



the HOUSING HOMEFRONT

A publication of the St. Petersburg and Dunedin Housing Authorities



SPHA RECEIVES PERFECT SCORE!!

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandates that all housing authorities in the nation meet strict requirements and are in full compliance with regulations governing its two major federally-funded programs: the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)/Section 8 program and the Public Housing program. In February 2011, SPHA submitted its housing program reviews to HUD for fiscal year 2010 with the anticipation of earning the federal agency's highest rating.

SPHA was notified by HUD on April 12, 2011, that its HCV/Section 8 program earned a perfect score of 100 percent on the annual Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) evaluation, receiving the top ranking of "High

Performer." The SEMAP evaluation reviews fourteen key indicators of the HCV/Section 8 department's performance, from the determination of reasonable rent to the expanding of housing opportunities.

In addition, SPHA also achieved the HUD designation as a "Capital Fund High Performer" and expects that its public housing program will receive a similar high score, with evaluation results due later this year. The "High Performer" designation means that SPHA could receive an increase in its annual funds from HUD and better positions the housing authority for grants.

SPHA has been named a "High Performer" consistently for the past decade.

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EXCITING NEWS

For all of the latest SPHA news, tune into WRXB Radio (Praise 1590-AM) on the second Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. and listen to SPHA's radio show!



SPHA and Catholic Charities Partner to Help the Homeless at Pinellas Hope



On Tuesday, February 8, 2011, eight residents moved into Pinellas Hope II and began a new chapter of their lives, thanks to the partnership between SPHA and the Catholic Charities Diocese of St. Petersburg.

Each of the eight residents received a project-based housing voucher from SPHA, which subsidizes a portion of the monthly rent for an apartment at Pinellas Hope II based on the tenant's income. SPHA is offering a total of 40 vouchers to eligible residents of the 80-unit transitional housing facility, which is equivalent to approximately \$280,000 per year of on-going funding for Catholic Charities.

Dr. Arnett Smith, SPHA board chairman, said, "We are proud to be community partners in the fight against homelessness, and we remain committed to finding more affordable housing options throughout our jurisdiction to help keep people off of the streets. By providing the funding for these vouchers, SPHA is able to give much needed support to Catholic Charities and those that they serve in a very meaningful and sustainable way."

Shelia Lopez, Catholic Charities Chief Operating Officer, said, "We are proud of our residents that have achieved self-sufficiency and can live in safe and affordable housing."

SPHA and Catholic Charities staff are working together to distribute the remaining housing vouchers. Catholic Charities identifies the eligible residents, and SPHA then



issues the project-based vouchers to them. Including the first eight residents to move in, 29 vouchers have been issued as of May 11, 2011.

The housing vouchers are made possible through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Project-Based Voucher program. The goal of the HUD program is to expand the availability of higher quality affordable housing units to the elderly, disabled individuals and homeless military veterans.

SPHA's HCV/Section 8 WAIT LIST

Within the first months of 2011, SPHA's Section 8 Department had issued vouchers to all families on its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)/Section 8 wait list, completely clearing the list. As a result of this achievement, SPHA reopened the wait list to applications for one-day only on February 25, 2011. This is the first time that SPHA's HCV/Section 8 wait list has been opened since September 2006. Staff estimates that approximately 1500 applications were received and currently is processing the applications to create the new wait list.

Volunteer Opportunities

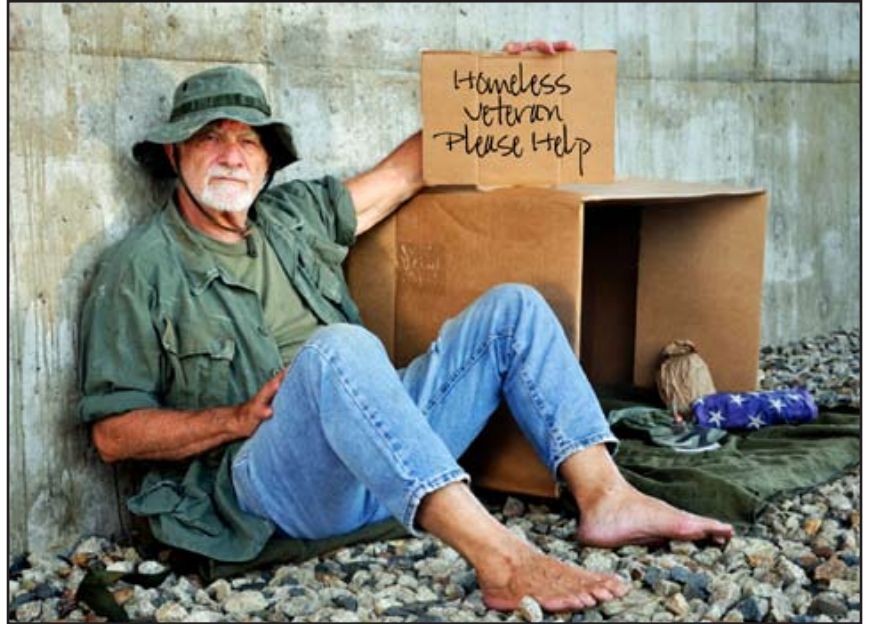
The Northwest Church of Christ (NWCOC) has partnered with SPHA to put together the “2011 Paint the Saint” service project. Tentatively scheduled for Saturday, September 17, 2011, church members and community volunteers will work together to repaint several low-income single family homes in St. Petersburg that are in need of exterior paint jobs. If you would like to participate, please contact Tom Burket at tburket@tampabay.rr.com.

The Dr. Carter G. Woodson African-American Museum, located in Midtown at 2240 Ninth Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33712, is looking for volunteers. Call 727-323-1104 for more information.

ARRA Update

In 2009, SPHA received an allocation of approximately \$1.3 million for the modernization of its public housing units under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The stimulus funding allowed the housing authority to expedite necessary improvements on its public housing properties and to create local jobs. The majority of the housing authority’s ARRA-funded projects have been completed, and SPHA plans to have all funds expended this spring, far exceeding the federal government’s March 2012 deadline. A complete list of contracts can be found on SPHA’s website at <http://www.stpeteha.org/stimulus.htm>.

SPHA is Committed to Veterans’ Housing



Currently, SPHA’s Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)/Section 8 housing specialists are working in conjunction with the Bay Pines Veterans Affairs Medical Center to find apartments for homeless veterans. SPHA has a total of 195 housing vouchers available to eligible veterans, through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program. These vouchers are worth just under one million dollars of funding per year.

The HUD-VASH vouchers allow veterans to rent private sector housing in St. Petersburg, contingent on their motivation to continue treatment and improve their individual circumstances. As of May 2011, SPHA has issued HUD-VASH vouchers to more than 100 veterans, allowing them to get off of the streets and into affordable apartments.

SPHA also is moving forward with plans to build Wounded Warrior housing within its jurisdiction. A Request for Proposal (RFP) will be issued asking developers to submit their best and most cost-efficient plans to provide up to 50 units of accessible housing for St. Petersburg residents wounded in military service. The RFP will be advertised in local newspapers and on SPHA’s website at <http://www.stpeteha.org/rfps.htm>.

SPHA and Bay Area Legal Services – A Successful Collaboration

In an environment where housing authorities and legal aid organizations often have contentious relationships, SPHA staff and Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. attorneys have collaborated on many occasions to ensure that low-income tenants have access to legal services, are treated fairly and with dignity and respect, and have continued access to quality, safe, sustainable, and affordable housing.

An example of this relationship is illustrated through the successful relocation of the residents of the Graham Park and Rogall Congregate communities. When the housing authority implemented its U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved relocation plan, SPHA invited Bay Area, along with Boley Centers, to be part of the dedicated relocation team.

Residents were offered the option of Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV), also known as Section 8 vouchers, to serve as replacement housing, or they could elect to move into openings at subsidized project-based or public housing developments. SPHA paid for all relocation-related expenses for residents.

SPHA and Boley team members worked one-on-one with residents to make certain that they were placed in housing that best met their individual needs. Bay Area

provided legal advice and assistance to ensure that the residents understood their legal rights and responsibilities, especially the residents who chose to relocate with a new HCV/Section 8 voucher.

Lisa Brody, Managing Attorney for the St. Petersburg office of Bay Area, confirms that “as advocates for safe, quality, and affordable housing, Bay Area welcomed the



opportunity to collaborate with the SPHA to create an environment that would increase the likelihood of the sustainability of the housing vouchers given to the former Graham/Rogall residents.”

The relocation process took place over the course of 15 months with all residents successfully moved. The overall goal of the team-approach to the relocation effort was to enhance the sustainability of the vouchers. SPHA continues

to provide support for residents in its HCV/Section 8, public and affordable housing programs, and Bay Area remains available to assist residents with their legal needs today.

In the two years since the Graham/Rogall buildings were vacated, the vast majority of the former residents who elected to use a HCV/Section 8 voucher remain active in the program. This illustrates the sustainability

of the voucher program and of SPHA's effective management of it. SPHA continues to work with Bay Area to ensure that former Graham/Rogall residents maintain housing and receive continued assistance.

Recently, the new owner of Nautica Apartments in St. Petersburg decided to stop participating in HUD's HCV/Section 8 program. More than twenty former Graham/Rogall residents had relocated to Nautica with their vouchers. Again, SPHA staff joined forces

with Bay Area and other community partners to find replacement housing and to provide legal advice for the impacted residents. As it was during the initial Graham/Rogall relocation effort, the goal of sustaining the residents' vouchers and their access to quality, safe, and affordable housing was paramount.

SPHA looks forward to continuing to work with Bay Area for the benefit of its residents and the St. Petersburg community.

SPHA's Fraud Recovery Program Has Banner Year



SPHA's Fraud Prevention and Recovery program recovered \$87,351.51 in fraud in 2010, the second highest fraud collection year since the program's inception. SPHA formed its Fraud Prevention and Recovery program in 2001, with the goal of reducing the incidents of fraudulent activity in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)/Section 8 program and saving taxpayer dollars.

SPHA Chief of Programs Melinda Perry said, "Fraud is a crime, which diverts scarce resources away from the neediest of our clients. SPHA's staff, with the full support of our Board of Commissioners and management, is committed to eliminating fraud in any form and recovering resources lost by fraudulent activity by residents, clients, landlords and suppliers. We are proud to be on the leading edge of the fight against fraud."

For the year ending December 31, 2010, SPHA has collected \$87,351.51 toward balances owed on repayment agreements with landlords and tenants in the HCV/Section 8 program and has repayment agreements in place with 45 current voucher-holders, totaling \$72,151 in outstanding fraud recovery debt to be collected. Since the program's inception in 2001, SPHA has recovered a total of \$648,859.61 from landlords and tenants.

Through SPHA's "Operation Zero-In" initiative, staff investigates HCV/Section 8 participants who report zero

income or who report family contributions as their only income. This initiative has expanded efforts to determine unreported income and has been successful in saving even more taxpayer dollars. HUD's Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system has been a great tool for SPHA staff in these investigative efforts. The EIV system allows the housing authority to gain access to the Department of Labor's information on employment income, and the use of this system has uncovered many assisted families failing to report their incomes correctly.

In addition, the Fraud Prevention and Recovery team members train HCV/Section 8 staff, development managers and other SPHA staff on how to identify fraudulent activities, investigate any potential cases of fraud, and work closely with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Inspector General (OIG), local, state and federal law enforcement agencies for prosecution of offenders. This partnership has resulted in numerous arrests of the worst offenders and saves the taxpayers thousands of dollars annually.

One half of the funds recovered by SPHA's Fraud Prevention and Recovery team is reinvested in fraud recovery efforts, and the other half is returned to HUD.

Save the Date

This year, SPHA is proud to take part in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) national *Father's Day Initiative* to celebrate and encourage responsible fatherhood. Children living in any of SPHA's public housing communities are invited to bring their fathers and grandfathers to the event on Saturday, June 18, 2011, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Dr. Carter G. Woodson African-American Museum (2240 Ninth Avenue South). The event will feature fun activities for all, raffle prizes, refreshments and more. Check SPHA's website at www.stpeteha.org for more details.



PROGRAM HONORED WITH HOUSING INDUSTRY AWARDS

authority is working to fulfill our mission of service and to empower our residents.”

As a direct result of the year-long Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program, 47 public housing residents have received skills assessments and job training, and fourteen residents have found permanent employment.

The housing authority’s goal for this initiative, which took place from March 2010 to March 2011, was to make personal contact with all public housing residents, in order to identify and assist those who were ready, willing and able to work. The Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Capital Fund Recovery Grant (CFRG).

Louis Fehrensen, NMA regional account manager, said, “By partnering with Catholic Charities and leveraging ARRA money, SPHA has moved beyond merely complying with Section 3 requirements to truly embodying the spirit of the Section 3 program in the city of St. Petersburg.”

The federally mandated Section 3 program requires that housing authorities provide job training, employment and contract opportunities for low or very-low income residents in connection with projects and activities in their neighborhoods. More information about the Section 3 and the Resident Skills Assessment program can be found on SPHA’s website at <http://www.stpeteha.org/section3.htm>.

In 2010, SPHA’s Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program received two prominent awards. In August, SPHA was honored to receive a Best Practices award from the Florida Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (FAHRO). In November, Nan McKay and Associates (NMA) named SPHA as a recipient of the national 2010 NMA Excellence in Housing Award, which recognizes leaders in the assisted housing industry through agency performance, community outreach, and efforts to break new ground for the future of the industry.

Dr. Arnett Smith, chairman of the SPHA Board of Commissioners, said, “We are honored to receive these prestigious awards from Nan McKay and FAHRO. Our Section 3 Resident Skills Assessment program provided a meaningful start on the path to self-sufficiency for public housing residents who are interested in creating a better quality of life for themselves and for their families. This program is just one example of the ways that the housing



From the CEO's *Desk*

This year, our entire community is facing some difficult issues. We all are confronting the harsh realities of a depressed economy and are making tough choices. Across the board, it seems that, while the need for services is growing, our budgets are dwindling – this is especially true in public housing. I hope that we can come together as a community to find a way to bridge this gap.

In order to do this, we first need to educate ourselves about the roles that each of our public organizations play. At the St. Petersburg Housing Authority (SPHA), our mission is to provide a variety of safe, sanitary, accessible, decent and affordable housing to eligible citizens within our jurisdiction of the City of St. Petersburg and a ten-mile radius of the city, while enhancing and promoting resident self-sufficiency. Our Board of Commissioners, who are appointed to four-year terms by the Mayor of St. Petersburg and confirmed by city council, is responsible for oversight of the agency and its policy-making. As the Chief Executive Officer, it is my job to execute the board's direction.

Many people think that the housing authority is a city department, but that is not the case. It is important to know that the majority of our funding comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) – we receive no operating income from the State of Florida or the City of St. Petersburg. As such, we follow HUD regulations in the management of our public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)/Section 8

programs, which combined serve approximately 3,400 families in our jurisdiction. We are a major contributor to the local economy – SPHA's HCV/Section 8 program puts \$22 million in housing assistance payments directly into the community each year.

However, housing authorities across the nation, including SPHA, are facing deep budget cuts proposed by the U.S. Congress that threaten funding for our existing programs and our future growth. With conservative budgeting and an emphasis on our Economies of Scales agreements, we hope to weather these potential cuts. We have been good stewards of public dollars, which is reflected in our excellent financial audits. Additionally, our prudent budgeting has provided us with a reserve of non-HUD dollars that we will invest in a new central office. The facility will better serve both our staff and our clients in the long-term as well as provide a boost to the local economy and construction industry in the near-term.

One of SPHA's priorities is to create more low-income and affordable housing options. Our Board of Commissioners has a clear vision for the future of the agency that includes developing mixed-income communities throughout our jurisdiction. Our goal is to reduce the concentration of poverty, and in doing so, provide more educational and economic opportunities for our residents. The first steps of realizing

this plan include divesting commercial property that does not directly support our mission and identifying future residential properties in non-traditional public housing areas. We recognize that this process is long, and dependent on HUD approval at various stages along the way, but we are committed to its success.

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St. Petersburg Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Dr. Arnett Smith, Chair
Harry L. Harvey, Vice Chair
Delphinia Davis, Commissioner
Joseph Lettelleir, Commissioner
Lorraine Perry, Commissioner
Lucinda Spire, Commissioner
Dr. David Welch, Commissioner

Dunedin Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

David Kelly, Chair
Regina Lawrence, Vice Chair
Shirley James, Commissioner
David Thinel, Commissioner

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We feel that our strategy, supported by HUD's rules regarding the deconcentration of poverty, will help us break away from the "status quo" and allow us to affect real change. It's time that our residents are empowered to move past the stigma of subsidized housing and are given real opportunities to break free from the cycle of poverty.

At the Dunedin Housing Authority (DHA), we are putting a similar philosophy into action. Fairway Gardens I and II are the first properties that DHA has operated in more than five years. With the opening of the 20-unit mixed-income development this spring, DHA is re-launching its public

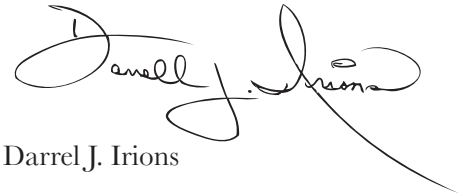
and affordable housing programs in a forward-thinking manner. Our goal is to enhance the surrounding community by maintaining properties with great curb-appeal and by offering our residents beautifully renovated apartments in non-traditional areas. DHA also is working in partnership with the City of Dunedin and the county to find other creative and budget-friendly ways to increase affordable housing options.

At both SPHA and DHA, we take immense pride in the properties that we own, operate and manage and of our service to our residents. We want to expand the horizons of our residents and change the often-times negative public perception about housing authorities. We want to

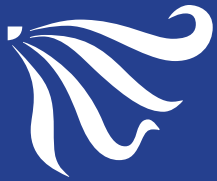
create an atmosphere of understanding and education with other agencies, so we can work together to provide more opportunities to those who need them the most.

As Chief Executive Officer, my door is open to you if you have questions about our plans. I hope that this newsletter provides more insight about what we do and why we do it.

Have a great day,



Darrel J. Irions



Join the
Dunedin Housing Authority (DHA)
as we celebrate the official *Grand Opening* of
Fairway Gardens Apartments



Thursday, June 2, 2011 • 10:00 a.m.
110 Lady Mary Drive N., Clearwater



If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Audra Butler, Communications Officer,
at abutler@stpeteha.org or 727-773-6198 by Thursday, May 26, 2011.



DHA Acquires 20 New Housing Units



The Dunedin Housing Authority (DHA) is rebuilding its public and affordable housing programs with the opening of two 10-unit apartment buildings, named Fairway Gardens. Fairway Gardens I is located at 30 Lady Mary Drive North in Clearwater, and Fairway Gardens II is located just down the street at 110 Lady Mary Drive North. The properties are within DHA's jurisdiction of the City of Dunedin and a 10-mile radius outside of it.

David Kelly, DHA board chairman, said, "The board's priority is to acquire or build additional affordable housing options in and around the City of Dunedin. Our goal is to be able to provide safe, quality housing to Dunedin residents in need. Our purchase of these buildings is the beginning of this process."

Fairway Gardens is the first property acquired by DHA since Highlander Village was demolished in 2005, due to the obsolescence of its major building systems and the lack of available funding for renovations. The land was later sold to Habitat for Humanity.

After an exhaustive search for suitable properties for affordable multi-family housing within its jurisdiction, DHA used five increments of HUD Replacement Housing Factor funds, plus Public Housing reserve funds and sale proceeds

from the land, to acquire the Fairway Gardens properties. DHA bought the properties for \$730,000, and renovations are budgeted for \$150,000.

Each building has six one-bedroom/one-bathroom units (approximately 650 square feet) and four two-bedroom/one-bathroom units (approximately 750 square feet). Renovations included fresh paint, updated cabinetry and countertops, new flooring, and HVAC systems.

Due to the funding mix, DHA is leasing 15 of the units to public housing eligible families with incomes from zero to 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). The remaining five units are affordable housing, serving families up to 150 percent of the AMI. Dunedin residents, as well as those who work in Dunedin, receive preference.

DHA opened its wait list for the public housing units on March 1 and expects the first resident to move in during late spring.

The Fairway Gardens Grand Opening event will take place at 110 Lady Mary Drive North on Thursday, June 2, 2011, beginning at 10:00 a.m. More information can be found online at <http://www.stpeteha.org/DHA.htm>.

Upcoming Affordable Housing Projects: On the Lorraine Leland Workforce Housing Tract project, DHA has partnered with Pinellas Community Development and the City of Dunedin to construct up to 25 town home units on a former public housing site.



DHA Logo Contest Winner and Finalists Announced



During their regular meeting on Tuesday, November 16, 2010, DHA's Board of Commissioners

announced the finalists of its city-wide logo contest and unveiled the winning logo by Dunedin resident Jan Provino. The winning logo, pictured above, was determined by the board to best represent DHA's mission to provide a variety of safe, sanitary, accessible, decent and affordable housing for eligible citizens.

David Kelly, chairman of the DHA Board of Commissioners, said, "We were so pleased with the creativity of the logo submissions. While all

of them really captured the spirit of our agency, we are excited to move forward with the winning design."

In addition to being named the "General Public" category winner and overall contest winner, Ms. Provino was awarded a cash prize of \$100. Laurie Colin, a senior at Dunedin High School who was the "Student" category winner, received \$50. All of the finalists also received



Pictured from left to right: Grand prize winner Jan Provino, Commissioner Shirley James, finalist Seth Longland, "Student" category winner Laurie Colin, Commissioner David Thinel, and Commissioner David Kelly.

certificates of appreciation from the housing authority.

The finalists and winners for each category are:

Student Category (open to all students enrolled in Dunedin public and private schools)

- Laurie Colin, 12th Grade - Dunedin High School (Category winner)
- Seth Longland, 6th Grade - Cornerstone Christian School

General Public Category (open to all other Dunedin residents of all ages)

- Jan Provino (Category winner and grand prize winner)
- Michael Bryant
- Joan Castaldo

DHA Commission *News in Brief:*

On April 12, 2011, David Kelly was re-elected to the position of Chairman of the DHA Board of Commissioners, and Regina Lawrence was re-elected as Vice Chair.

CONTACT

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 12849
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

Physical Address:
888 Executive Center Dr. W.
Suite 100
St. Petersburg, FL 33702

Office: 727-323-3171

Fax: 727-328-6699

TDD: 800-955-8770

TTY: 800-955-8771

Web: www.stpetcha.org

Asset Management:
Clearview Park Apartments
3200 37th Ave. North
St. Petersburg, FL 33713

Office: 727-217-7254