



RRHA

nFocus

A newsletter for the employees of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority

November 2007



Back to Blackwell

As Richmonders cross the James River and head into the city's South Side, new energy can be felt upon entering the Blackwell community. The building of new single family homes, new townhouses and new apartments signal a new neighborhood with a diverse mix of residents. "People see the neighborhood has changed in this beautiful area," said Anthony Scott, RRHA executive director. "The community looks vibrant, energetic, exciting. The hard-working residents have welcomed new neighbors, new services along with these new state-of-the-art homes. It's Back to Blackwell."

The revitalization of Blackwell, through RRHA's HOPEVI revitalization program, includes construction of 188 single family homes in the Blackwell community. Construction has started and homes are being sold, according to L. Dexter Goode, RRHA's HOPEVI project manager. The homes range in size from 1,450 to 2,040 square feet with three or four bedrooms and will sell

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RRHA Launches Affordable Housing Initiative With Committee of 13



Affordable housing is more than a buzz word and it is RRHA's mission to make it a reality for more people in Richmond.

Executive Director Anthony Scott said to do this, the agency needs input from all of its employees. "I need your ideas on how to make this a better agency," Scott told a meeting of Affordable Housing staff and others. The meeting announced the members of a new group called the Committee of 13, which will devise and implement improvements for RRHA's affordable housing operations.

"It's a new phase of RRHA," Scott said, referring to the major revitalization projects

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between \$160,000 to \$190,000. Down payment assistance is available for qualified buyers.

One of RRHA's development partners, Southside Community Development Housing Corporation (SCDHC) is constructing 37 homes, while the Better Housing Coalition is RRHA's partner constructing 45 homes. A total of 106 units, will be built by Hearthside Homes, LLC. and RRHA. Two completed model homes are available for customers.

The efforts in Blackwell represent the comprehensive federally funded HOPEVI Revitalization Program. In total, the program will bring 308 single-family homes, 161 apartments, a new school, a new community center and a refurbished park will be the result.

*For information on purchasing homes contact the HomeCenter at 780-4884 or email homecenter2@rrha.state.va.us. **IF***



New HCVP Manager Hard at Work. Shawn Williams Joined RRHA in the Spring.

Shawn Williams, RRHA's new Housing Choice Voucher Program Manager, came to the agency in April and since then has been busy coordinating the

agency's large rental assistance program.

HCVP, also called Section 8, allows RRHA to provide rental assistance to low-income families interested in living in private rental units. Williams said she understands how crucial her role is at RRHA. "The program is so valuable because shelter is the most basic necessity for every human being," Williams said. "Richmond offers so many opportunities to people who may want to move to Richmond, but due to limited income or a disability, may not be able to afford the housing."

Williams, who is originally from Pittsburgh, began working at the housing authority there almost two decades ago.

She began her housing authority career as a clerk in a housing community and after a year became a Housing Specialist in the Section 8 program. "I thought that it would be interesting to learn that program because it has so many rules, regulations and program policies that it always offered a challenge," Williams said. She then went to work in the Section 8 department of the Allegheny County Housing Authority. In 2001, she became the Section 8 Program Supervisor with the Prince William County Office of Housing and Community Development. "My goal for the Housing Choice Voucher Program is to assure that it operates according to the rules and regulations of the program so we can continue to receive the funding for HUD to provide decent, safe and affordable housing for those in need," Williams said. "The transition into the position has been exciting, challenging and humbling."

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in progress throughout the city. With several new projects in the works, Scott said he wants the agency to maintain all of its 4,100 public housing units. "There is a tremendous need for public housing," said as he discussed the need for programs to help residents transition out of public housing. "We need to change the dynamics of public housing and move toward mixed-use developments."

At the September meeting, Scott stressed the importance of teamwork and accountability. "We have an aggressive strategic plan," Scott said. "Each person on the team has a role and if we all perform we can accomplish great things."

The transformation the agency will soon see will build on themes employees are already familiar with. "We're building on, not abandoning 'Mission Possible' and 'Gung Ho.'"

John N. Hill, deputy executive director of affordable housing, said RRHA "will change the face of affordable housing through logical, cohesive programs."

Hill said RRHA will also need to standardize many of its procedures and documents, as well as create desk manuals. That way when new employees are hired, they can easily refer to standard practices for completing most tasks.

Also in attendance at the meeting was long-time RRHA landlord, Ruth Bielke. Bielke owns six properties that accept Housing Choice Voucher Program tenants plus two additional private rental properties in Richmond. "Overall it's been a positive experience," Bielke said of her experience with RRHA. "I like the inspections. It helps me keep my properties safe and habitable."

In addition, RRHA has several housing and revitalization goals from making swift repairs of its units, to developing plans for revitalizing struggling neighborhoods.


Hill also announced the new group within the agency who will lead the charge to create, implement and monitor the department's course of action. This group, called the Committee of 13, is comprised of leaders from various divisions within Affordable Housing and other departments in RRHA.

The issues this committee and Affordable Housing plan to address, will take time. "They all won't get fixed today," Hill said. "But they will get fixed—through teamwork. The Committee of 13 is the leader of this initiative."

For the first two months, the Committee of 13 will meet every two weeks, then they will meet monthly thereafter. The group members will form individual subcommittees and



pull talent and expertise from people throughout the agency. The subcommittees will meet between meetings of the Committee of 13 and prepare updates on their progress. These updates will be integrated into a larger report from the entire committee, which will be constantly revised and updated, Hill said. "It will be a living document."

"We want to change what public housing looks like to give assurances that people are living in safe housing," said Hill. 

Introducing The Committee of 13:

Steven A. Benham
Roxanne W. Brinson
Tammy L. Grubb
Delon D. Hunt
Carol Jones-Gilbert
Marie Jones-Woolridge
William Perkins
Joseph Sarver
DeNita Square
Sharon B. Valentine
Charles Williams
Shawn Williams
Theodore Woods, Sr.
and Coordinator, Ann E. Lis

The Committee of 13 needs you! Committee members may ask you to participate on subcommittees or assist with specific projects. Please support their efforts and get involved! **Thank you.**



MaLinda Washington

Division of Procurement Services Announces Several Changes

RRHA welcomes several new hires and activities in the Division of Procurement Services. MaLinda B. Washington has taken to her new role as procurement manager and been involved in several new changes in the department. A Richmond native, Washington holds several professional certifications, including certification as a Virginia contracting officer. She is also a Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB), Senior Management Practitioner (SMP) and a Life Focus Leadership Coach (LFLC). Washington comes to RRHA after working in various positions for more than two decades with the state of Virginia.

Prior to coming to RRHA, Washington served in various positions such as the Deputy Director for Administration and Finance for the Department of Social Services at the City of Richmond, the Statewide Procurement Manager for the Division of Purchases and Supply for the Commonwealth of Virginia. She also served as the Director of Operations for the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind, and Multi-Disabled at Hampton, Associate Director of Material Management for the College of William and Mary and Old Dominion University.

"As the procurement manager my role is to ensure that all Procurement Activities are performed in accordance with all Federal, State, and Local laws and regulations," said Washington, "The team is committed to working with

agency personnel, vendors, local and state government agencies to enhance the policies and procedures of the Procurement Division."

Washington shared RRHA is very committed to providing Section 3 and MBE (minority business enterprise) opportunities. "We are currently striving to provide employment and other economic opportunities to low and very low income persons and are making our best efforts that are consistent with Federal, State and Local law to award contracts to Section 3 and MBE businesses."

Along with Washington, RRHA welcomes Teresita

Williams. Williams comes to us in the position of contract officer, from the private sector and has more than 20 years of procurement experience. RRHA's new contract specialist, Bonita Ross, joins us from the private sector and has vast experience with contract management and office management. These new employees join the current




*l-r sitting: Dorothy Morris, Bonita Ross
l-r standing: MaLinda Washington, Dalton Fonville, Teresita Williams. Not pictured: Decta Vines, Antoinette Holliday and Earnest West*

Procurement Team members Earnest West, Buyer, Dalton Fonville, Contract Officer, Dorothy Morris, Office Support Specialist; Decta Vines and Annette Holliday, Mail/Messengers.

In other department news, RRHA has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Virginia Department of General Services, Office of Fleet Management Services to provide vehicle maintenance and management services and other vehicle support, acquisition and disposal services.

RRHA's Division of Procurement Services will be conducting procurement training on the requisition process, methods of procurement, procurement procedures, contract administration and the requirements for the federal statute, the Davis-Bacon Act.

The training will enhance the policies and procedures set forth by RRHA to effectively manage its internal controls for procurement, receipt of goods and services, and invoice payments, Washington said. 

Rodney Forte Joins RRHA as Deputy Executive Director for Community Revitalization

Rodney Forte can't say enough about the impact RRHA's Strategic Plan will have on the future of the city. Forte, who was named RRHA's new deputy executive director for community revitalization, will focus on finding innovative ways to fund the projects related to the agency's Strategic Plan.

"This agency truly has vision," Forte said. "I hadn't seen anybody put together a quality strategic plan with real community support."

As the head of RRHA's revitalization department, Forte will cultivate partnerships with public agencies and private firms, direct the renovation and rehabilitation of existing properties, handle real estate acquisitions and supervise the demolition and disposition of the agency's obsolete properties. Forte's duties will also include managing RRHA's capital improvement projects as well as the design and construction of new projects.

Executive Director Anthony Scott shared Forte's depth of knowledge will be a valuable asset as the agency works to bring to life its revitalization plans. "I am pleased to welcome Mr. Forte to RRHA. I am confident that his experience, drive



Rodney Forte (pronounced Fort)

and compassion will be a valuable asset to our team."

Scott also extended his sincere appreciation to Garland Curtis and Lee Householder, who both filled the role of interim deputy executive director of community revitalization. Their commitment to RRHA and the entire Community Revitalization department represented the best in team work!

Forte, who comes to RRHA from North Richland Hills, Texas was the vice president of development and acquisitions of T.R. Forte Investments Inc. He also served as director of planning and development at the Fort Worth Housing Authority. At the Dallas Housing Authority, he held positions of HOPEVI and affordable housing coordinator as well as the economic development coordinator.

Forte earned his master's degree in public administration from North Carolina Central University in Durham and his master's degree in business administration from Amberton University in Garland, Texas. His undergraduate degree in social work is from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, which is his hometown.

Forte is humble about his accomplishments and eager to work with the skilled staff at RRHA. "It's really not about me," he said. "I'm just another member of the team." **IF**

Holiday Schedule

RRHA offices will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Thanksgiving

November 22 and 23, 2007

Christmas

December 24 and 25, 2007

New Year's Day

January 1, 2008



RRHA Police Enhance Community Outreach Efforts



R RHA's police department held an awareness event in Creighton Court in October, to promote safety and responsibility in the agency's public housing communities.

During the October 29 event, officers distributed safety information as well as trick-or-treat bags and Halloween tips to neighborhood children.

The RRHA Police Department is working to enhance its relationship with the community. This will help police officers communicate more effectively with residents, increase understanding of officers' authority and citizens' responsibilities, and encourage everyone to be involved in making neighborhoods safer.

"There is nothing more important to the RRHA than providing a safe environment in which families may grow and thrive," Executive Director Anthony Scott said prior to the awareness event. "This could not be accomplished without strong relationships between the housing authority, residents, and the Richmond Police Department." Officers were excited to talk to residents about the police force's goals and plans at the community event.

"We really care about what happens here and try hard to enforce the law in a way that keeps the community's needs and concerns at the forefront," RRHA Police Chief Hal Hazelton said. "Our officers are an involved part of each public housing community."

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services' in October 2006 designated the RRHA Police Department as an official police department which has the authority to arrest offenders both on and off RRHA property and makes the unit eligible for numerous grants for new programs, training, and equipment. **LF**

New HomeCenter Helps Turn 'Your Dream Home Into Your Own Home'



With a new service called the HomeCenter, homebuyers, vendors, real estate agents, or anyone seeking homeownership services, can call one number at RRHA to find answers.

"Now lenders, real estate agents, housing counselors, and families interested in purchasing a home can get information from one unit," said Desi Wynter, project manager at RRHA. He said the HomeCenter will provide "one number to call, one unit to talk to, one source to disseminate information regarding RRHA homeownership initiatives."

The HomeCenter, which uses the slogan "Turning Your Dream Home Into Your Own Home," provides a central location for the public to call or email instead of seeking information from different departments. This will help RRHA function more efficiently, while allowing those seeking services to easily find information.

The HomeCenter will benefit people looking for information on a variety of areas including: public housing, elderly housing, first-time homebuyer programs, homes for sale from RRHA partners and more.

This new service will handle, accept and process applications, provide education and counseling for homebuyers, give referrals as well as track and compile data it receives. The HomeCenter will also create marketing strategies for homeownership programs and work with the City of Richmond and businesses to increase development in key neighborhoods.

"RRHA offers a wealth of information and assistance to people seeking homes in Richmond, said Anthony Scott, executive director. "The HomeCenter will now make our services more user-friendly and easier to navigate. This one-stop shop will be a gateway to the countless programs we offer."

Before the HomeCenter's creation, different initiatives were handled by different departments.

RRHA's HomeCenter will serve as a point of entry for several of the agency's initiatives, including: the Family Self Sufficiency Program of the Housing Choice Voucher Program along with homeownership opportunities through RRHA revitalization efforts in Blackwell through the HOPEVI program, Carver, Newtowne, Church Hill, North Highland Park, Jackson Ward, the Capital One Sport Blight Program and the Neighborhood Homeownership Program.

"HomeCenter will benefit RRHA by addressing two of our Strategic Planning Goals. First, by pooling resources, we have

created a streamlined service center as a central point of contact for RRHA residents and the public," Wynter said. "A centralized service means better processes, data collection, and records management, making RRHA operate more efficiently."

Beyond that, Wynter said the HomeCenter simply makes RRHA a better resource, while enhancing the agency's image in the community.

"The HomeCenter will provide quality customer service. By collecting, retaining and distributing homeownership information from one central source, RRHA improves its accuracy of providing relevant and updated housing and community related information," Wynter said. "Customers and vendors will not have to contact several different departments within RRHA to inquire about homeownership. Moreover, we eliminate confusion and foster collaboration within RRHA and achieve a better public perception."

This will also make navigating RRHA's various programs much easier for people who are interested in buying a home from one of RRHA's partners. **LF**

HomeCenter Already at Work

RRHA's Robert Jackson, homeownership coordinator, worked diligently to help a Housing Choice Voucher Program client close on her first home, said Desi Wynter, project manager at RRHA. The client was able to purchase her home Aug. 21, with Jackson by her side. "His attention to detail saved her more than \$5,500 in contract costs," Wynter said. "He did a great job helping her make it through the homeownership maze."

This latest purchase means RRHA has 13 families who have taken advantage of the Housing Choice Voucher Program to achieve the dream of homeownership, Wynter said.

The HomeCenter will make it easier for others seeking help from RRHA to call one, central location to receive the information and assistance they need.

**Call The HomeCenter at
(804) 780-4884/ TDD (804) 225-0538
Or Email: homecenter2@rrha.state.va.us.**



Make a Difference While Sharing the Joy this Season

As the saying goes, charity begins at home. RRHA provides literally homes for thousands of residents in Richmond. Therefore it's natural that our charity and generosity helps some of those same residents receive additional support through our giving. RRHA's theme is "Make a Difference," which complements the United Way theme of "Sharing the Joy."

Last year, our generous co-workers gave more than \$35,000 with \$16,000 going to the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy and \$19,000 to the overall United Way campaign. And what a difference those funds have made. The Academy has blossomed!

Your gifts are crucial, said Doris Jackson-Crocker, who chairs RRHA's drive.

Your contributions will allow the Academy to continue to provide youth who live in our public housing complexes the

opportunity to participate in numerous sports and cultural activities. The goal of the Academy is to introduce non-traditional sports and skills that may earn scholarships for higher education. The focus is on life skills while the participants receive case management services.

Every dollar helps

The money you designate for the Academy gives young people a positive outlet and deters negative activities such as crime and gang involvement.

To continue to offer our youth such exciting experiences as learning golf, tae kwon do, boxing, tennis and fine arts, we need your continued support this giving season.

With this year's campaign we will focus on: school readiness, youth development, preventing homelessness and caring for older adults.

This year, the RRHA giving campaign "Making a Difference," will be the first time the agency runs its campaign independent of the City of Richmond.

Our 2007 goal is to raise \$40,000 for the entire campaign. Jackson-Crocker said RRHA's campaign will be a success because of the team atmosphere. "The good thing about

RRHA's campaign is that support starts at the top and moves on down," Jackson-Crocker said. "Last year our head coaches for the Board were the Chairman of the Board, Brian Jackson, III and Commissioner Hill-Christian. Our Executive Director, Anthony Scott did not hesitate in picking up the phone soliciting support. Also, we added the cheering squad members of the Executive Team staff like Cassandra Scarborough and Valena Dixon. In addition, we have the quiet supporters like Kirk Orris and Joe McGreal."

Thank you to the volunteers who made our Harvest Fest/Flea Market Kickoff, a success on October 5:

- > **Affordable Housing** – Theresa Henley and Sonya Robinson
- > **TPR** – Maya Eakins
- > **Administration** – Renee Hart
- > **Community Revitalization** – Priscilla Jackson
- > **Executive Office** – Terri Garrett

RRHA hosted a Flea Market/Bake Sale and all of the proceeds went towards our campaign. We are grateful to have several local merchants in the area that have already provided gift certificates including the Jefferson Hotel, Hampton Inn-Richmond West, Fridays, Red Lobster, and Tripps.

MAKE A DIFFERENCEDonate today! 



My Story

I have given to the United Way campaign for the last 10 years. I feel that my contributions help impact the lives of others. I'm also aware that the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy helps various children in our public housing communities. Since I have worked in many of our developments, it's good to know that these kids are helped by my donations.

I encourage other RRHA employees to participate in the giving campaign because their contributions can help bring about positive change right here in the communities we work in.

By Charles Williams, who has worked at RRHA for more than 16 years and is a Housing Manager for the Mosby Court community.

Do you have a story to share?

Please email Valena Dixon at vadixon@rrha.state.va.us with your story about why you give or how someone you know has benefited.





Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy Scuba Program Wins National Award

RRHA's youth scuba diving program—which is believed to be the only diving program in public housing in the nation—won an award from the National Association of Black Scuba Divers (NABS).

The program, which operates through RRHA's Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy, was awarded the NABS "Service to Diving" award. The association announced the award earlier this month at the NABS Annual Summit on the Caribbean island of Tobago. RRHA's diving program was nominated by NABS member, the Black Dolphin Divers of Richmond, the group that provides diving mentoring and training for the youth program. Valena Dixon, RRHA communications director, accepted the award on behalf of

the agency at the Annual Summit.

The "Service to Diving" award is designed to honor individuals and organizations who make significant contributions to the sport of scuba diving through education, training, marine science, volunteerism or organizational development. RRHA was recognized for its innovation and commitment to youth development through establishing a youth scuba diving for at-risk youth through the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy.

The National Association of Black Scuba Divers, Inc.

(NABS) has been a catalyst for promoting scuba diving throughout the African-American community. This national organization promotes scuba diving, water sports skills, and environmental awareness and conservation; develops educational programs to stimulate interest and knowledge in the sport of scuba diving; provides scholarships for students studying marine and environmental sciences and sponsors



scuba trips and open water educational experiences.

RRHA's Joan Seldon directs the YSFAA and Clifton Hicks serves as president of the Black Dolphin Divers. They hope the national recognition will lead to more community and corporate support and participation in the many programs YSFAA offers.

In addition to scuba diving, RRHA's Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy offers training in swimming, golf, tennis, boxing and tae-kwon-do. **IF**



RRHA...Building Dynamic Partnerships... to support our youth!

David R. McGeorge Car Company chose RRHA's Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy (YSFAA) as its "McGeorge Cares" Partner of the Month for November.

McGeorge, which operates Toyota, Scion and Mercedes-Benz dealerships in the Richmond area, spotlights one area non-profit organization each month.

On the auto company's www.mcgeorgecares.com website, information about YSFAA can be found as well as a link to the eight minute video on the program. Visitors to the site are encouraged to volunteer, donate or help sponsor YSFAA programs.

The YSFAA program is being highlighted at each of McGeorge's four area dealerships with posters and brochures in the showrooms. RRHA will be featured as McGeorge's November partner in ads running in Style Weekly, the Richmond Free Press and the Henrico Citizen.

"In support of the needs of at-risk youth in our community, throughout November, McGeorge Car Company has partnered with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to help create awareness of its Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy," the McGeorge site says.

YSFAA provides RRHA youth with several avenues to participate in non-traditional activities and sports such as scuba diving, martial arts and cultural and education activities.



Thank you... For saving a life!

We appreciate all who supported our Blood Drive with the Virginia Blood Services on October 31. Your efforts make all the difference in so many ways. Desi Wynter, RRHA Coordinator for our Blood Drives, is always available to answer any questions you may have--and to take your name if you are interested in signing up for our next Blood Drive! Please call Desi at 780-4741 or email him at dlwynter@rrha.state.va.us.



New Hires

Welcome to RRHA...and Congratulations!

As we build and revitalize Richmond, we at RRHA constantly strive to build and revitalize our team. We at RRHA know that the agency cannot accomplish its goals without a dedicated staff. We are excited to welcome new teammates:

Maya Eakins – Executive Administrative Assistant for the Technology, Planning and Research department

Nekeisha Greene – Customer Service Specialist / Tenant Selection department.

Theresa Henley – Executive Assistant in Affordable Housing

Charlie Moody – Maintenance Specialist

Moné Walker-Williams – Program Eligibility Technician / Tenant Selection department.

Malinda Washington – Procurement Manager

Shawn Williams – Housing Choice Voucher Program Manager

Teresita Williams – Contract Officer

Ismail Shodeinde – has been promoted to the position of HVAC Mechanic



Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority

Anthony Scott, Executive Director

Valena Dixon, Editor, Communications Director

InFocus is published for the employees of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority. It is produced by the Communications Department, 901 Chamberlayne Parkway, 780-4167. We welcome submissions from all employees and we reserve the right to edit.