

# THE PHA Experience

A Community Newspaper For & About Residents

## PHA Exceeds Goal in Completing More Than 6,000 Housing Units

PHA has more than made good on its promise to develop or preserve 6,000 affordable housing units in a five-year period, under a plan dubbed “six-in-five” when it launched in 2014. The timeline was extended because of pandemic delays, but PHA - and partners funded by PHA - have built or renovated a total of 6,441 housing units.

“We feel a deep sense of accomplishment in meeting our goals, but we live in a city with such tremendous need that it feels as though our work has really only just begun,” said PHA President and CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah. “What makes our program so successful is that, in addition to the construction and neighborhood rebuilding we have done, we have funded and worked with extremely committed nonprofit housing organizations whose mission matches our own.”

One of the major areas for renovation has been PHA’s scattered site inventory. These are individual, decades-old properties owned by PHA that had fallen into disrepair and remained vacant and uninhabitable for years. Since the 6-in-5 program began, PHA has renovated 1,745 of these units, many in gentrifying neighborhoods, thereby preserving housing affordability in those communities.

PHA’s ongoing revitalization of the Sharswood neighborhood in North Philadelphia also has been a major area of construction during this period as well including North Central 5, a beautiful, modern apartment building located near Temple University. PHA has also built 50 homes for sale during the 6-in-5 period purchased by PHA families who went through the agency’s homeownership counseling program.

Changes in funding streams from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have accelerated the pace of construction. For example, under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, PHA has been able to convert public housing funding to higher paying Housing Choice Voucher Program funding. RAD represents a tool PHA plans to continue to use as it looks ahead to convert its remaining legacy properties to modern communities.

“We will use every tool at our disposal to create and preserve more housing for low-income families, seniors, and veterans,” Jeremiah said. “Even with all the efforts of our housing organization partners in the city and our own development activities, families still remain on our waiting list for years before finally having the opportunity to move to a PHA site.

While completing the 6-in-5 program was the highest profile

accomplishment for PHA in 2021, PHA also made great headway promoting social mobility and creating sustainable neighborhoods. Among the notable 2021 achievements:

PHA completed the North Central Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant, putting the finishing touches on 302 rental apartments and affordable homes. The neighborhood has a new 10,000 square-foot community center, training and employment supports, recreational areas, and an award-winning day care center operated by residents in partnership with Temple University. Norris Apartments residents’ incomes have doubled since the launch of Choice Neighborhoods, and violent crimes have decreased 42 percent.

- The Housing Choice Voucher Program expanded housing options for Philadelphians by launching a campaign to recruit participation by additional property owners and by offering monetary and support incentives to current property owners. Approximately 350 new property owners rented units to PHA voucher holders for the first time.
- PHA prioritized populations at greatest risk for homelessness this year. The agency partnered with Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) to offer apartments to housing insecure CCP students. The rehabbed buildings, which will serve up to 16 students, are just blocks from the Main Campus. The authority received nearly \$10 million in emergency housing vouchers to help homeless families and those at risk for losing their housing. These families are being referred to PHA by the City.
- The PHA Workforce Center at Vaux Community Building continued to expand workforce and employer partnerships by bringing in CVS Health as a training partner. CVS Health opened a Workforce Innovation and Talent Incubator, which prepares people for jobs as retail associates and pharmacy technicians.
- PHA continued to proactively contract with Black and Hispanic-owned businesses. For the latest reporting period, 28 percent of contract funds went to Black-owned firms while more than 4 percent went to Hispanic-owned companies. Overall, non-white businesses received 36.5 percent of PHA contracts.



- This year, PhillySEEDS, Inc., a PHA subsidiary, awarded \$316,000 in scholarship aid to 84 PHA residents seeking or engaging in higher education - a new record.
- PHA helped 90 people move from renting to owning homes - setting a record for homeownership as well. In 2021, the Homeownership Opportunities Program also helped Dwayne Fair purchase the home his family had rented from PHA for 52 years.
- Ninety-two students -about half of them PHA residents- were graduated from Vaux Big Picture Learning High School, which PHA helped to establish in Sharswood. Forty-two percent were headed for college, a trade school, or an internship, and 84 percent had internships during their time at the school. The class valedictorian has been accepted to 13 schools and received nearly \$1 million in scholarship awards.
- Fitch Ratings upgraded the Philadelphia Housing Authority’s financial outlook from stable to positive. The report serves as a barometer of PHA’s overall financial standing

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# Tragic Fire Exposes the Need for Affordable Public Housing and Emergency Preparedness



The deadly fire on 23rd Street has shaken all of us at the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA).

This misfortune comes at a time many PHA residents are mourning the loss

of friends, neighbors, and family members during pandemic and recent surge in violence. .

I offer my prayers and sincere condolences to all residents who have faced a tragic loss.

PHA is working hard to assist the families of the fire victims so they have whatever they need, including new housing options.

Shortly after the fire deadly fire in Philadelphia, another fatal fire broke out in the Bronx, leaving 17 people dead.

PHA strongly encourages you to test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors each month. If you find that a detector is not operational, please immediately contact the Customer Response Center at **(215) 684-4000**. PHA will generally respond to your calls within 24 hours. Do don't remove the batteries from these devices under any circumstance. It is a lease violation to disengage any smoke detector or carbon monoxide detector in your home.

PHA's maintenance teams are inspecting all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in its housing units. We are installing new batteries as needed, and placing tamper proof stickers over the devices so batteries cannot be removed.

We have asked our resident leaders to work with us in helping our communities to organize and prepare for emergencies, be they COVID-19 surges, fire prevention, safety programs, or other public safety concerns.

We understand that the lack of affordable housing is at the root of many of Philadelphia's current health and public safety challenges. PHA understands this and has been forcefully advocating for new funding to repair and maintain our aging housing stock and

build thousands more modern units to meet the various housing needs of Philadelphians. We ask for your support in our efforts.

It is encouraging that other powerful and influential voices within this city are joining in this cause. The only way we will get this done is by working together and looking out for each other.

This special edition of the PHA resident newspaper gathers helpful information on fire safety, emergency planning, PHA news, and support programs.

I encourage you to save the PHA contact information, and keep it close at hand. We stand ready to help. Take advantage of the PHA on-line portal that makes interactions with PHA staff easier, and more convenient.

PHA has staff to provide the latest information on the changing job market, career training programs, and entrepreneurship. We offer scholarships to help you or household members complete college. Our network of partners and stakeholders offer free programs for children and youth, well-stocked food pantries, skill development courses, educational services, vital community health services and more.

I wish to extend my personal thanks to everyone who has reached out this past year to help a neighbor, a friend or a relative who has been grieving a painful loss.

We have come through a dark and difficult period together. Yet PHA remains strong in its resolve to help residents gain access to jobs, quality housing, and opportunities.

Sign up for a PHA program today so you can join the residents and voucher holders who are taking decisive actions to help the city to recover from COVID-19, and create a more inclusive economy going forward.

Kelvin A. Jeremiah  
President & CEO

## Help us Help You

PHA Headquarters is again open to walk-in traffic during normal business hours.

### IMPORTANT PHA CONTACTS

Contact	Phone Number
Philadelphia Housing Authority Customer Service Center	215 684-4000
PHA Police (Administrative Office)	215 684-4840
PHA Police (Emergencies)	215 684-1911
Maintenance (Business Hours)	215 684-8920
Maintenance (After Hours)	215 684-1911
Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program FSS coordinator	215 684-5309
For more information	215 684-8926

FSS is a program which coordinates housing assistance with other resources to assist families to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Participation generally lasts five (5) years, during which participants identify educational, professional, and personal goals.

Resident Services Director	215-684-8734
PHA Section 3 Resource Center	215-684-8926

The PHA Section 3 Resource Center helps PHA residents and those receiving housing assistance find their place in today's economy by increasing skill and educational opportunities and connecting them to decent jobs, postsecondary training, entrepreneurship workshops, and homeownership.

To schedule an appointment for career training enrollment opportunities, email the Workforce Center at **vaux@pha.phila.gov**.

Visit **pha.phila.gov/housing/pha-sites-map.aspx** and select your development for useful information regarding the services below:

- Community services (library, fire station, etc.)
- Public schools
- Shopping centers/banks
- Public transportation

### Rent Is Due the First of the Month

What forms of rent payment are accepted?

Payments may be made by check, money order or online by using the Public Housing Customer Service Portal, where credit and debit cards are accepted. PHA will not accept rent payments in cash. Checks should be made payable to Philadelphia Housing Authority. All payments must include your name and unit number.



# How to Prepare for Life's Emergencies

Every household should plan ahead for emergencies and natural disasters.

State, federal and local officials recommend that families hold frequent drills to prepare how they will respond to emergencies and hazards. They also recommend keeping basic supplies on hand to help households survive during disasters.

Prepare your family for an emergency:

## **Step 1: Make a plan. Your family's emergency plan should identify:**

- Escape routes and evacuation routes from the home.
- A place to meet in event the family becomes separated during a disaster.
- Where and how to get news alerts during a disaster.
- Store important emergency contact numbers in your cell phone. Also designate a friend or family member to serve as your 'in-case-of-emergency' contact.

## **Step 2: Prepare an emergency kit. In an emergency, each household will need some basic supplies.**

- Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)
- Food (at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food)
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Extra batteries
- Whistle (to signal for help)

## **Step 3: Stay informed. Sign up for emergency alerts that can be sent directly to your cell phone number.**

To sign up for federal emergency alerts, visit <https://www.ready.gov/alerts>.

In addition, Ready Philadelphia offers 11 types of free message and alert categories, so you can get important updates whether you live, work, or play in the City. From sirens to street closures, ReadyPhiladelphia provides text message to keep you informed.

There are two ways to sign up.

For free weather or emergency information alerts, use the quick text-to-enroll feature by texting READYPHILA to **888-777**. To customize your free text or email alerts, visit the [www.phila.gov/ready](http://www.phila.gov/ready), and choose the categories that most interest you.

## HOME SAFETY TIPS

Stay warm and safe this winter by following these simple tips from the National Association of Fire Protection:

### **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors:**

- A smoke alarm should be placed on the ceiling or high on a wall. Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms. They should be at least 10 feet from the stove.
- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- Test smoke alarms at least once a month.

### **Fire Prevention**

- A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire.
- Roughly 3 out of 5 fire deaths happen in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms.
- Keep candles and matches in a safe place where they are out of the reach of children.
- Never use an oven to heat your home.

### **Candles**

- Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed. Avoid the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Keep candles at least one foot away from anything that can burn.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.
- Have flashlights and battery-powered lighting ready to use during a power outage.



### **Space Heaters**

- Always purchase a heater with the seal of a qualified testing laboratory.
- Keep the heater at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, including people and pets.
- Choose a heater with a thermostat and overheat protection.
- Place the heater on a solid, flat surface.
- Make sure your heater has an auto shut-off to turn the heater off if it tips over.
- Keep space heaters out of spots where there is heavy foot traffic.
- Plug the heater directly into the wall outlet.
- Never use an extension cord.
- Space heaters should be turned off and unplugged when you leave home. Turn portable heaters off before going to bed.

### **Heating Tips**

- Keep anything that can burn at least three-feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot "kid-free and pet-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.

# PhillySEEDS Awards a Record \$316,000 in College Aid to 84 PHA Residents

PhillySEEDS, Inc., a Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) subsidiary, set a new record last year by awarding scholarship funds to 84 PHA residents seeking or pursuing higher education.

It provided \$316,000 in scholarship aid to these winners, which set a record for the amount of money given out. In 2020, PhillySEEDS awarded 77 scholars a total of \$291,000 in scholarship aid.

More than \$2.21 million has been awarded to 574 residents since the program began in 2013. Money for the scholarships comes from PHA's budget and funds donated by program supporters and vendors.

With your help, PhillySEEDS reached an important milestone in 2021 as it attained its goal of raising \$1 million for the PhillySEEDS Nellie Reynolds Scholarship Endowment Fund. This endowment ensures that scholarships will be available to future generations of PHA residents who need additional resources to complete their college degrees.

PhillySEEDS provided scholarships

to both graduating high school seniors and students already in college.

"We're thrilled to recognize the incredible work being done by PHA residents to put themselves on a path to social and economic mobility. Education is a real game changer and a passport out of poverty. PHA stands by them on their journeys," said PHA President & CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah.

Of the 84 college and high school students receiving scholarships:

- 48 with GPAs between 3.30 and 4.00 received \$5,000.
- 20 with GPAs between 3.00 and 3.29 received \$3,000.
- 16 with GPAs between 2.50 and 2.99 received \$1,000.
- The scholarship recipients represent PHA developments around the City, as well as the Housing Choice Voucher Program (also known as Section 8).
- 48 out of the 84 awardees are first-time PhillySEEDS awardees.
- 15 awardees just graduated high



school and are entering into their first semester of college/university. One of these winners came from Vaux Big Picture High School, where PHA partners with the School District of Philadelphia and Big Picture Learning.

- 52 awardees are Housing Choice Voucher Residents
- 32 awardees are living in Public Housing/PAPMC sites
- Scholarship applications for 2022 will be available soon.

PhillySEEDS, Inc. is an award-winning, 501(c)(3), charitable, non-profit corporation founded by PHA to promote the social and economic advancement of PHA-assisted residents through philanthropic activities, community-based partnerships, and special initiatives.



## PhillySEEDS 2021 Scholars!

Ataullah B Al-Muttaqi	Jhalil K Griffin	Nadera R Robinson
Nadara D Bacon	Abrianna Hankey	Giovanna Rodriguez
Kimberly Barnes	Adayah Hankey	Jiovanna E Rodriguez
Chikayla E Barriner	Kawthar B Hasan	Armanii D Sanchez- Hite
Alvina Belcher	Yuzza M Henderson	Taiana Sanders
Nijah Broady- Lewis	Ke'mani Hill	Taibria Sanders
Shaniya N Brown	Kimberly Hills	Tenora R Sanders
Tasia Bryant	Sakim Howard	Ajahle S Scarlett
Malik Butler	Shanni Jackson	A'lasia M Scott
Khlaida J Cephas	Tah'Diyah Jackson	Aariyona Smith
Karen R Coleman	Christopher Javier	Trinity M Stephens
Yusef J Collins- Bryant	Shida M Jones	Fahem S Sultan
Deresha N Cooper	Tria C Jones	Caren L Teague
Sandra Cooper	Janya Kelty	Khaci U Teague
Cinnaya R Demby	Zybrea Knox	Ronae B Thomas
Salae I Dennis	Monique McKnight	Monai K Thompson
Amirah Durkson	Kipaji C Miles	Ramir K Tindley
Inas I Eiyadeh	Jevon M Mitchell	Amber C Toussett
Nancy I Eiyadeh	Shamoniq ue C Montaque	Manirah N Tucker
Kenaizha Ezell	Nahseem S Moody	Jermaine Wade
Michelle Fisher	Akello A Mosby	Ti'aira Watts
Marquis J Fountain	Nasiim J Moses	Shayla A Whitmore
Alaysia M Frager	Yu'unique D Palmer	Jordan Williams
Ashira N Frager	A'nya S Parker	Khyonna Williams
Jahod Garner	Saudia Pasha	Khamyra Wilson
Tyshay R Goudy	Latasha E Pearson	Zanitha R Wilson
Nya E Griffin	Stephen S Piner	Kareema York
Nyasie E Griffin	Yahnijah Reynolds	Indonesia N Young

## Don't get Left Behind

The 2022 PhillySEEDS Scholarship application is now available at [www.phillyseeds.org](http://www.phillyseeds.org).

### To apply, you must provide or complete:

- 2022 PhillySEEDS Scholarship application
- Official high school transcript with a cumulative GPA of 2.5 or above or GED Diploma
- 500 to 750 word essay
- 2 letters of recommendation

Hard copies of the application may be mailed or hand delivered to the address below or emailed to [Marco.Ferreira@pha.phila.gov](mailto:Marco.Ferreira@pha.phila.gov) by Wednesday, June 15, 2022 (close of business 5 p.m.)

PhillySEEDS Scholarship Committee  
2300 W Master Street  
(Entrance on 24th Street side)  
Philadelphia, PA 19121

## College Unbound

College Unbound is a new, degree-granting institution for adults who have faced barriers to completing their Bachelor's degree. This fully accredited school specializes in getting students on a path to a degree, keeping them focused on that goal, and supporting them in every way necessary to achieve it.

The Philadelphia Housing Authority is partnering with College Unbound to help residents who may be eligible to enroll. CU's student-friendly services are closely aligned with PHA's belief that everyone can achieve goals if they have the right tools and supportive services.

For instance, childcare often is a barrier for adult working students. At CU, where students attend classes both online and in person, childcare services are available to students when they are required to attend an in-person lab.

If you are interested in learning more, please visit [www.collegeunbound.org](http://www.collegeunbound.org) for more information.





# In A Class by Themselves:

## Meet PHA's First Class of Entrepreneurial Fellows

Over the course of six months, PHA's first cohort of fellows from the Entrepreneurship Program – 12 in all – met online with coaches and advisors who covered topics ranging from starting a business to time management to business fundamentals such as cash flow, budgeting, marketing, and more.

In October, the first nine entrepreneurs, all but one of whom were PHA residents or HCV voucher holders, completed the fellowship. Many of the services and products they developed were created to elevate and uplift the community.

PHA congratulates the fellows:

**Carolyn Nelson**



**Business:** Information Technology Computer Hospital (ITCH)  
Teaching Tech to Women

**Donna Surratt**

**Business:** Kings to Us  
Healthcare services.

**Nija Wiggins**



**Business:** Corneey's  
A Philly-based food truck

specializing in flavored corn-on-the-cob and popcorn.

**Latres Hardrick**



**Business:** Reroute-Changing My Direction  
Apparel and clothing line.

**Tamika Williamson**



**Business:** A Woman Forged By Fire & Williamson Family LLC  
Community-centric businesses that serve and inspire.

**Tanja Carter**



**Business:** It Takes A Village Of Helping Hands  
A nonprofit offering services ranging from social to educational.

**Shakia Campbell**

**Business:** Clean As Possible  
Residential and commercial cleaning and sanitation

**Adriana Williams**



**Business:** ADW (Initials)  
A fashion apparel and merchandise company based in Kensington. A companion company teaches people how to sew.

**Adbul Aazim Muhammad**



**Business:** Olympus Consulting Group LLC  
Consultant who provides services to faith-based groups and does consulting with social justice program

### Moving Forward

Nija Wiggins and Adriana Williams both have become entrepreneurs in residence, which is PHA's advanced program. Both women have made a 9-month-long commitment to practicum elements culminating in an opportunity to get up to \$55,000 in seed money.

## ENTREPRENEURIAL FELLOWSHIP

### ABOUT

The PHA Entrepreneurial Fellowship is an immersive training and development experience designed to equip start-up business owners with the tools needed for their businesses to thrive. Applications for Cohort 3 **open April 1st and the last day to apply is April 28.** Don't miss out for this great opportunity to grow your small business with personalized pathways, informative workshops and networking within our vast community of professionals. .

### AWARD

Graduates will receive:

- Up to a \$3,000 small business grant
- Up to \$2,000 worth of books, licenses and certification for your business
- Opportunity to receive free office space and services in RAB's Resident Incubator

### ELIGIBILITY

- Must be a PHA resident or HCV participant
- Complete reading and math assessment

### TIME COMMITMENT

Six months at approximately 15 hours per week.

### Next Start Date:

Thursday, June 23, 2022

### HOW TO APPLY:

For more information or to request an application, please email [section3@pha.phila.gov](mailto:section3@pha.phila.gov).





## PHA Residents Are Making the Impossible Happen. Is it Your Turn?

Nija Wiggins comes from a family of good cooks. Since childhood, she has dreamed of showcasing the family's recipes by selling their food one day on the Boardwalk.

"Corn is definitely one of my favorite vegetables," said Nija, who sells flavored popcorn and corn-on-the-cob and bills herself "Queen of the Cob." "We have a family home in Ocean City, N.J. I wanted to showcase the way we cook. Everybody feels their

families have the best recipes."

During the pandemic, she moved closer to this goal after she and her business, Corneey's Food Truck, were selected to participate in PHA's inaugural Entrepreneurial Fellowship, an immersive training and development experience designed to equip start-up business owners with the tools needed to thrive.

Like many entrepreneurs, Nija took

her passion and turned it into a venture designed to increase financial stability for her two girls. She still works fulltime to pay the bills, but last summer, she took her food cart out to festivals, and sometimes just out on the street, serving up her gourmet popcorn and flavored corn-on-the-cob to passersby.

Corneey's Food Truck, which opened in September, 2020, is a celebration of locally grown corn and deliciously fresh ingredients. Wiggins blends global cuisines and seasoning into her dishes like the Elote (Mexican-style), The Jerk (Jamaican-style) and The Deep Fried, Southern-style corn.

While she has mastered the creative aspects of her business by herself – cooking, experimenting with flavors, and finding processes to meet surging customer demand at fairs – she had less experience with bookkeeping, marketing, finances, taxes, and business and strategies.

"When I first started, I was all over the place," she said. "I wasn't organized

at all. I was just doing things. The program taught us to be more organized and how we can make small changes for bigger benefits."

The Entrepreneurial Fellowship also put her in touch with experts in these areas and offered one-on-one coaching and other supports.

In the last six months, Corneey's customer reach has grown to include some high-profile clients. The Philadelphia Housing Authority has added her to its approved vendor list and hired her to serve food at its events.

"Confidence and support. That is what the Fellowship program gives you," Nija explained. "It builds you up and then prepares you for what's to come,"

After completing the program and learning business fundamentals, Nija felt she was on firmer footing as she went out to compete with more established companies.

Now working as an entrepreneur in residence at PHA, Nija is ready



to grow her company. She has been selected to participate in a new civic venture that will bring small businesses into the Parkside neighborhood and prepare them to work out of shipping containers that are being repurposed as shops. The area will feature an outdoor food mall. "This is my dream come true," she said.

Nija often brings her two girls, Bailey and Brooklyn, along with her as she works, so they can watch, help out, and understand how to start and run a company.

"I always been a leader," she said. "But you need to learn how to follow before you lead... I felt that I could always do more."



*Nija Wiggins turned her love of corn into a growing business.*

## Buying a House Today Can Mean More Opportunities Tomorrow

Akirah Pressley purchased a three-bedroom home that's within walking distance of a park, a library, and local shops because she wanted a more stable financial future for her children.

"I have always wanted to buy a home," Akirah said. "This is something I always wanted to give to my children. I didn't have much stability growing up."

Her journey to homeownership began when she enrolled in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS). Clarifi, Philadelphia's largest financial empowerment and housing counseling organization, showed her how to make her credit work harder and put together a solid financial plan.

"I had a financial advisor I was working with to help me understand the lingo. Once you understand those things, fixing your credit is a breeze,"

Akirah said. "I bought a car, and was able to purchase it without having to put any money down because my credit was good. I became creditworthy, and things changed."

Once she got her finances together, other areas of life began to change. She had been living on a meager salary, but her new sense of confidence led her to have a heart-to-heart talk with her employer. She was told about a different job that would quadruple her income, and they hired her for that position.

Families entering the FSS Program work with an FSS Coordinator to develop goals and a plan of action to reach goals that lead to self-sufficiency. Akirah worked toward buying a car, then a house.

With a strong credit rating, she is pursuing her next dream: starting her own business.

Participation in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is voluntary for families and is open to Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program participants. PHA is partnering with Compass Working Capital on the self-sufficiency program. Compass is a Boston-based nonprofit that provides financial services to families with low income, and contracts with Clarifi to help PHA's residents.

The program helps residents to save, even if they move into higher-paying jobs that trigger rent increases.

The PHA establishes an interest-bearing escrow account for each participating family. Any increases in the family's rent due to increased earned income during the family's participation in the program result in a credit to the family's escrow account. Once a family graduates



*Now that Akirah Pressley has bought a house, she hopes to leverage her home equity to start a business.*

the escrow and use it for any purpose.

"My recommendation is to sign up," Akirah said. "It's a great program. I was able to use the money in my escrow account that I got from the FSS program to pay down some debt, which helped increase my credit score."

And that higher credit score then That action, in turn, helped to decrease the cost of the mortgage

all connected, she said.

As she makes monthly payments, she is building equity to help her with her business or other future needs.

"It takes a lot of determination," Akirah said. "What you put into it is what you get back. It is only as hard as what you make it."

To learn about the FSS Program, visit [www.clarifi.org/fss](http://www.clarifi.org/fss).

# Vaux Community Building – Start Here: *A Better Job, a New Business, and a New Home*

The pandemic has changed how we work, where we work and the scope of the work we do.

If you have visited a local pharmacy lately, you may have noticed they look a bit like community health centers. They now offer on-site medical care such as blood pressure testing, dispense information on health and wellness, and connect customers with the latest vaccines, technology and health equipment.

Entry-level jobs at a pharmacy today can lead to careers in health and wellness, retail, or the pharmaceutical industry.

CVS Health is PHA's newest partner at Vaux. It established a Workforce Talent and Innovation Center in to train pharmacy technicians and customer service representatives, both of whom

are in strong demand.

Vaux Community Building at 2400 W. Master Street in Sharswood also offers programs to help residents budget, start a business, and buy a home, along with fun, interactive activities and educational resources for adults and youth.

Its broad network of partners connects residents with resources that often are hard to find, and the Sharswood CNI team is working with Sharswood residents to make their community a neighborhood of choice.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has selected Vaux Community Building as an EnVision Center, which offers PHA and the City of Philadelphia the opportunity to leverage funding for services.

## Check out Free Resources and Programs at Vaux:

### Big Picture High School

Innovative public high school that provides students with real-world experiences outside of the classroom **267-507-9690**

### Clarifi

Financial counseling, coaching, and enrollment in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program **267-546-1153**

### CVS Workforce and Innovation Talent Center

Provides hands-on training for pharmacy technician and customer service jobs with placement opportunities **267-294-6420**

### PowerCorps PHL

Provides career-connected education and paid work experiences in collaboration

with AmeriCorps and the City. Training focuses on urban forestry, electrical and solar and green infrastructure **215-221-6900**

### Rebuild

Construction and Finishing Trades Training Program **215-684-8926**

### Temple University Vaux Community Health Center

A community health center. Get your COVID-19 inoculations here. **215-204-3084**

### PHA Workforce and Homeownership Centers

The PHA Section 3 Resource Center helps PHA residents and those receiving housing assistance find their place in today's economy

by increasing skill and educational opportunities and connecting them to decent jobs, postsecondary training, entrepreneurship workshops, and homeownership. **215-684-8926**

Find entrepreneurial resources at <https://bit.ly/PHAssec3>

### Mighty Writers

Hands-on activities and programs for youth that increase literacy and build useful writing and critical thinking skills. **267-239-0899**

### Trades for a Difference

Offers inclusive training program to reduce the skilled trade gap. **267-270-5095**

## Getting Ahead in a Changing World

PHA and its partners can connect residents and those receiving housing assistance to high-wage jobs.

### NEWS BRIEFS

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Is Hiring People Who Want to Help Others

The West Philadelphia Skills Initiative is recruiting Philadelphians for their Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Patient Services job training program

If you are interested, email [vaux@pha.phila.gov](mailto:vaux@pha.phila.gov) or call **215-684-8926** to schedule an appointment to learn more.

Who should apply?

Patient Services Representatives can be stationed in the Emergency Department, Admissions, or Outpatient settings and are responsible for greeting patients and families, collecting & entering demographic and insurance

information, collecting payments associated with services rendered, and other duties as needed.

Applicants should be patient-focused, computer-savvy individuals with customer service experience. They must be available during the full training schedule.

### The Keys to Homeownership

Last year, a record number of public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher participants bought a home.

Every new homeowner went through the homeownership readiness process, where they saved \$2,000 through new budgeting skills, and completed credit counseling to obtain a decent credit score.

They also received one-on-one housing counseling and a pre-approval letter from a lender or bank. After completing the readiness process, the residents met with a PHA

homeownership counselor to discuss their options with PHA.

Qualified residents also receive mortgage and down payment assistance through several programs: the Mobility Homeownership Program, First Front Door Grant, PhillySEEDS (PHA's nonprofit affiliate), Philly First Home, and lenders/banks such as PNC and Santander Bank.

PHA's Homeownership Opportunities Department is located in the Workforce Center at PHA's Vaux Community Building (2300 W Master Street) in Sharswood. The department hosts free workshops to discuss how to get started.

To make an appointment, call **215.684.8926**



## Hometown Hero

Dwayne Fair bought the home his family had rented from PHA for nearly 52 years going through the PHA's Homeownership Opportunities Program. He wanted financial security for his family, and a chance to invest in his own neighborhood. *"You have to help yourself first before anyone else can help you,"* he said.



## THANKSGIVING TURKEY



## MIGHTY WRITERS AT PHA JOB FAIR



## SHARSWOOD HOLIDAY DOORS CONTEST



## BOOK BAG EVENT





BOOK BAG EVENT



KINDNESS MATTERS CAMPAIGN AT NORRIS



SPEAKING OUT AGAINST VIOLENCE



CVS WORKFORCE AND TALENT INCUBATOR





# PHA NEWS ROUND UP

## HOUSING INNOVATIONS

PHA and Jumpstart Philly are working together to remove neighborhood blight and offer small developers an opportunity to learn how to rehab affordable homes.

The partners identified 10 PHA properties, each in need of full renovation. Then, via a lottery, the partnership gave 10 graduates of the Jumpstart Training Program an opportunity to purchase a PHA property for \$10, and then use the Jumpstart Philly Loan Program to renovate and sell the property. The houses rehabbed through the partnership will be sold to people whose incomes are less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI). The Jumpstart Training Program introduces less experienced developers to the basics of real estate development, including property sourcing, due diligence, financing, design and construction, and leasing and selling. Upon graduation, participants are paired with an experienced mentor to guide them through their first few development projects.

**A Place to Call Home** Students at Community College of Philadelphia who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless now have a place uniquely designed to support their success.

The Philadelphia Housing Authority and the Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) are partnering on a pilot program that has transformed 16 apartments in two scattered-site



buildings into housing for CCP students.

The buildings are located on North 10th and 11th streets, less than a mile from the College's Main campus.

The program provides more than just a roof over students' heads. The PHA and the College will provide other supports. For example, once a student moves in, PHA will work with them to establish a stability plan with the goal of establishing secure, permanent housing. They also will receive educational support services.

On the career front, PHA's ongoing partnership with Trades for a Difference is opening the door of the construction and trades industries a bit wider and letting new people in.

In the Construction Leadership

Development Program, 15 students recently completed their core training and, as part in their alumni track programming, now will be able to develop advanced industry credentials such as Flagger certifications, hazard waste material handling (Hazwopper), AutoCadd essentials, BIM (Building information modeling), estimating certifications, and other specialized and or niche market industry recognized credentials.

Graduates received certifications that lead to employment in a fast-growth, high-salary industry. These certifications include OSHA 30 Hour Cards, Scaffolding Certification, and Workzone Flagger Certification.

Twelve of the graduates received full time employment starting at \$17 an hour or higher.

## PHA FSS Program Wins Continued Support

The Philadelphia Housing Authority has received a \$358,000 award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support its family self-sufficiency program.

With this award, PHA will be able to continue to support families in their efforts to become self-sufficient and financially secure. The funding will be used to fund the staffing of Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Coordinators who work directly with residents to connect them with comprehensive education, digital literacy, job training, job placement, financial literacy, and homeownership opportunities.

Congress created FSS in 1990 to help families who live in federally subsidized housing

to increase their income and build savings. It resolves a well-documented issue in how rent is calculated for recipients of housing assistance, by enabling participating households to capture as savings any rent increase that results from an increase in household earned income. These savings build over time, and participants can use the savings toward their financial goals.

"Programs like FSS are an important part of how PHA serves our residents and voucher holders," says PHA President and CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah. "By working with partners like Compass, we've been able to expand this program so that more households have this opportunity to build savings and the support they need to work toward their goals."

## GRANTS TO SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Philadelphia is set to receive \$735,000 in federal funding from a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant. The award comes from the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI). The program invests in local, cross-system collaborative efforts to assist young people aging out of foster care and who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), Department of Human Services (DHS), and Office of Homeless Services (OHS) will work in partnership to administer the program. The funding will

provide 75 housing vouchers, that will cover a maximum of 36 months of rental assistance.

Additionally, PHA has received \$145,337 to provide permanent homes to 20 veterans experiencing homelessness. The funding comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This brings the housing authority's total HUD VASH allocation to 834, which has played a critical role in Philadelphia effectively ending veteran homelessness.



# BOARD RESOLUTION UPDATES

## MAY

**Resolution No. 12152** – Approved the schedule for regular meetings of the Philadelphia Housing Authority Board of Commissioners through May of 2022.

**Resolution No. 12153** – Adopted the FY 2021 annual reports of the committees of audit, risk management, finance, policy & planning, and resident services.

**Resolution No. 12154** – Authorized a contract for moving and storage services in support of evictions with Murphy's Transporting Services, LLC in an amount not to exceed \$1,785,936.00.

**Resolution No. 12155** – Authorized a contract for roof replacement services at Raymond Rosen with Pasad, LLC, in a total amount not to exceed \$1,175,309.

**Resolution No. 12156** – Approved a memorandum of understanding between the Philadelphia Housing Authority and the Community College of Philadelphia to operate housing for a higher education learning pilot program consisting of sixteen units in two scattered site buildings that are now uninhabitable and vacant, with the units to be leased to CCP students who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

**JUNE Resolution No. 12157** – Authorized a contract with Independence Blue Cross to provide employee health insurance, for a total aggregate amount not to exceed \$23 million dollars.

**Resolution No. 12158** – Authorized contracts for year-round youth services with the Urban League of Philadelphia and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Philadelphia in a total aggregate amount not to exceed \$5 million dollars.

**Resolution No. 12159** – Authorized a contract for courier services for parcels, building materi-

als and appliances with Heaven Sent Ltd. for a total amount not to exceed \$250,000.

**Resolution No. 12160** – Authorized a contract for the summer food program with contract with Food Management Services, Inc. dba Lintons Food Service Management in a total amount not to exceed \$1,791,500.00.

**Resolution No. 12161** – Authorized the Philadelphia Housing Authority to obtain approval from the U.S. Department of Housing And Urban Development for Capital Fund and Operating Subsidy Awards for four new annual contributions contract alternatively-managed entity developments, and to close the transactions.

**Resolution No. 12162** – Approved the Philadelphia Housing Authority's annual Moving to Work report for fiscal year 2021 for submission to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and certified that the three statutory requirements have been met.

**Resolution No. 12163** – Authorized approval of the award of nine project-based voucher proposals, totaling 319 project-based vouchers (PBV). The vouchers are to be awarded as follows:

Community Ventures (Francisville Village) 10 PBV's; New Courtland (New Courtland Apts at Burholme) 35 PBV's; Catholic Housing and Community Services (St John Neuman Place) 52 PBV's; Community Ventures (Francisville East) 10 PBV's; HAGE (Villas del Caribe) 44 PBV's; Mission First (Kings Highway) 31 PBV's; Pennrose (Vernon House) 68 PBV's; HAGE (Villas De Hage) 18 PBV's and Mission First (Rhawn & Academy) 51 PBV's.

**JULY Resolution 12164** – Authorized a contract for equipment rental with Herc Rentals Inc. for a total amount not to exceed \$314,569.

**Resolution 12165** – Authorized contracts for Financial Literacy Counseling Services with Sole Strivers and the Goal Attainment Companies, LLC and Affordable Housing Centers of Pennsylvania for a total aggregate amount not to exceed \$1,250,000.

**Resolution 12166** – Authorized contracts for vacant property clean out services with W & W Contractors, Inc.; Total Environmental Concept, Inc.; Townes Mechanical Contractor, Inc.; and Milestone Contractors, Inc. for a total aggregate amount not to exceed \$5.5 million.

**Resolution 12168** – Approved the memorandum of understanding between The Philadelphia Housing Authority and City Of Philadelphia to administer emergency housing vouchers for a total amount not to exceed \$860,000.

**Resolution 12167** – Authorized a contract with WellAdvantage, The Well Workplace, LLC to provide employee wellness program administration and wellbeing services for an total four-year aggregate amount not to exceed \$446,000.

## SEPTEMBER

**Resolution No. 12169** – Adopted the comprehensive annual financial report and the associated financial statement for the period of April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021. The materials were prepared by RSM US LLP. The work was done in record time and with the ideal results of "no findings."

**Resolution No. 12170** – Approved an amendment to the PHA Controlled Policy & Procedure #10 that changes the dollar threshold for Board approval of contracts and contract modifications, with a quarterly reporting requirement to the Board. It also incorporates the recently revised U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development ("HUD") regulation governing Section 3

definitions and requirements.

**Resolution No. 12171** – Authorized PHA to update and revise the appropriate disposition requests to HUD in accordance with the resolution, which are for 4 of the 14 properties for which dispositions were approved by Board by Resolution No. 12131. The 4 properties relevant to the resolution are at 3604 and 3606 Wallace Street and 626 and 636 N. 36th Street and were previously for disposition to Mt. Vernon Manor CDC for nominal consideration.

**Resolution No. 1217** – Authorized PHA to negotiate and execute a development agreement with Frankel Enterprises and/or its affiliate as well as to negotiate and execute all related contracts and documents necessary or appropriate to develop, finance, construct the development, as described in the resolution, submit a Disposition Application to HUD for the PHA properties, convey the properties at nominal consideration and to take all necessary actions to carry out the provisions of the resolution.

**Resolution No. 12173** – Authorized PHA to contract with Benchmark Real Estate Partners, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$10,890,319.00 for construction management services.

**Resolution No. 12174** – Authorized PHA to contract with DCS Auto Service, Inc. for the provision of general vehicle repair services. DCS Auto Service will be added to, and aggregated with, the group of 4 contractors already approved and awarded in April 2021. The total aggregate amount to be expended under the 5 contracts, including the exercise of any options, is not to exceed four million dollars.

## OCTOBER

**Resolution No. 12175** – Authorized PHA to conclude a policy of insurance for Workers'

Compensation and Employer's Liability Insurance coverage with Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, to provide claims administration, loss control services, and account management for a not-to-exceed \$13,945,367.00.

**Resolution No. 12176** – Authorized PHA to contract with Nan McKay and Associates, Inc. for employee training services. The contract – with a two-year base period with three one-year option periods – is not to exceed \$275,000.00.

**Resolution 12177** – Authorized PHA to contract with Allergy Technologies for bed bug treatment services. The contract performance period is a 2 year base period with three 3 one-year option periods. The total amount to be expended is not to exceed \$14,695,000.

**Resolution No. 12178** – Authorized PHA to contract with CBIZ Benefits and Insurance Services, Inc. for employee benefits administration services. The contract performance period is a 2-year base period with three 3 one-year option periods. The total amount to be expended is not to exceed \$500,000.

**Resolution No. 12179** – Modified the amount of the award in Resolution No. 12173, dated September 17, 2021, for a contract with Benchmark Real Estate Partners, LLC for Construction Management Services. The modification would increase the contract amount from \$10,890,319.00 to \$11,905,535.00.

**Resolution No. 12180** – Authorized PHA to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, under which PHA would support the existing Witness Relocation Program by supplying up to 35 Housing Choice Vouchers and/or Public Housing Units per year, subject to funding availability, for use by prosecution witnesses to such crimes

## This is not your Grandmother's Public Housing

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) has awarded Blumberg 83 in Sharswood one of its most prestigious awards for project design, the Award of Excellence.

Blumberg 83 features modular wood frame construction and includes sustainable design elements guided by two prominent green rating programs - Enterprise Green Communities and Energy Star Certified Homes.

Residents have a modern community center, landscaped green space for walkability, and a management office. The 83 units range in size from 616 square feet to 1,641 square feet. There are 10 wheelchair accessible units and three

units for the hearing/visually impaired.

The award of excellence is given out to showcase the ways NAHRO's members are making a difference in their communities and in the lives of the people they serve.

With demand for affordable housing increasing in Philadelphia, the modular construction used at Blumberg enabled PHA to decrease the time required from construction start to completion. The start date on construction was May, 2019. The first occupant moved into a unit in Jan. 2020.

"We haven't built units like this before," PHA President & CEO Kelvin Jeremiah said at the Blumberg 83 grand opening. "This is not your grandmother's public

housing."

The modular manufacturing process significantly reduced the amount of construction waste and energy use. Additionally, it reduced costs allowing more units to be built in a community where decent housing is at a premium.

The Philadelphia Housing Authority also received four Awards of Merits from NAHRO in 2021, recognizing achievement for two housing developments and two innovative programs.

PHA earned a record number of awards this year as it adapted its operations and added new services to support residents and the

City during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blumberg 83 and North Central Phase 3 both won Awards of Merit in the housing design category. More than 40 public and civic partners came together to revitalize the area formerly known as Norris Homes. North Central Phase III is one of the newer phases, and is a mixture of two- and three-

story townhomes, and six apartment-style buildings.

PHA's remote learning centers established during the pandemic - equipped with high-speed Wi-Fi and desks - and the maintenance team's effort to address the backlog of work orders were recognized by NAHRO in the resident services and administrative innovation categories respectively.



## 2022 PHA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

The third Thursday of every month at 3pm

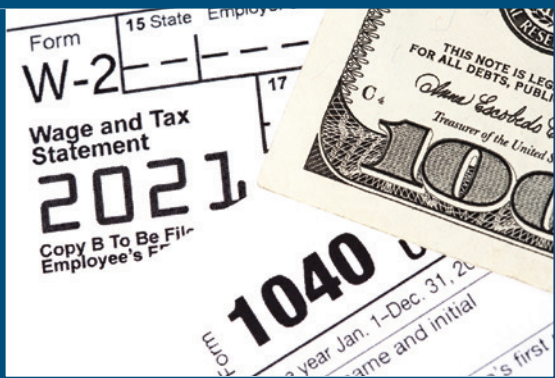
- April 21
- May 19
- June 16
- July 21



To learn about PHA Covid-19 Board Meeting Protocols visit **bit.ly/PHAvirtual**



# NEED HELP WITH TAXES?



PHA residents can schedule  
an appointment for free tax filing  
[www.cwfphilly.org/appointment](http://www.cwfphilly.org/appointment)



# GET HELP PAYING YOUR UTILITY BILLS

Utility costs are rising rapidly. If you are in danger of having your utilities shut off or going without heat in your home, these programs can help you:

## **Utility Emergency Services Fund (UESF)**

UESF is funded by the Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This program provides assistance to low-income individuals and families who need help paying utility bills. Visit the UESF website to learn more about their programs and find out if you qualify.

## **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

LIHEAP offers cash grants to help low-income families pay their heating bills. Crisis grants are also available for households in immediate danger of being without heat. Visit the LIHEAP website to learn more about the program find out if you qualify.



## *Are You Ready to be a **Homeowner?***

*You could qualify for  
down payment, closing costs,  
or monthly mortgage assistance.  
To make an appointment call*

**215.684.8926**

Or visit us at

**Vaux Community Building  
2400 Master Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19121**



**ENROLL IN OUR HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM TODAY!**