

SPHA Helps Public Housing Resident Celebrate The Holidays

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ST. PETERSBURG – The St. Petersburg Housing Authority's (SPHA) Adopt-A-Family program made this holiday season a little merrier for one family living in public housing. The housing authority provided gifts on December 23 to single mother Tocarra Wilson and her three children, ages one to six years. The presents, which included toys and a Publix gift certificate, were purchased solely with personal donations from SPHA staff.

"I told my kids that I was coming in [to SPHA's offices] to get the rest of their presents, and they were so excited. Without this help, I wouldn't be able to give them much," said Wilson with tears in her eyes.

In order to qualify for selection for this year's "Adopt-A-Family" program, families had to be SPHA public housing residents in good standing and active participants in the Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program, which is a pro-active resident outreach and skills assessment initiative designed to identify and assist residents who are ready, willing, and able to work.

With help from the Section 3 caseworker, Wilson found a part-time job in August as a patient care assistant at a local nursing facility. She also is taking steps towards completing one of her educational goals by enrolling in classes to obtain a GED.

"The housing authority means a lot to me," said Wilson. "I was struggling."

SPHA Chief Executive Officer Darrell Irions said, "We are proud of Ms. Wilson's drive to achieve more for herself and her family, and we are happy to help them celebrate the holidays. Ms. Wilson is a great example of how the Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program can help motivated public housing residents secure jobs, education, self-sufficiency and self-fulfillment."

Since the Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program's inception in March 2010, 295 residents have received program information, 44 residents have been interviewed and assessed for specific training and educational needs, and fourteen residents have achieved permanent employment. The housing industry has honored SPHA with national and statewide best practices awards for program achievements.

More information about the Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program can be found on SPHA's website at <http://www.stpeteha.org/section3.htm>.

The St. Petersburg Housing Authority (SPHA) is a public body corporate that has a 70-year history of developing and administering affordable housing programs in the city of St. Petersburg. Consistently scored as a "High Performer" on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assessments, SPHA provides housing assistance to more than 3,400 families residing in St. Petersburg. The authority has received national awards and recognition for its innovative programs, including the Economies of Scale program, the Jordan Park HOPE VI redevelopment program, the Section 3 program and the Fraud Recovery program. More information about the authority's programs and services can be found at www.stpeteha.org.