

The PHA Experience



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

Issue 18

A Community Newspaper for and About Residents

October 2008



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First homeless vet to receive HCV is "ecstatic"

Kevin Carroll intended to have a career in the military. Instead, life threw him a few curve balls, which had him running a shelter for homeless veterans for five years, and then ending up homeless himself. But as the first homeless veteran in a new PHA program to receive a housing choice voucher, Carroll is looking forward to having a place to call home.

"I'm ecstatic," said Carroll, clutching his voucher gratefully. "This is helping me beyond my wildest dreams. I'm going to go home and thank God."

Home for Carroll right now is transitional housing. He has been on the streets and in shelters since 2003. With his voucher in hand he will be able to look for his first real apartment.

Carroll served as an Army medic from 1976 through 1979. He had intended to stay in the Army, but when he



Army veteran Kevin Carroll holds the Housing Choice Voucher that he obtained with the assistance of VA Social Worker Stephen Bennett (standing).

was called for an 18-month tour of Korea his then-wife put her foot down. "When you have a wife and a child, you have to take that into consideration," he said.

Unfortunately, drugs got the better of him, and he lost his family. He and

his fourth wife ran the shelter for homeless veterans, which he says was the most fulfilling thing he has ever done. But once again, drugs took their toll, and he lost his job, his home at the shelter and his wife, although he admits she tried to help him.

In the end, Carroll said, "I got tired of that lifestyle. I was very sick, and if I kept on that way, I was going to die."

He turned to the Veterans Administration hospital and entered a program that has kept him drug-free for over two years.

"They turned me around," Carroll said. "Thank God for my social worker, Stephen Bennett, and the people at the VA, who take the time to help people."

Bennett guided Carroll through the process of applying for the voucher. As part of a national effort, the federal government has provided special funding for PHA to issue vouchers for 105 veterans in Philadelphia.

None of them could be happier than Kevin Carroll. "I am so blessed," he said.

Pre-Apprenticeship grad flying high at Boeing

Search on YouTube.com, and you can watch Boeing Aircraft's Osprey aircraft flying over Iraq.

Shericka Burrows plays the YouTube videos for her son and daughter so they can answer the question, "What does mom do all day?" Unlike other moms, Shericka is a sheet metal worker at Boeing's Delaware Valley plant, where she helps assemble the military airplanes that can transform into helicopters.

"I really like it because I can look

on YouTube and see they are really using them overseas," says Shericka, who adds she loves her job so much she spends the day smiling while she works.

Shericka left an office job over a year ago to enter PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program intending to pursue a career as an electrician. "I always enjoyed doing things with my hands," she explains. Once in the program, she was one of four Pre-Apprenticeship students tapped for a special program that Boeing was running through Delaware Community College to train sheet metal workers and recruit them to work on their planes.

The 10-week course "was a breeze" says Shericka who learned to read blue print

Singing for her supper, hustling for her dreams

Sherry Tucker has been hustling to get by for most of her life. She spent most of her childhood in foster homes, and she's now struggling to raise a seven-year old daughter as a single parent.

But as a contestant in a new reality TV show, "Hustle for Your Dreams," Tucker is betting that the drive and talent she has in abundance will finally pay off.

Tucker, a Housing Choice voucher resident, attended the Philadelphia tryout for the show last year and impressed the recruiters with her R & B singing and her song-writing skills. When she admitted she had written her song, they suggested that she create a song for the show's promo when the broadcast dates nears. "Hustle for Your Dreams" is scheduled to begin broadcasting in November 2009, according to producer Jay Hamilton.



Sherry "Dimples" Tucker will be a contestant on the new reality show, "Hustle for Your Dreams."

"I have been singing since I was 11 years old," says Tucker. "Music was

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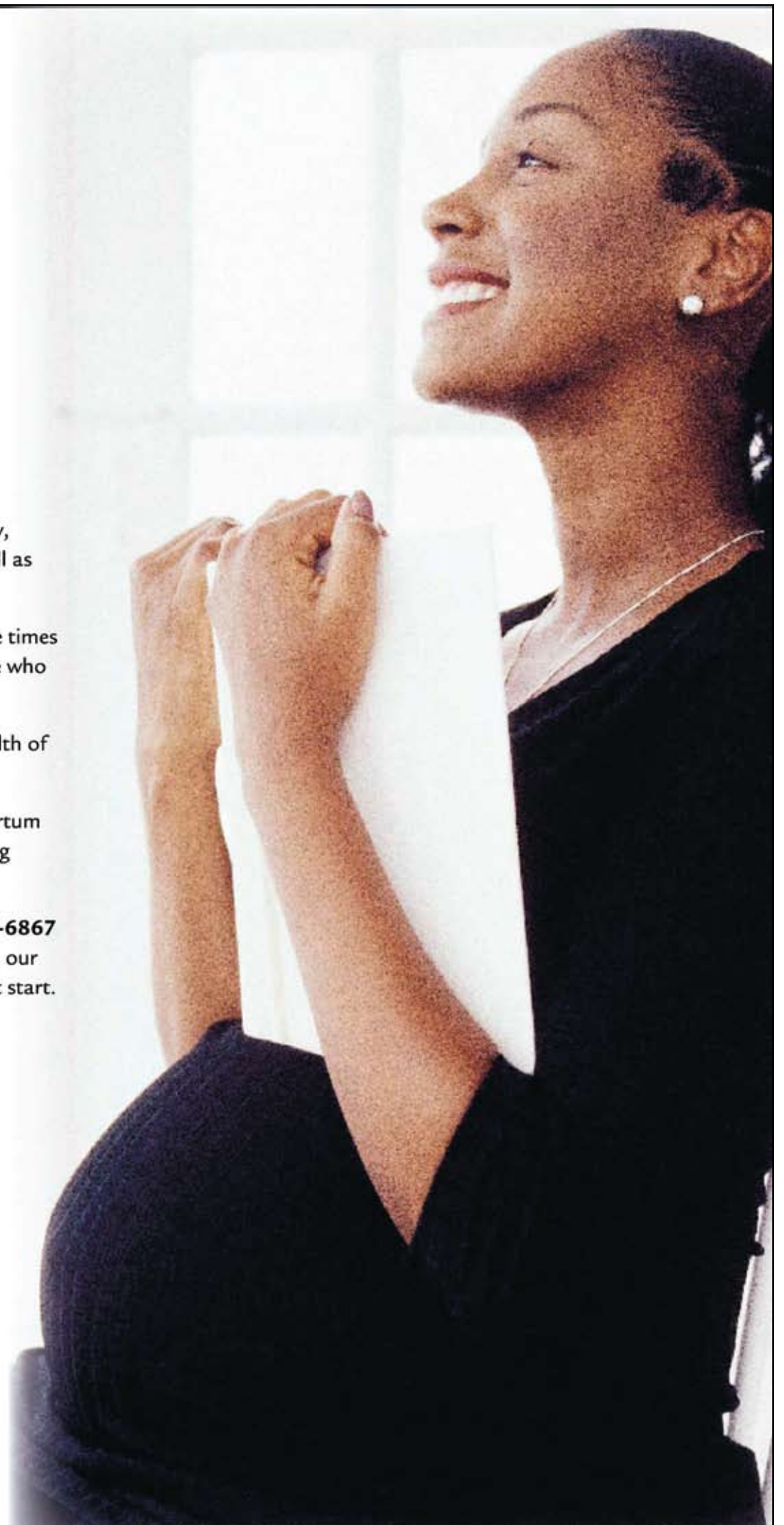
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Seniors realize the american dream of homeownership

Ronald and Brenda Coleman have been married 42 years and have spent their entire lives as renters, raising six children in PHA homes. As they struggled to raise their family, they never even imagined owning a home.

That changed the day they received an invitation from PHA to become homeowners at the new Ludlow development, not very far from where they live now. They attended the workshop that assists residents who are eligible to become homeowners. The Colemans learned how to pay their bills, save money, and improve their credit.

“We didn’t know how to pay our bills at one time. We always did what we thought we wanted to do at that time, and we would always have a hard time paying our bills. We learned if we pay our bills, we can get just about anything we want,” Brenda Coleman says. “We’ve been

saving for a while now. It’s been a good seven years.”

Ronald Coleman says he decided to take the plunge late in life and become a homeowner because he realized, “for what I’m paying in rent, I can be buying.”

Mr. Coleman is a retired policeman and laborer on Philadelphia’s docks. His wife still works as a supportive services assistant for the Philadelphia School District. They assist their son and daughter-in-law by caring for their 10-year-old granddaughter who was seriously affected by a stroke.

“For what I am paying in rent, I can be buying.”

Ronald Coleman

Mrs. Coleman says she likes the design of the homes at Ludlow and the fact that they have more space. She says their new home has features that might be considered luxuries elsewhere, such as the Energy Star appliances, central air conditioning, and a garage. The home is all-electric,



Ronald and Brenda Coleman are excited to be in a home of their own.

and she believes that will be less expensive than natural gas.

Mr. Coleman likes the fact that Ludlow is a neighborhood with private homeowners that’s close to Center City with residents

that have the same goals as he and his wife.

Ronald and Brenda Coleman are really excited. They’ll have a place that they can spend their retirement, and they’ve surprised

their friends, some of whom said they’d never do anything like this. But people like the Colemans who work hard and are willing to take a chance, even later in life, can still achieve the America dream.

Nellie’s “green roof” is blooming

When the first lucky seniors move into the brand new Nellie Reynolds Gardens in November, the last thing they’ll be looking at is the roof. They’ll certainly love the sunlit atrium, where they can relax and spend time with their friends. And the 64 comfortable apartments with wall-to-wall carpeting, air-conditioning and modern appliances will be a big hit.

So no one will blame them for ignoring the roof. But the “green roof” at NRG is a remarkable feature that will guarantee that NGR residents’ children and grandchildren live in a cleaner, greener world.

The 20,000 square foot “green roof” was installed this summer and planted with between five and ten different types of sedum plants – a hardy breed that will eventually form a green carpet on the rooftop. Today, the tiny plants don’t look like much, but as they grow and spread, they will become a three-inch deep layer that will soak up rainfall, cool the building in summer and moderate cold temperatures in winter.

In addition, the plants will keep 300,00 gallons of rainwater from

running off into the city’s sewer system, reducing strain on the system and water pollution at the same time. Nellie Reynolds Gardens is PHA’s third new site that combines affordable housing for seniors with elder care services on the same site. Seniors who would have normally had to choose nursing home care can now live independently in their own apartments.

The roof is just one of the many environmentally friendly materials used to construct the building.



Tiny seedlings planted in the roofing at Nellie Reynolds Gardens will eventually form a three-inch deep environmentally friendly carpet.

PHA has also installed Energy Star appliances and fixtures, used recycled or “Green Label” carpet and environmentally friendly paints, primers and caulking to help preserve air quality in the three-story building.

The building is named for PHA Board of Commissioners member Nellie Reynolds in honor of her almost 40 years of leadership in the movement for public housing residents’ rights and responsibilities.

Social Security recipients encouraged to “go direct”

PHA residents who receive Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits don’t have to wait for their checks to arrive in the mail anymore.

The U.S. Treasury’s “Go Direct” program deposits benefits directly and electronically into recipients’ bank accounts or on a prepaid Direct Express debit MasterCard.

Treasury officials say the direct deposit program is safer and more convenient. You won’t have to go to the bank or credit union to deposit your check, and you won’t have to pay check cashing fees that average \$6 per check.

For PHA residents without bank accounts, the money will be credited to the Direct Express card automatically each month. No bank account is required to receive these cards, which are issued by Comerica Bank of Dallas and can be used at retail locations and ATMs. The system will not allow a card user to withdraw more money than they have in their account.

Use of the debit card is free in most instances. The Direct Express® card ATM network offers surcharge-free access at approximately 50,000 machines throughout the country including PNC Bank, which has its machines in Wawa stores in Philadelphia.

Signing up for the Go Direct program is free, and residents have several options:

- You can call a toll-free helpline at (800) 333-1795
- You can go online at www.GoDirect.org or www.DirectoASuCuenta.org
- Stop in your local bank, credit union or Social Security office
- Fill out a paper form and mail it

To receive a Direct Express debit card, call toll-free (877) 212-9991 or register online at www.USDirectExpress.com. No credit check or minimum balance is required.



MOVING FORWARD

COMMUNITY PARTNERS TRAINING PROGRAMS



Administrative Assistant Job Readiness Program

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

Home Maintenance Repair Program

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

Personal & Financial Development

MET
3801 Market Street Suite 2002
Philadelphia, PA 19104
215.747.2781

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Medical Billing Pharmacy Technician

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

Hospitality Training Programs

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

Self-Employment Program

Enterprise Center
4548 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139
215.895.4078

Commercial Drivers License Customer Service Training Environmental Services Training

New Wave Resources, Inc
1321 Arch Street 6th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215.496.9388

Job Placement/Job Coaching

Educational Data Systems Inc.
42 South 15th Street Suite 300
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215.568.8316

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



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations



Six public housing residents attend college with help from the Carl R. Greene Achievement Scholarship

When Samirah Billips was in high school, one of her closest friends was diagnosed as HIV-positive. Samirah's efforts to help her friend sparked an interest in helping other HIV-positive teens, which led her to St. Christopher's Hospital for Children's Teen Testing Program.

After six years as a volunteer for the program, Samirah is working full-time at St. Christopher's clinic and, at the same time, studying for a master's degree in Public Health at Drexel University. Her goal is to find a cure for the disease that is devastating the teens – some as young as 11 years old – that she sees in the hospital clinic.

Until April, Samirah worried that she would not have the money to continue her education and pursue her dream. But as one of six recipients of the Carl R. Greene Achievement Scholarship, she is now on solid financial ground. The scholarship that is helping Samirah complete her education is available to all public housing residents, of any age, for any legitimate post-secondary institution – college, trade school or professional program.

"The scholarship couldn't have come at a better time for me," she said with a smile. Already burdened by loans taken out to pay for her bachelor's degree in psychology, Samirah doubted she could pay for

graduate school. "I couldn't afford it, and I didn't know what I was going to do. This has relieved some of the stress I was feeling."

Scholarships were also awarded to Jamillah Williams, Rosa Mercado, Krystle Ortiz, Maurice Belle, and Faith Holden at an April 11 fund-raising event marking Mr. Greene's 10th anniversary as PHA executive director.

Like Samirah, Jamillah's desire to be a nurse was triggered by a personal tragedy – the death of her infant son from respiratory complications.

"I wanted to be more hands-on," says Jamillah, who began by becoming an LPN. "Once I got a taste of nursing, I wanted to attain something higher," she added. She's now on her way to becoming a registered nurse at Community College of Philadelphia

Faith Holden, a sociology major at Arcadia University, plans to work with troubled children. "I've been working with kids since I've started," she said. And she's grateful for the scholarship. "I feel so good. Without it I don't know if I could have attended school."

To apply for the Carl R. Greene Achievement Scholarship, applicants can obtain an application at any PHA management office or on the PHA web site, www.pha.phila.gov.



PHA Executive Director Carl Greene (center) holds a symbolic check for \$18,000 that was raised at an April 11 event to support the Carl R. Greene Achievement Scholarship Program. Joining Mr. Greene are (from left to right) PHA Executive General Manager Linda Staley, Samirah Billips, Jamilla Williams, Sharon Combs, TSSI Director Asia Coney, Maurice Belle, Rylanda Wilson of PHA's Program Compliance Dept. and Faith Holden.



"This scholarship couldn't have come at a better time for me," says Samirah Billips, who is beginning a master's program in public health at Drexel University.

The application must be accompanied by:

- A letter of interest containing the student's goals and needs for assistance;
- The most recent transcript or a letter of acceptance to the scholarship school;
- An acceptance letter from a bona fide post-secondary school;
- School financial bills for tuition, board, transportation, etc.;

- Proof of filing of Federal Financial Aid Application (FAFSA).

A personal interview may be required.

The application deadline is May 1 for the 2009 Fall Semester. Payments will be made directly to the school. Scholarships are for one-year only. Applicants with a 2.0 average who are in good standing with their schools may reapply. For more information, contact Rylanda Wilson at 215-684-4161.

A message from the Executive Director



One of the Housing Choice Voucher program landlords featured in this edition of the PHA Experience made a comment that really got my attention. He said his PHA tenants all take very good care of their homes. That comment speaks volumes for the improvements in the program over the past several years and the partnership that has been formed among clients, landlords and the housing authority.

"As an organization, PHA has created a balanced approach. The public has a right to expect the Housing Choice program to be well run."

It's no secret that the program - formerly called Section 8 - had many critics. The complaints were directed at clients and landlords, and at the housing authority for not being a tougher manager. We took those complaints to heart and in 2003 put a package of reforms in place. The result has been better maintained properties and fewer complaints about client behavior. Also, more clients than ever are

working their way toward leaving the program and moving on to economic self-sufficiency and, in some cases, homeownership.

As an organization, PHA has created a balanced approach. Slightly more than half of our clients are in the voucher program while slightly less than half live in public housing. The voucher properties are spread in a balanced way in neighborhoods throughout the city, which we believe is how the program works best.

The public has a right to expect the Housing Choice program to be well run and for landlords

and tenants to uphold their responsibilities. I am happy to say that's exactly what the public is receiving.

Thank you,

Carl R. Greene



What is your favorite subject in school?



Kiheem Ayres
– Wilson Park
“Science.”



Karmin Grant
– Wilson Park
“Math.”



Maliqe James
– Wilson Park
“Reading.”



Haniyah Kelley
– Abbottsford Homes
“Homework.”



Keliyah Reaves
– Abbottsford Homes
“Reading.”



Kearney Scool
– Johnson Homes
“Reading.”



Shamyah Washington
– Johnson Homes
“Math.”

www.PHA.PHILA.gov

Neighborhood Network Computer Labs

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

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

Classes Locations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Computer Labs Also Available At:

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

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

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

Workforce Center - 3200 Vare Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19145

To Sign-Up Please Contact:

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



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

A house in West Philly brings Christmas in June

Christmas came late for the Huang family this year. Cheryl and Jung Huang, Taiwanese-Americans who came to Philadelphia five years ago, were thrown out of their South Philadelphia home right before Christmas because of a dispute with their landlord. At the time, the desperate couple had no idea that they would be touched by two angels – PHA and Liberty Resources Inc. – who would help them find a new home.

Mr. Huang, a professor of Mandarin Chinese, became permanently wheelchair bound after falling down the stairs of the couple's South Philly home. After the accident, he and his wife charged their landlord with several code violations and initiated a lawsuit against him. As a result, they were locked out of their house, first by the City's Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I) and then by their landlord. The landlord's attorney told them they had no chance of winning their suit because the judges were on the side of the landlords.

Desperate for a decent place to live with their three children, the Huangs planned to file a complaint with L & I. It was a cloudy, rainy

day. Cheryl was pushing her husband in a wheelchair with one of their children in tow. They were all in tears. On the way to L & I headquarters in the Municipal Services Building, Mr. Huang noticed a building in the 700 block of Market Street. People in wheelchairs were going in.

The Huangs ventured into the building, not knowing it was the home of Liberty Resources Inc. (LRI), an agency dedicated to assisting people with disabilities. The Huangs were escorted into the offices of LRI's Barbara Prince, who helped them apply for PHA's Housing Choice Voucher program. It was just six days before Christmas, and LRI and PHA were about to sign a historic agreement that committed 100 vouchers to disabled people, so they could live independently.

The Huangs received their voucher in March, but it took until late June to find the 4-bedroom home that they needed for their family. During that time, they had lived with friends, on the street, and in motels. LRI assisted the family with money for a deposit while PHA's Housing Choice program helped them get a utility allowance.



Cheryl and Jung Huang are happy to have finally found a home in West Philly.

Christmas for the Huangs finally came on June 20th when they moved into their new home in West Philadelphia.

Jung Huang says he likes "the freedom to be able to go around in a wheelchair" in his new home. Cheryl Huang says she likes the privacy that they and their children enjoy; the home is quite secluded. Best of all, it

has central air conditioning.

Eventually, the Huangs would like to buy their own home, but, for now, they're very happy that PHA and LRI enabled them to find a quality, accessible, comfortable home.

For more information on the program, contact Liberty Resources Inc. at 215-634-2000.

An HCV Landlord in search of tenants

"I haven't had any bad tenants," says HCV landlord Barry Stern of his almost two years working with PHA. Stern has about 200 PHA tenants in apartment buildings and houses that he both owns and manages for others throughout Philadelphia.

"PHA tenants' houses are always clean. They take care of the grass. They shovel the snow. You can't tell the PHA tenants from other tenants."

Stern, a newlywed who is younger than your average PHA landlord, signed on with the HCV program because PHA is the largest government agency in the rental business. As an HCV landlord, Stern knows that he will be receiving his rent every month. He has nothing but praise for PHA's HCV service staff, who he notes have the difficult job of receiving both tenant and landlord complaints.

His biggest problem is finding enough tenants to fill the multi-family buildings that form the bulk of his housing stock. HCV tenants, he points out, usually have children and prefer houses. He adds that the rental market has slowed down considerably this summer.

"I have gorgeous houses for rent, and people aren't even coming," he says. Most of Stern's buildings are in South and Southwest Philly, although he does have some in the Northeast.

If you are interested in renting a house or apartment from Stern, please call 267-978-8480.

An unconventional painting success story

Janet Warryton, a 39-year-old journeywoman painter who works at the Philadelphia Convention Center, is anything but conventional.

How many people do you know with three kids who jump from working as a housekeeper to working the building trades and earning their college degrees, too?

Warryton, a graduate of PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program, began working as a painter at the Convention Center last February on a temporary basis after a two and a half year layoff. She was offered a permanent painting job with benefits when one of the workers retired in May. She jumped at the chance to take a permanent job, knowing there will be plenty of work in the future as the Convention Center undergoes a massive expansion.

"I feel like I have accomplished a lot. I have no regrets," she says. "I'm happy with what I'm doing."

Warryton, a PHA scattered sites resident, does not hesitate to take



PHA Pre-Apprenticeship grad Janet Warryton abandoned housekeeping to become a painter at the Pennsylvania Convention Center.

chances to advance herself. She left her housekeeper job to enter the Pre-Apprenticeship Program in the late 1990's. She worked for PHA for a year and then formally entered the apprenticeship program with the International Union of Painters & Allied Trades (IUPAT), earning her journeywoman's card in May 2005.

When she was laid off shortly after receiving her card, Janet began attending Community College of Philadelphia (CCP). She wanted training and skills that she could use when there would not be enough painting work, and did an assortment of jobs to support her family while attending the College.

Janet made the most of her long layoff by graduating with honors from CCP with an associates' degree in management and entrepreneurship. She enrolled at Pierce College the following month to earn a bachelor's degree in business administration and small business entrepreneurship and will graduate in the spring.

"I love school. I've always attended some sort of school even as a working adult," Warryton says. "When I was laid off, I went through the Welfare to Work program. I didn't want to go through another job training program because I felt as though I had the skills."

Instead, Warryton is learning how to run her own business, a dream that is two or three years down the line for her, along with the goal of owning her own home.

And Janet urges more residents to take advantage of PHA's programs because "they'll see the real outcome of it."



A summer filled with

The summer of '08 is gone but not forgotten. We captured many of



Back to school haircuts got Oxford Village boys in shape for the new school year.



Five hundred children received backpacks filled with school supplies at PHA's Back Pack Giveaway, sponsored by the Apartment Association of Greater Philadelphia.



PHA's senior programs director Charmaine Morton celebrated her birthday with residents, staff and PHA commissioner Nellie Reynolds at the senior health fair hosted by NewCourtland.



WDA's Unity Day brought thousands of visitors to Penn's Landing. Many of them posed in the cutouts created by PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship students.



Thousands of kids throughout the city enjoyed a nutritious lunch at PHA's Summer Food Program.

memorable moments

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



Every seat in the house was filled with job hunters filling out applications at PHA's Fourth Annual Job Fair.



PHA's seniors enjoyed a barbeque, big band music and information about senior services from SEPTA, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging and other agencies at a senior health fair hosted by NewCourtland Health Services.



The sweet strains of Gospel music combined with food and a perfect summer's day made WPPZ's Gospelfest a great event. PHA was an event sponsor.



NASCAR has nothing on Wilson Park, where an exciting wheelchair race set seniors' hearts aflutter.



Dr. Ann Slaughter of the University of Pennsylvania joined other healthcare professionals at PHA's Accessibility Expo at the John F. Street Center. Disabled residents received information about services and enjoyed lunch and activities.



Noelle Miller of Champlost Homes, Sonia Jones of the Resident Advisory Board and PHA Assistant Executive Director Carolyn Carter were among attendees at the Resident Leadership Retreat at the Embassy Suites Airport Hotel in June.



PHA MTE Family Services Program

Homebuyers Club Workshops

WORKSHOP 1

Sponsored by Citizen's Bank

Strawbridge Building

8th & Market sts. 13th Floor

Community Area

Wednesday, October 22

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

First Time Homeownership Orientation

Budgeting & Money Management

Wednesday, October 29

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

Credit Repair / Home Inspection

WORKSHOP 2

Sponsored by Wachovia Mortgage Corp.

John F. Street Center

1100 W Poplar St.

Saturday, October 18

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

First Time Homeownership Orientation

Budgeting & Money Management

Saturday, October 25

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

Credit Repair / Home Inspection

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

Please plan to attend both sessions when registering.



WORKSHOPS DESCRIPTION

First Time Homeownership Orientation

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

Budgeting & Money Management

Learn how to define income and expenses.

Credit Repair / Home Inspection

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



Philadelphia Housing Authority
Building Beyond Expectations

Back to the classroom – Pre-Apprenticeship grad returns as instructor

Aaron Butler is enjoying a life he could have never imagined growing up in one of PHA's scattered sites. He is a journeyman painter, a Commercial Drivers License instructor, and a small business owner. Butler, 30, is also a homeowner in Germantown with a sense of fulfillment and a bright outlook. None of this, he says, would have occurred without PHA's Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

"I enjoy watching people get hope."

Aaron Butler

"I never thought that I would be an instructor. I never thought that I would be a guy making potentially up to \$80,000 a year. I never thought that I could get a commercial driver's license. I emphasize that to the folks who are coming through the program because I know they feel the way that I felt."

Aaron Butler's journey toward self-sufficiency and fulfillment began ten years ago when he joined the Navy. Upon his discharge from the military, Aaron came home to take care of his terminally ill mother, who was suffering from sickle cell anemia. He learned of the Pre-Apprenticeship program through the PHA

Experience.

"I got into the program, and it was everything that they told me it would be," Butler says.

Of particular importance, he says, was the mentoring that he and others received from the instructors – which proved as valuable as the technical instruction. Aaron, like others before him, needed someone to listen to him and advise him, especially when

his mother passed away midway through the training program.

He graduated from the program in 2001 and took tests to enter several unions, eventually becoming a member of the Painters' Union. Along the way, Aaron held a couple of retail jobs and took some culinary arts training before starting his Apprenticeship in September 2002 and earning his journeyman's card in May 2005.

Butler decided to pursue a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) because occasional layoffs in the building trades left him without a job and he needed to keep earning money for his family. When he's not painting, you may find him driving a big rig somewhere in the Philadelphia area.

Eventually, the Pre-Apprenticeship Program added CDL training based



Pre-Apprenticeship graduate Aaron Butler is back in the classroom, now as an instructor of Commercial Driving License classes.

on Aaron's experience. He teaches students in the classroom; they receive behind the wheel training from New Wave Resources (another PHA Community Partner) at a facility in Northeast Philadelphia. Aaron also plays the role of mentor to his students, just as his instructors at

Pre-Apprenticeship did for him.

"I enjoy watching people's lives change. I enjoy being a part of something; sitting back and watching people go from nothing to something. I enjoy watching people get hope."

Eagles and PHA make a great team

The Eagles Book Mobile made appearances at four PHA sites this summer – the John F. Street Center, Wilson Park Community Center, Abbottsford and Johnson Homes. At each site, Storybook Man entertained the children. Then each child was able to choose a book to take home.

The Eagles raise money to support the Book Mobile at their annual Carnival and Auction. This year, 16 PHA volunteers spent the day at the Carnival – handing out maps as people came into Lincoln Financial Field and helping out with the games. It was a successful fundraiser for the Eagles and a great day for PHA volunteers.



PHA kids received a book of their choice when the Eagles Book Mobile visited their site.



Sixteen PHA employees volunteered to spend a Sunday afternoon at the Eagles Carnival and Auction to help raise money to support the Book Mobile and other Eagles community service projects.

Diversity at Ludlow

PHA's Ludlow homeownership development has proven very popular with all kinds of people. In fact, the sales at Ludlow have produced the most diverse group of homeowners at any PHA development.

Malvin Reyes, manager of PHA's homeownership program, says the new homeowners come from five different groups of people: African, Asian, Hispanic, Arab, and White. African-Americans and Asian-Americans have the highest numbers with more than 37 and 31 percent of the homeownership respectively. Hispanic and Arab-Americans have just over 12 percent each. Just over 6 percent of the new homeowners are white.

A check of the latest Census figures by Kevin Gillen of the University of Pennsylvania and the firm Econsult shows that the new homeownership mix reflects the population of the 19122 neighborhood. The Ludlow community also includes Pacific Islanders and American Indians, as well as people of mixed race heritage.

Reyes points out that the sales prices of PHA homes at Ludlow are very attractive to those in adjacent neighborhoods such as Northern Liberties and Fishtown. Homes in those neighborhoods can easily sell for as much as \$500,000. The quality, afford-

able homes at Ludlow sold for between \$165,000 and \$175,000. There are already signs that private developers are coming into the neighborhood to rehabilitate existing homes or build new ones on open space.

"I think people see the change that's been going on for the past ten years," Reyes says. "This is so close to Center City. You're walking distance to the riverfront and to Chinatown. This is prime land. It's good land."

In addition to the cultural mix at Ludlow, Reyes notes that the new homeownership group has a nice mix of age groups and professions. The Ludlow development also features PHA public housing, which looks exactly the same as the homeownership units.

Gillen also points out that Ludlow and similar inner city neighborhoods will become more attractive as energy costs rise.

"Given a choice between heating and cooling a 'McMansion' that's a 45-minute commute from the city versus someplace that's more energy conscious and has walk ability...that can look very appealing to first-time homebuyers," he says.

And Gillen says the sales data gathered by Econsult is showing just that.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

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

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



Ten writers and poets who grew up in public housing



Alice Wilson-Fried
Author of *Outside Child*



Bernestine Singley
Author of *When Race Becomes Real*



Billy Lombardo
Author of *The Logic of a Rose*



Jane Taylor Lisle
Author of *Black Duck*
and other children's books



Kim Sykes
Author of *Angry Bird*



Lorenz Bell Graham
Author of *South Town*



Martin Espada
Author of *The Republic of Poetry*



Mary Huff Stevenson
Author of *The Urban Experience*



Maurice Berger
Author of *White Lies*



Michelle Davis
Romance writer

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Team C

Northwest Germantown Office

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Team D

North Philadelphia Office

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Team E

Northeast Philadelphia Office

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Some neighbors concerned over planned park at MLK Community

Residents at PHA's Martin Luther King Plaza are excited about a new park coming to their community, but the excitement is tempered with concerns that the park be kept safe and secure.

PHA has agreed to turn over a square block of its property at 12th and Catherine Streets, just south of Center City,

to the City of Philadelphia for development and maintenance of Hawthorne Park. Neighborhood activists have been campaigning for a park in the area for some time, but the reaction in the community has been mixed.

"Having the park here is a good idea," says PHA resident Donna Gaston, "The park should also reflect the beauty of the neighborhood."

But Gaston, like other neighbors is concerned that the park could be misused.

"For today's children, parks are a good thing," notes Christie Foti, who lives across the street from the park. "Just as important is keeping it clean and secure."

"We want the park, but only if it is used correctly, for kids and people who just want to sit and enjoy the environment," says Howard Goodman, another PHA resident.

"We want the park, but only if it is used correctly."

Howard Goodman

"Is it going to be maintained? Will it be patrolled?"

PHA Executive Director Carl Greene points out that PHA agreed to turn the property over to the city after he was assured that the city would take care of it.

"The park was to be a part of this development in our initial design," says Greene. "However, with the tremendous need for affordable housing we considered building more homes on at least part of the property. When the City and Mayor Nutter found the funding necessary to build and maintain the park, we were

convinced to move ahead with the plan."

The park construction will cost \$2.15 million. The State of Pennsylvania is paying about \$1.4 million, with the remaining \$750,000 coming from the City of Philadelphia, the Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation.

Park construction will be complete in 2010, but it is not the final activity at the site. PHA also plans to demolish the old community center at 12th and Fitzwater Streets to make room for 19 affordable homes for sale. These, too, will be ready in 2010. That will bring the total number of homes built by PHA at the site to 245, almost evenly divided between low-income rentals and moderate-income homeownership.

"The Hawthorne community serves as an example of the positive impact planned, quality, affordable housing can have on a neighborhood. Low-income families, now live next door to middle class families and upper middle class families. This would not have been possible without this public investment," Greene said.



Neighborhood activists turned out in triumph at the Hawthorne Park plan announcement.



Howard Goodman wants the new park used correctly.



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A PHA COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAM

Opening the door of opportunity at OIC

Kima Major is a PHA resident with seven children ranging from 18 to just a year old. She has always felt that her primary responsibility was to take care of her family. But as any parent knows, running a family is expensive. Her bills started piling up, and she had an urgent need to find work. "My husband's hours were cut back recently and making ends meet became difficult," said Kima.

PHA suggested that she turn to a PHA Community Partner, the Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC) for training. OIC counseled her and offered her the opportunity to work in culinary arts, the front desk or in house keeping. She picked house keeping and received solid support.

"The people at OIC are very professional. Through the 10-weeks of training, they provided transportation and then helped me get a job and are helping me keep the job. Because of this experience I now work at the Embassy Suites Hotel and feel successful because I have overcome challenges," she said.



PHA Resident Kima Major.

Kima's goal is to stay focused with the hopes of becoming a hotel manager. She was picked for the Embassy Suites management-training program. She is quick to say that much of her success comes from the door of opportunity that opened because of OIC. I would recommend anyone to go to OIC. Having a job makes you feel independent, productive and secure."



The Resident Empowerment Conference was a success



Asia Coney, Director of TSSI, told the gathering that the fight for safe, decent, affordable housing never ends.

This year's Resident Empowerment Conference, sponsored by Tenant Support Services Inc., drew 239 participants – about 20 percent more than last year. About 142 of the delegates were from outside Pennsylvania, including some from as far away as North Carolina and Missouri. The conference was held over Labor Day Weekend at the Marriott Hotel. Participants discussed issues surrounding public housing and enjoyed several social activities as well.



The Resident Empowerment conference drew 239 participants from around the country.

Philadelphia Housing Authority

SENIOR'S CALENDAR

OCTOBER - MEDICAL CLINIC MONTH

9th	Sight and Sound Theater - THE CREATION" Plus Lunch at the Hershey Farm Buffet
10th	Katie B. Jackson Mini Health Fair
24th	Liddonfield Health Fair
28th	Flu Shot's and Blood Pressure Screening Bentley Hall from 8:30am to 10:00am, Blumberg from 12:00pm to 2:00pm Emlen Arms from 12:00pm to 2:00pm, Cassie L. Holley from 12:00pm to 2:00pm Wilson Park from 12:00pm to 2:00pm
29th	Flu Shot's and Blood Pressure Screening Katie B. Jackson from 12:00pm to 2:00pm, Mt. Olivet from 12:00pm to 2:00pm
30th	Flu Shot's and Blood Pressure Screening Germantown House from 8:30am to 10:30am, Suffolk Manor from 12:00pm to 2:00pm

NOVEMBER - HARVEST MONTH

8th	Black and White Ball "In Honor of Evelyn Williams & In Memory of Lucille Smith" The Ball's Originators Wilson Park Community Center, 2500 Jackson Street from 4:00pm to 8:00pm
14th	Emlen Arms Harvest Day Celebration 6733 Emlen Street from 3:00pm to 5:00pm

DECEMBER - CELEBRATION OF LIFE MONTH

18th	Holiday Celebration Emlen Arms Older Adult Center, 6733 Emlen Street Cassie L. Holley Older Adult Center, 2100 Dickerson Street
19th	Holiday Celebration Liddonfield Older Adult Center, 8800 Jackson Drive Wilson Park Older Adult, 2508 Jackson Street

Hustling for her dreams

continued from page 1

my way out. It helped me forget my problems.”

She made it through one round of “American Idol,” but “they didn’t think I had the boom for the buck,” she recalls. Still, during round two, someone from “Hustle for Your Dreams” handed her a card, and she was on her way. Sherry admits that the music business is tough, and she realizes that perseverance is the only way to succeed.

Which makes her a perfect candidate for “Hustle for Your Dreams,” which demands more than just singing talent. Teams of players from different cities will compete for a \$1 million prize. To succeed, they will have to complete a series of tasks every week while holding down a job to make a living. Upon completion of each task, teams will be judged on both their performance and their money-managing skills. The winning team will be set up in business with the \$1 million investment.

Sherry’s nickname on the show is “Dimples.” How she got that name is evident when she smiles. To succeed on the show, she’ll also need a little help from her friends. You can catch Sherry’s act on her HFYD MySpace page – PA09230758. The more people who view her page and sign on as friends, the more status she’ll have on the show. Tryouts are continuing around the country. A schedule is available at hustleforyourdreams.com.

Taping for HFYD has not begun yet, although Tucker recently received a letter from the producers telling her to be on call to shoot a commercial for the show. While she waits for things to gear up, she performs at weddings and church events. She is also working on a degree in business at Strayer University, realizing that if she does succeed, she’ll need those skills.

“With a little faith, all things are possible,” she says. And she’s continuing to work with a voice coach, getting ready to release a CD single, and in every other way, hustling for her dreams.

Pre-Apprenticeship grad

continued from page 1

and assemble the aircraft. “They walk you though the job,” she explains. “They train you for everything you need to get into the company.”

She gets great satisfaction seeing the results of her labor. She is also pleased to be working at Boeing, where, she says, “you can move wherever you want to go.” In addition to the program at Delaware Valley Community College, Boeing offers on-site classes for their employees to help them advance at the company.

“One employee was a janitor, and he took the sheet metal class. Now he is working on planes, too.”

In addition to sheet metal training, PHA’s Pre-Apprenticeship Program offers housing residents the opportunity to train as electricians or carpenters and prepares them to take the test to join the unions. PHA staff members also look to help promising students like Shericka find special opportunities, such as the program at Boeing. For more information about the Pre-Apprenticeship Program, call George Johnson at 215-684-8049.

Wilco Electronics offers TV and Internet to PHA residents

Tired of the same old TV programs and want something more interesting? WPHA-TV, the brainchild of Wilco Electronic Systems, is now available with programs specifically designed for PHA residents. Wilcox, the only minority-owned cable operator in Philadelphia, was the

primary TV service provider for Philadelphia Housing Authority residents for more than 20 years. But the company lost business because it didn't keep up with residents' needs.

"There was just no way to compete with the influx of dishes

within the PHA community without offering additional services and competitive products" says the President and Wilco founder Will Daniel.

Now armed with new services, new management, new customer service practices and a brand new community access channel, Wilco is ready to take on its competitors by offering more premium channels without installation charges, additional wiring or contracts to sign.

Wilco is trying to regain its former PHA customers by establishing the new WPHA-TV, Channel 66 and its website component, www.wphatv.com. The channel gives residents original programming: financial classes, job skills training classes, health and wellness programs, local talk shows and films from

independent filmmakers.

One of the highlights of WPHA-TV is real time online streaming of PHA events. The channel

made its streaming and online debut last month during the 2008 TSSI Resident Empowerment Conference. "We envision the channel

"We will begin offering video production classes for PHA residents."

Andrew Carn, Wilco New Media Development Specialist

playing a major role in organizing PHA events, such as health care screenings, and empowering residents to communicate their message around the world," according to Andrew Carn, Wilco's new media development specialist. And the WPHA-TV production team will begin offering training for residents interested in learning about video production."

The list of new services is extensive. This fall Wilco is offering Internet services and will

soon offer phone service for PHA residents and give residents a chance to lease or buy a computer.

For information about Wilco's services or about programs on WPHA-TV, call 215-540-3930.



Wilco Electronics headquarters in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania.

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Building Beyond Expectations

