggle with drugs, violence and poverty so he decided to take the initiative and help make it a better place.

"I teach my sons that you always have to do something in your community," said Mr. Glenn. "I tell them that and then they see my example. We can't wait for handouts; we have to do it for ourselves."

The members of Community Outreach are in their 50s and 60s. They grew up fighting turf wars, but now they're trying to rebuild and revitalize the community and bring hope, structure and awareness to the people who live there.

Alfonso's interest in community service was first sparked by his role as a concerned parent. He volunteered at Frederick Douglass School where his children were students and eventually became Home and School president. He focused on encouraging men to be

involved in their children's lives and planning activities to benefit the school.

Eventually, Mr. Glenn brought his commitment and passion for service to Community Outreach. He has been involved with the organization for 5 years and now thinks of his work with Community Outreach as a calling.

"Volunteering makes me feel whole," he explained. "Like a citizen."

His responsibilities include planning events for the community, reaching out to different organizations for donations, and fundraising. He and his hardworking team also do the lion's share of the cooking for Community Outreach's two big annual events for the neighborhood—a community cookout near the end of the summer and a Seniors Appreciation Dinner, which is held around Thanksgiving.

This year's Seniors Appreciation Dinner was held on November 13 in the Raymond Rosen Community Center. The residents socialized and enjoyed a great, home-cooked meal. Members of Community Outreach also delivered food to the homes of senior residents who couldn't make it out.

The organization maintains a strong relationship with the Raymond Rosen tenant council and resident leader Shirley Spencer.



Seniors enjoy a home-cooked meal in the Raymond Rosen Community Center, courtesy of Community Outreach. The Seniors Appreciation Dinner is one of two major events that the group organizes for their neighbors.

"She is always supportive of our needs," said Mr. Glenn. "Like us, she has lived around here for years and we have a brother/sister partnership."

Community Outreach is planning to hold movie nights every other week for the kids at Raymond Rosen. The goal is to give youth in the community something to do and offer them the opportunity to talk about their day and any issues they may have. The organization is concerned about the lack of programming and job opportunities for youth.

Community Outreach also maintains lots in the community and boards up vacant buildings. Their goal is to obtain

a vacant property in the neighborhood and turn it into a base of operations, but one of the challenges the group faces is funding. Community Outreach accepts donations, but most comes out of pocket.

At the moment, there are about 15 members, all men, though women have been involved in the past. The door is always open to more people in the community who want to pitch in.

"But it has to be from the heart," says Mr. Glenn.

For more information about the Community Outreach organization, please email AGLen121@aol.com.



The members of the Community Outreach organization are Rosen residents committed to revitalizing the neighborhood and bringing hope, structure and awareness to the people who live there. Pictured in first row: Dave. Second Row: Ray, Mickey, Heads, Anthony, Reds. Third row: Sam, Umar, China, Alfonso Glenn.

Fairmount Boys & Girls Club honors former mentor



Kiana Edwards (far right), Site Director for the Fairmount Boys & Girls Club, presents a floral arrangement to Natalie Ray, the mother of former club mentor Troy Johnson. Talayah and Samir Ross, Johnson's cousins, hold a plaque donated to the club by the Borowsky Family Foundation. The foundation also made a donation toward the club's day-to-day operations.

Troy Johnson was a young man in the prime of his life when he was cut down by gunfire this summer as he walked across the Harrison Elementary School playground. He was apparently an innocent victim of a turf war taking place in the neighborhood. His death shocked his family and friends, including the staff and participants of the Boys & Girls Club at the John F. Street Community Center where he volunteered as a mentor.

On Thanksgiving Eve, a plaque honoring the young man was presented to his family by the Borowsky Family Foundation during a special memorial service and dinner. Johnson's grandmother worked for the Foundation and the people there were as impressed as Boys & Girls Club officials with his dedication and talent. The foundation donated money for the plaque, which will be displayed at the center, and the general operation of the club.

"Troy Ray Johnson was a fine, creative young man," said Laurie Wagman, the president of the philanthropic group. "We knew he had a splendid future ahead of him. He was gifted."

Wagman and Kiana Edwards, site director for the club, said that Johnson was beloved throughout the community. He participated in teen programming at the club, worked on a couple of music projects, and was seen by many as an inspiring rapper.

"What made Troy special was that he was a young man that actually gave back to his community," Edwards said.

A mentor is a role model who is three or more years older than the youth they help at the club. They donate one hour per week to give one-on-one tutoring or instruction, making an important investment in a child's life.

Without people like Troy Johnson, the Boys & Girls Club would be hard pressed to offer the adult leadership and other services its members need.

"The more positive people [get involved], the more our program will thrive," Edwards said. "And Troy was one of those people that allowed this program to thrive. He contributed in a positive way."



Troy Johnson, 21, was a young man in the prime of his life who was volunteering as a mentor at the Fairmount Boys and Girls Club when he was cut down by gunfire this summer.

www.PHA.PHILA.gov

Neighborhood Network Computer Labs

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

5405 Gibson Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19143

Blumberg Apartments

2311 W. Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Blumberg Seniors

2311 W. Jefferson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Harrison Plaza

1240 N. 10th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122

Hill Creek

5573 Hillcreek Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19120

John F Street Center

1100 Poplar Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Johnson Homes

2630-D Norris Drive, Philadelphia, PA 19122

Spring Garden

715 Brandywine Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

Westpark Apartments

300 N. Busti Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

White Hall

4749 Tackawanna Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124

For class times please contact:

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



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

PHA takes part in national heart health program

PHA residents have the opportunity to take part in a national program that promotes healthy living through diet and exercise.

The program, With Every Heartbeat Is Life, trains residents of public housing to become promoters of healthier living within their communities. Training

sessions will take place regularly at PHA sites with residents teaching fellow residents how to eat healthy and recognize the warning signs of life-threatening conditions and diseases.

Drexel University and Penn State's Cooperative Extension Center are partnering with PHA to run the

program locally. Residents should watch for workshop schedules to be posted at their sites.

The National Institutes of Health partnered with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to focus on improving the health of public housing residents after finding a high rate of preventable chronic diseases among them. Many of those diseases are linked to weight problems.

Good diets and healthy choices affect self-sufficiency and a resident's success in life. The push for making healthy choices and increasing access to good food is also championed by First Lady Michelle Obama.

PHA hosted a training session for With Every Heartbeat is Life in early November at Johnson Homes. The topics included knowing your risk for heart disease, staying physically active, controlling high blood pressure, and keeping cholesterol in check.

Ronald Guyton, one of the resident instructors from Johnson Homes, said African-Americans are an "at risk" group for heart disease and diabetes, so good diet and exercise are critical. He believes the biggest threat for many people is not knowing what's in the food they're eating.

"People miss out on reading the labels on things that we eat—the sodium, the sugar, the cholesterol," he said. "Those things are very, very important. We really need to read the labels and find



Toni Taylor, Ronald Guyton, and Christine Bush of Johnson Homes conducted five sessions for the "With Every Heartbeat Is Life" workshop at that site. They gave residents information on making healthy lifestyle changes to prevent heart disease.



Mary Green, RN, a Drexel University nursing instructor, checks Sheila Emanuel's blood pressure at the "With Every Heartbeat Is Life" workshop at Johnson Homes. Drexel University and Penn State's Cooperative Extension Center are partners with PHA in the program.

out the contents of what we're eating."

Guyton has to manage his diabetes and high blood pressure. He said it was a process for him to learn how to deal with those conditions, and he wanted to come and share his knowledge with everyone. He feels that many residents are not eating properly because the cost and lack of availability of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Another instructor, Toni Taylor, also of Johnson Homes, told residents that they don't need to join a gym to get the exercise they need. She pointed out that they can take brisk walks, going up and down stairs, and march in place behind their chairs during TV commercials. Even house cleaning is a cost effective form of exercise!

Looking for quality adult day services? Then Ridge Avenue is the place to be...

At Ridge Avenue Eldercare Services, our certified, caring staff offers clients a daytime program of recreational activities, social services, meals, and quality nursing care in a new, state-of-the-art facility.

Ridge Avenue Eldercare Services is certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging to provide free and discounted health services for qualified seniors.

If you or your loved one is not pre-qualified for state benefits, our staff is happy to assist you in the application process.

We Provide:

Meals

- Breakfast • Hot Lunch • Snacks

Activities

- Interactive Programs • Therapeutic Activities
- Fitness and Exercise • Health & Wellness Education
- Cultural Participation • Socializing and Networking

Transportation

- Provided to and from the center

Medication Management

- Worry-free medication assistance

Ridge Avenue Eldercare Services

2653 W. Glenwood Avenue • Phila., PA 19121

(215) 684-2464



Call today and make an appointment for a guided tour.



This past winter was filled

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



PHA brought some holiday spirit to senior sites this December with the annual tree lighting ceremonies. Residents and staff sang along to carols at Katie B. Jackson Plaza in West Philadelphia.



Seniors at Suffolk Manor enjoyed a nice meal with their neighbors as part of the tree lighting ceremony. Marilyn Jackson, a Pre-Apprenticeship student, was one of the servers.



The Boys & Girls Club's holiday party at the John F. Street Community Center emphasized fun and fitness. Members participated in health screenings, aerobic exercise, and hula hoop competitions.



Health Partners helped sponsor the holiday party for the Boys & Girls Club and shared important health information with those in attendance.

with memorable moments!

Which events do you remember best?



Volunteers at the John F. Street Community Center sorted and packed almost 1,000 canned goods as part of PHA's MLK Day of Service. The donations were sent to Philabundance and two local homeless shelters.



PHA collaborated with community activist Paul "Earthquake" Moore (standing, third from left) to hold MLK Day activities at Bartram Village Community Center. Children learned about Dr. King's legacy and discussed how to promote justice and peace in their community.



PHA and the PhillyRising Collaborative hosted a kick-off concert for the Philadelphia Youth Music Program on Saturday, January 21 at the Wilson Park Community Center. Philly artist Rell performed the PhillyRising theme song; he is backed by Steven Wise and LP Stiles Band.



The singing group PHI.GI. performed at the Philadelphia Youth Music Program Kick-Off Concert. The program will be based at the Wilson Park recording studio and teach youth marketable skills in music production.

Numbers show PHA fosters minority business & resident employment

PHA is exceeding most of its goals for promoting the growth and development of minority businesses and the employment of low income residents of Philadelphia.

During the past year, the agency surpassed the targets set by HUD for minority and women-owned businesses. 32% of PHA's contract dollars went to minority-owned businesses while 17% went to firms owned by women. The federal government targets are 20% for MBEs and 10% to WBEs.

The housing authority and its contractors are also required under Section 3 of the HUD Act of 1968 to

provide job training, employment, and contract opportunities for residents on projects and activities in their neighborhoods.

Under the law, 30% of new hires have to be low income or very low income residents of Philadelphia.

In 2011, PHA and its contractors hired 228 Section 3 residents for non-construction positions or 64% of all new non-construction hires. 447 Section 3 residents were hired for construction jobs or 19% of all positions.

People who are hired as a result of the Section 3 provision are grateful,

especially in the current job market.

Daryl Sampson, a painter's apprentice, is working on the new Norris Apartments for Buttonwood Construction.

"I did not have a job before then," he said. "It's been a big help to me."

Sampson has left public housing and supports a family of four children. Before working for Buttonwood, he got by doing part time work with no benefits or pension. Now, he likes to say, he can pay the bills and still have enough money for a sandwich.

PHA resident Tiffany Reid works part time for Oystertree Consulting, a company that is doing an agency-wide sustainability assessment. She's excited to get a chance at a new and promising career.

"I'm going into a field that I'm fairly new to, so I'm learning new things and new opportunities are opening up to me," she said.

Abdul Mujahid, who works as a glazier for Eureka Metal and Glass in Northeast Philadelphia, started out working for PHA before going to the private sector. He said the job came at a perfect time because he has a wife and two-month old son.

"I've got a little breathing room now. The benefits with this job are great," said Mujahid.



Residents who are hired as a result of the Section 3 provision are grateful, especially in the current tight job market. Daryl Sampson, a painter's apprentice, is working on the new Norris Apartments for Buttonwood Construction.



Tiffany Reid, a PHA resident hired under the Section 3 program, works for Oystertree Consulting, a firm under contract to PHA to provide an agency-wide sustainability assessment. She conducts research, is involved in meetings with city officials, does assessments, and has crafted a sustainability survey for PHA employees.

The Section 3 program also requires that 10% of the money awarded under construction contracts and 3% of the money for non-construction activities go to Section 3 business concerns.

PHA exceeded those goals as well. Over \$4.8 million or 11.7% in construction dollars went to Section 3 businesses. Over \$598,000 or 3.7% went to Section 3 businesses for non-construction work.

Section 3 business concerns are businesses that are at least 51% or more owned by low income or very low income residents or businesses that employ Section 3 residents for at least 30% of its full-time, permanent staff.

Businesses that subcontract their work and spend more than 25% of their contractual award with firms owned by low income people also qualify as Section 3 business concerns.

In 2010, PHA adopted a special plan to meet Section 3 requirements through policy review, training and outreach. The plan has proven very successful, thanks to the collaboration of PHA staff, stakeholders, and residents.

For more information about PHA's Affirmative Action and Section 3 programs, please visit the Business Opportunities section of our website at www.pha.phila.gov

Pre-Apprenticeship grad willing to do what it takes

Maurice Hayes knows what it's like to hit rock bottom. Before he came to PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program, he was living on public assistance and staying with his uncle after he was laid off from a couple of jobs. He was out of work for two years when he entered the program in January 2010.

But Hayes, 32, was always a hard worker. He had majored in electrical engineering at Temple University for three years while also working as a cook, a carpet cleaner, and parking attendant. Then, he got sick and his money problems began. There were also scheduling issues. He dropped out of school with a 2.8 grade point average. Maurice was like so many people looking for work today in a tough recession—talented, but hitting dead ends.

From the moment he signed up for the Pre-Apprenticeship program, Maurice was inspired by instructor Alex Perez, who mentors students pursuing a career as electricians.

"I can't say enough about Alex Perez," Hayes said. "His work ethic and everything that he did inspired me to push myself further and take this opportunity seriously. Everything that he said was true. He's the reason why I'm working right now."

Perez helped Maurice brush up on the math skills he'd need to become an electrician, skills that include some algebra and trigonometry. Meanwhile, Maurice still needed to get some money in his pocket. With a little luck, he landed a job as a customer service agent at a casino. He'd work there from 5:30pm to 2:30am and attend school from 7am to 3pm, catching sleep whenever he could.

"It was the hardest thing that I've ever done in my life, but I had to do it. It had to get done," Hayes said.

Maurice graduated from the program in June 2010 and kept working at the casino because the job market for apprentice electricians was dry. In November, the job at the casino dried

up too and Hayes was down to his last few dollars. Thanks to a reference from Alex Perez, he landed a job last March with Larry C. McCrae, Inc., a well-known electrical contractor in the Philadelphia area.

Hayes is now back on his own, renting his own apartment and making plans for the future, including starting his own contracting business.

"It's something I've envisioned since I was a child," he said. "I always wanted to own my own business. I want to leave something to my daughter or if I have a son."

Maurice calls his long road back to self-sufficiency and success "amazing" and said he thanks God every day for what he has and is not letting go.

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



Pre-Apprenticeship graduate Maurice Hayes had been out of work for two years before entering the program. Now he is working for an electrical contractor and making plans to start his own construction business.



Housing Choice resident finds home of her dreams



Lisa Spencer became a homeowner in southwest Philadelphia after working hard to clear up her credit and save money for a down payment. She also had a good realtor who did an analysis on what she could afford to buy and where she wanted to live.

Since she was a kid, Lisa Spencer has had her eye on a neighborhood in Southwest Philadelphia. It seemed like such a happy place, especially at Christmas when it was all lit up. Now, she's living the dream.

Ms. Spencer, who is a Certified Nursing Assistant, works as a secretary at the University of Pennsylvania hospital. She has two children, a 20-year-old son and a 17-year-old daughter. Her son is a graduate student at Temple University while her daughter attends Motivation High School.

Lisa became a Housing Choice client in 2003 and then, in 2008, she made a decision to change her life.

"I called my representative and I told her I was tired of paying rent. She sent me to the first time homebuyers program," Spencer said.

Before she could even think of buying a home, Lisa had to clean up her credit. She owed \$1,200 in utility and cell phone charges.

"It was a big mountain to climb. It was rough," she said.

Lisa got help from the Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Delaware Valley, a non-profit community service organization that provides counseling services and educational programs to people before, during or after a period of financial difficulty.

"I learned how to budget, how to make agreements that I can afford and stick to it. I learned to pay my bills on time and to have a rainy day fund," she said.

It took 18 months for Lisa to clear up her credit. In September 2009, she opened an account to save for a down payment. In a little over a year, she had \$4,000. Her house hunting began last January.

Spencer believes it's important to have a good realtor, too. She calls her realtor, Don Sherman of ReMax, "my angel." She said he did an analysis based on what she could afford and where she wanted to live. He also pointed out potential maintenance issues and told her to check the neighborhood for safety and quality of life.

Last May, Lisa found the home she wanted. It's still a little hard for her to believe that she owns a three-bedroom home with 1,500 square feet, just ten minutes away from work. Now, she's working on her next dream, becoming a registered nurse, by taking courses at Community College of Philadelphia.

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

Philadelphia Housing Authority



Interested in homeownership? PHA has two programs that can help you achieve your dream

HCV Homeownership Program

Participants in the Housing Choice homeownership program may use their vouchers to make monthly mortgage payments.

Scattered Sites Homeownership Program (Section 5H)

For scattered site residents who are interested in purchasing the home where they currently reside.

For more information, please contact:

PHA's Homeownership Division

215.684.4375 or 215.684.8018

malvin.reyes@pha.phila.gov



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations



PHA provides equal access to housing and services without regard to race, color, creed, gender, national origin or physical disability.



PHA resident among honorees at mayoral reception for students

A high school student from West Park Apartments received an award and met Mayor Michael A. Nutter in November as part of the Mayor's Ninth Grade Freshman Perfect Attendance Challenge.

Tonia Fields is a 9th grader at Paul Robeson High School for Human Services in West Philadelphia. She and a classmate were chosen to represent Robeson at a reception at City Hall because of their perfect attendance, good behavior and grades. She received a certificate and tickets to a Philadelphia Flyers hockey game.

Tonia was surprised at first.

"My friends and my teacher told me that I won the award to meet the mayor and I didn't believe it," she said.

At the dinner, the mayor spoke to students about his experiences in school and how that impacted his dreams to become mayor.

For Tonia, the mayor's speech reinforced the importance of staying in school, doing well, and achieving your dreams and goals.



Tonia Fields, a freshman at Paul Robeson High School, with her mother Jacqueline Barnes. Tonia was one of the honorees at a reception held by Mayor Michael Nutter for 9th graders in November.

Tonia's parents, who attended the dinner with her, are incredibly proud.

"It's an honor for her, coming from here to have a chance to do something like that," said her mother, Jacqueline Barnes.

Tonia likes reading, math, social studies and science and is also part of the poetry club and chess club at school. She plans to go to college at Drexel or Penn State and become a real estate agent. Her father, an electrician, inspired her chosen career path.

Homeownership tips

In the last issue, we offered homeownership tips from a housing counselor and a banker. Here are some suggestions from an experienced realtor for readers who are in the process of buying a home or thinking about it.

Robert Rosado is a realtor who works with PHA residents who are working towards owning their own home.

"It's important to understand what you are getting into," Rosado said. "The process is completely different from renting and what new homeowners are used to. You are entering into a contract with certain terms and obligations."

He stresses the importance of clients doing their homework first. Buyers who are ready to look for a house should decide where they want to live and check out the neighborhood thoroughly. Then it's a realtor's job is to help them find available housing and make appointments to see properties.

"It's important to be a detective before you go further," Robert said. "There are good houses, but homebuyers have to look to find them and not settle."

When you look at a lot of houses, they can start to blur together, so take a

camera with you. It's also good to take notes about what you see. Always err on the side of caution. When visiting a property, try everything: the lights, sinks, toilets, windows, appliances. Check the heater, plumbing, and electrical systems and keep an eye out for water spots or any visible leaks.

Robert also stresses the importance of deadlines. There are inspections that have to be conducted by a certain time and mortgage commitments to meet. Get documents ready for settlement.

He also advises prospective homebuyers to avoid applying for new credit or cosigning loans for others while you're in the process or about to settle on a property. Borrowing for other things reduces your ability to borrow for your own property. Robert has seen this happen in the past with clients who open a credit card to get new furniture or other necessities for the house. Instead, wait to do that because banks may look at your credit again before settlement.

It's also important to make your payments on time. Late payments will show up on your credit report and your loan can be denied. Make sure you're



up to date with utilities and anything that can come up on a credit report.

Finally, Robert advises clients to treat the home buying process as a business transaction and not to take it personally.

"It's important to not get emotionally invested—you may have to walk away due to a bad title or deed or there may be liens and judgments against the property," Rosado cautioned. "When you get the keys in your hand, then you can fall in love with the property."

For more information about homeownership, call PHA's Homeownership Division at 215-684-4375.

RESIDENT SERVICES CONTACTS

COMMUNITY PARTNERS MANAGER

Luz Paradoa
712 North 16th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130
215-684-0393

ESS COORDINATOR FOR HCV

Angelique Martez
215-684-2057

ESS COORDINATOR FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

Audrey Hickmon
215-684-2682

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR

Jerel Brooks
215-684-0393

SERVICE COORDINATORS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING

Colette Dunlap
Blumberg Apartments (T, W, F) 215-684-2685, 215-684-5551
Abbottsford Homes (M, TH) 215-684-1180

Nicole Connell

Raymond Rosen Apartments (M, W, F) 215-684-5553
Johnson Homes (T, TH) 215-684-4715

Stephanie Hamlin

Wilson Park (M,W,F) 215-684-0015
Bartram Village (T,Th) 215-684-2163

TEAM A - South Philadelphia Office

Nyla Jones
1172-1174 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19146
Zip Codes: 02, 03, 06, 07, 12, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, and 53
215-684-3126

TEAM B - West Philadelphia Office

Crystal Marshall
5207 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139
Zip Codes: 04, 31, 39, 43, and 51
215-684-1359

TEAM C - Northwest Philadelphia Office

Jenneane Tillar
2850 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19133
Zip Codes: 18, 19, 26, 27, 28, 29, 38, 41, 44, and 50
215-684-3051

TEAM D - North Philadelphia Office

Jenneane Tillar
2850 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19133
Zip Codes: 05, 06, 07, 08, 21, 22, 23, 25, 30, 32, 33, 34, and 40
215-684-3051

TEAM E - Northeast Philadelphia Office

Tiffani Goins
4346 Frankford Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19124
Zip Codes: 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 24, 35, 36, 37, 49, 52, and 54
215-684-1559

ASSET MANAGER - JOHN F. STREET COMMUNITY CENTER

Carla Fleming
1100 Poplar Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
215-684-3959

Youth News

PHA and PhillyRising launch youth music program at Wilson Park

(continued from page 1)

spoke at this special event.

The initiative started with a request from the Point Breeze community: neighbors and residents wanted a music program established right in their neighborhood. The city's PhillyRising Collaborative partnered with PHA and local music professionals to make it happen.

"It just all came together, which is what PhillyRising is about," said Adé Fequa, Assistant Managing Director of the PhillyRising Collaborative. "We learn what the community wants, find out who has resources, and partner with people who have facilities and programs."

PhillyRising partner Dominic McFadden of McFadden Music Productions will manage the program. He fell in love with the Wilson Park recording studio the second he saw the space and immediately began reaching out to his contacts in the music industry.

He estimates that 35 instructors who have been in the business for years and are eager to share their

knowledge have offered to teach young participants recording and engineering. The instructors will also educate them on the foundation of music while emphasizing how it is really done.

"It's not like what you see on TV and hear on the radio," McFadden explains. "The reality is sitting back here [in the studio] and doing it."

Participants will have the chance to do actual vocal recording with artists and entertainers that they know.

The program also emphasizes job opportunities and career options in the music industry for youth. After six weeks of learning the ropes, participants will intern at real, established studios throughout Philadelphia. They will take the skills they learn at the Wilson Park recording studio and help do live stage sound setup at concerts.

While a lot of kids dream about being rappers and singers, McFadden encourages youth to think of another way into the music industry.

Fequa agreed, "Not everyone can be Jay-Z or Beyoncé, but you can make

40, 50 dollars an hour to record those guys right here in Philadelphia. We're here to teach that skill."

The program also offers a caring environment where adults pay attention to what youth need.

"I know it will keep kids out of trouble," said McFadden. "This studio is top of the line and it will be a safe place for these young people to discover the joys of music."

The Wilson Park Community Center is a state-of-the-art facility with a computer lab, basketball court, and dance studio. It is home to the Wilson Park Unit of the Boys & Girls Club and has hosted several health and community events. In 2007, PHA received a \$150,000 grant from the Wells Fargo Foundation to establish the South Philadelphia After-school Recreation Center (SPARC) at Wilson Park and hire a coordinator to initiate services designed to promote healthy living, support academic achievement and leadership skills for area youth.

PHA and PhillyRising hope to expand the Philadelphia Youth Music Program to other locations as well, including PHA's John F.



From left, PHA Administrative Receiver/Executive Director Michael Kelly, Rena Sinakin from Rena Sinakin Productions, Mayor Michael Nutter, and Dominic McFadden of McFadden Music Productions toured the Wilson Park recording studio.

Street Community Center in North Philadelphia.

"This program will benefit a lot of kids—PHA kids, South Philly kids, kids who have been in trouble with the law, but want to do better," said Assistant Managing Director Fequa. "We'll be able to do something that I think is very special to this area and that is unique to the city. I don't think too many cities have something

like this, the partnerships we have. I would guarantee, after we do this successfully, it will catch national buzz."

The program starts February 15 at Wilson Park. Applications are available at the Wilson Park Community Center, 2500 Jackson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19145. Attention: Stephanie Hamlin, Service Coordinator, (215) 684-0015.

Happy holidays for kids at Raymond Rosen



The Raymond Rosen Resident Council partnered with IMPACT Charity Services to make the holidays extra special this year for children at the site. Five hundred children received toys and presents during a holiday party at the community center. Volunteers from Epiphany Fellowship Church at 17th and Diamond Streets helped facilitate the giveaway and members of the church choir sang carols for the guests.



Santa Claus wasn't the only famous figure to stop by and wish residents a Merry Christmas at the Raymond Rosen holiday party. Former Eagles player Jeremiah Trotter met with children and their parents as well. Officers from the Philadelphia Housing Authority Police Department and the 22nd District were also at the event.

Pre-Apprenticeship Program
FOR CONSTRUCTION TRADES

A hands-on training program that offers participants career opportunities in:

- CARPENTRY
- PLUMBING
- ELECTRICAL WORK
- ROOFING
- PAINTING

Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CENTER
1905 VARE AVE
215.684.8049
WWW.PHA.PHILA.GOV



Grandson is an 11/11/11 baby

Darlynn Lee, a West Park resident, with her youngest grandson, Robert Jace Lee-Eury. Ms. Lee won't have any trouble remembering Robert's birthday. He arrived a little earlier than everyone expected on 11/11/11, just in time to spend the holidays with his grandmother.

"To be born on 11/11/11!" exclaimed Ms. Lee. "I knew he was going to be special."

Seniors enjoy an enchanting evening



Lena Myrick, Jean Hodge, and Dorothy Peoples enjoy the Black and White Ball, which was held the first weekend in November at Emlen Arms in northwest Philadelphia. Myrick said she likes getting dressed up to have some fun. Peoples said Hodge talked her into attending the ball.

Senior Calendar

FEBRUARY

Celebration of Healthy Hearts - Red Party

Heart healthy lifestyle workshops and cooking and exercising demonstrations

Red Party

Emlen Arms February 10, 2012, 10am

Red Party

Holmecrest February 17, 2012, 10am

Red Party

Nellie Reynolds Gardens February 23, 2011, 10am

MARCH

Celebration of Nutrition - The Biggest Loser PHA Senior Edition

A nutrition and fitness program providing healthy lifestyle and dietary changes for a healthier you

Workshops

Wilson Park
Conswiller B. Pratt Apartments March 6, 2012, 1pm

Workshops

Collegeview
Nellie Reynolds Gardens March 8, 2012, 1pm

Workshops

Plymouth Hall
Suffolk Manor
Emlen Arms March 9, 2012, 1pm

The Biggest Loser PHA Senior Edition Kick Off Pep Rally

John F. Street Community Center March 15, 2012, 10am

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

Residents of Emlen Arms hosted the annual Black and White Ball in early November on a crisp Saturday evening. The weather outside was chilly, but the night club setting in the community room was hot.

Emlen residents, their relatives, and seniors from other PHA sites truly enjoyed a night out while being pampered with some first class dinner service and music by the deejay, Ramon. For some, the ball is a rare chance to socialize with a lot of people.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for people to get together. It's an opportunity to socialize, to get dressed up, to feel good about themselves," said Ed Rudow, Site Director for the Wilson Park Senior Program.

For Ricardo Dredden, president of the Wilson Park Resident Council, events such as the ball are particularly meaningful. He is recovering from the effects of a stroke.

"A lot of our residents today cannot get out and communicate," he said. "We have to learn how to be happy. Sometimes, you have a life-threatening illness and you never believe that you're going to be able to do the things you used to do."

Dredden added that life is limited and nobody is promised tomorrow.

Carolyn Dobby, a 14-year resident at Emlen Arms, says she has looked forward to the ball every year since the tradition first began. It makes her feel younger and she can have a nice night out without going very far.

Evelyn Williams of Wilson Park is one of the residents who first came up with the idea to hold an annual ball. She was honored for her work by those in attendance at this year's event. Charmaine Morton, PHA Senior Programs Manager, presented Ms. Williams with a colorful bouquet of flowers.

Arnold Walker, the president of the Emlen Arms Resident Council, was smartly dressed in a black, pin-striped suit. He was glad that seniors had the chance to get together and was hoping that all went well.

We're happy to report that it did!



Arnold Walker, president of the Emlen Arms Resident Council, looked sharp in his pin-striped suit. He said a lot of work went into the Black and White Ball.

Mount Olivet residents receive “The Perfect Gift” for Christmas

Residents of Mount Olivet in West Philadelphia enjoyed an extra special Christmas with a holiday extravaganza and a play put on by two aspiring playwrights.

Darsell and Desi Brittingham are the daughters of Mount Olivet resident Mozelle Jackson who wanted to do something a little extra special during the holiday season.

Residents were treated to light refreshments, a few giveaways, a group sing-a-long, a raffle of holiday

gifts and a family photo taken with a donated holiday backdrop. And then, they sat back and enjoyed a play, “The Perfect Gift.”

The play focuses on the true meaning of Christmas. The story follows the Jones family as they shop for Christmas gifts. The hustle and bustle of shopping during the holidays is pushy and overwhelming. While the Jones are shopping, a modern-day Mary and Joseph tell the story of the birth of Christ. The wise men walk

past them with gifts, the shepherds walk past them with their sheep, the angels fly by them spreading joy and singing “Glory to God in the Highest,” and Mary with the Baby Jesus and Joseph walk by them.

The spirit of the season takes over and the shoppers treat each other with kindness. The story culminates with the creation of the Nativity, much like many people display in their homes. The surprise is that the Jones family along with the modern-day Mary and Joseph also bring their gifts to the Baby Jesus. The play closes with the song, “Silent Night.”

Ms. Jackson, who has lived at Mount Olivet since 2004, believes that holding special events such as this one are critical to the well-being of residents.

“It helps us go on with our lives. It keeps us from becoming dormant,” she said. “Death is coming? Are you going sit and wait for it or are you going to try and outrun it?”

Jackson jokes that her mother outran it and lived to the ripe old age of 96.

Putting on the play was a challenge.



The cast of “The Perfect Gift” was led by Darsell Brittingham (upper left corner) and her sister, Desiree, (2nd row, first left). Their mother, Mozelle Jackson (upper right corner), lives at Mount Olivet and wanted to do something a little extra special during the holiday season.

“We are blessed that we were able to make it all happen in light of the calamity that occurred,” Darsell Brittingham said. “Due to testing, the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts was unable to perform with us, two additional actors were unable to perform due to

conflicts and another lost his mother just six days before Christmas.”

Mount Olivet residents were thrilled with the presentation and Brittingham has promised to produce another play for them at some future date.



Residents Diane Jacob and John Baker were the winners of beautiful baskets at Mount Olivet’s 2011 Holiday Extravaganza on December 22nd. Louise Washington is sitting to Jacobs and enjoying the moment.

Scattered Sites Homeownership Program

(continued from page 1)

“The program gives renters a chance to be homeowners and I’ve been renting this house for so long,” Mitchell explained. “It was a great deal at the perfect time. The mortgage is cheaper than renting.”

The first step he took was going through the first time homebuyer’s workshop, which teaches prospective buyers about homeownership responsibilities.

At the workshop, Mitchell learned to think of homeownership as not just buying a home, but making an investment. That opened his eyes.

Mr. Hughes’ good credit and savings made making the jump to homeownership much easier. He had no trouble finding a lender. In fact, he had a lot of options to choose from and focused on finding the best interest rate.

Mitchell credits working in his Uncle Leon’s store in the neighborhood for

teaching him responsibility at a young age.

“You have to think ahead and look to the future instead of getting money and spend, spend, spend,” he advises. “Always put something to the side and have good credit.”

Mitchell closed on the house in 2010—the same year he graduated from Community College of Philadelphia with an Associate’s Degree in information technology. He currently works as a claims processor for Community Behavioral Health and hopes to use his education to advance through the company.

“Graduating from school and buying the house was an exciting time,” Mitchell said.

He’s grateful for his site manager, Ms. Jamison, for telling him about the program and helped him get started.

“Every time I had a problem, she would look into it,” said Mr. Hughes. “It took time, but she always tried

to get things done for us. It was very good working with PHA.”

As part of the Scattered Sites Homeownership Program, PHA ensures that all major systems in the home are up to date. Mr. Hughes is currently working on making his own improvements to the house.

“It feels like I have more value in the home,” he said. “When you own something, you take care of it better.”

He sees it as his first home. Now that he’s gone through the process, Mitchell is thinking about getting into real estate. He’d like to buy more properties, fix them up and rent them out. But he knows that when he moves, his mother and uncle will always have a roof over their heads.

“There are a lot of memories in this house,” he said. “This is always going to be a home to us.”

For more information about the Scattered Sites Homeownership Program, please call (215) 684-8018.

New head of resident services

(continued from page 1)

out and build new partnerships to strengthen programs for residents in the areas of health, education, workforce development and special needs.

Dr. Little’s goals for the department include significantly increasing the number of residents who enter careers in booming fields like green economy, medical services, entertainment, and science as well as helping more residents become first time homebuyers so they no longer need housing assistance. Financial empowerment also has to be an important part of the equation for residents.

One of Dr. Little’s major responsibilities is also working closely with resident councils and the Resident Advisory Board. He’d like to expand the number of active resident leaders to ensure that every development is represented and encourage current leaders to

mentor leaders of the future. He also plans to offer leaders training so they have the tools they need to manage their councils effectively and develop resources and partnerships that will enhance their communities.

Dr. Little describes his philosophy as emphasizing conversations over confrontations and treating people with respect.

“I talk to everybody. I believe in close, good relationships,” he said. “Let’s talk, let’s partner, let’s figure it out. We may not always agree, but you can depend on me to do what is best for families.”

His vision for resident services at PHA emphasizes putting residents first and using the best policies and practices to do so.

“We should be about empowering people, improving communities and putting our signature on things that have a lasting impression,” said Dr. Little.

NETBOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM *for PHA Residents*

Program

- Microsoft Office – Word, Excel, Powerpoint
- Web Base (*internet access, surfing, online document creation*)

Eligibility

Philadelphia Housing Authority Residents who are 18 and older.

How to Register

Fill out the 'Computer Training and Education Form' and submit to your management office, or fax applications to 215.684.8080, you will be contacted for a scheduled date and time.

Location

Community College of Philadelphia - Main Campus, 18th and Callowhill Street
Community College of Philadelphia - Northwest Regional Center, 1300 West Godfrey Avenue

Sessions

Two 4-hour sessions. With completion you will be eligible for a Netbook computer.
Limit one Netbook computer per household.

For more information call
215.684.1016



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

FreedomRingsPartnership

Linking You to Opportunities through Internet Access, Training and Technology

