

# The HOME Edition

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Third Quarter 2014

## Striving for Success



Top: The Family Self-Sufficiency program (FSS) graduated 19 clients from its FSS program this summer. Left: Housing Choice Voucher Program participant Veronica Bass and her family. Right: Former Irvinton Village resident Bernadette Smith and her family.

The Houston Housing Authority graduated 19 clients from its Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, its largest graduation class to date. The FSS program promotes and encourages participants to develop strategies towards financial independence. Participants sign a five-year contract agreeing to work towards accomplishing individual goals that they set for themselves. This year's graduates are all employed, have increased their combined income by 314 percent, and two graduates Bernadette Smith and Veronica Bass are now proud homeowners.

"It is a wonderful feeling to be a homeowner," Bass said. "I walk differently, I talk differently, I even dress differently. I used to be afraid of being a homeowner because I thought it would be too much of a responsibility but I realized that I can handle it. I'm now fearless and looking for the next thing in my life to conquer."

Each person in the FSS program is assigned a caseworker who assists in providing the participant with referrals for social services and follows up with clients to make sure they stay on track. Participants have the opportunity to attend various life skills classes through FSS, including budgeting, home ownership and college. For more information on the FSS program please visit our website [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com).

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### HHA 2014 Goals:

- Improve Agency Performance
- Increase Quantity and Quality of Housing
- Increase Resident Self-Sufficiency
- Increase Customer Satisfaction
- Increase Community Engagement and Participation

### Our Mission:

To improve lives by providing quality, affordable housing options and promoting education and economic self-sufficiency.

## CEO Corner



This summer, I enjoyed visiting our communities and speaking with our residents about the 2015 Annual Plan. I was able to address your questions and concerns during the public hearings held in August, in addition to receiving valuable feedback from members of the community including the Resident Advisory Board. Thank

you for your participation. Our 2015 Annual Plan, which provides information on our policy, financial, development and capital investments for the coming fiscal year is accessible on our website, [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com).

I'm proud to announce that we have joined President Obama's Better Buildings Challenge. We are committed to reducing our energy intensity across our entire housing portfolio by at least 20 percent within 10 years. We are the first multi-family residential provider in Houston to join the Better Buildings Challenge. As a partner, we will work with the Department of Energy and Housing and Urban Development to achieve portfolio-wide energy savings and share successful, cost-effective strategies to maximize building efficiency. We recently completed an energy audit for our public housing portfolio to assess utility and energy saving measures. The results of the audit will determine the best practice to achieve the goal of 20 percent reduction in energy intensity by 2024. I look forward to sharing with you more information on our progress.

We are celebrating a huge milestone. We have successfully helped to house 100 homeowners through our Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. Among the homeowners, we've helped is Kristy Kirkendoll, a single mother of four children who was able to reach her goals of obtaining a college degree, improving her credit score and owning a home within three years. We are proud of Ms. Kirkendoll and all of our families who worked hard to make their dreams of becoming homeowners a reality.

I want to thank everyone who joined our cycling team or donated towards our goal of \$5,000 for the American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure. We are committed to promoting healthy living and building healthy communities. Your support is appreciated.

My staff and I will be in the communities attending meetings and events. We look forward to your input and feedback on the work that we are doing. Have a great holiday season.

## Upcoming Programs

### ► **Covenant Keepers Homebuyers Club November 15 (Every 3rd Saturday)**

The free nine-month program, sponsored by Covenant Community Capital, is designed to help participants navigate the home-buying process and become a successful homeowner. For more information on the program, including the Down Payment Assistance that is offered please contact Veralisa Hunter with Covenant Community Capital at [veralisa@covenantcapital.org](mailto:veralisa@covenantcapital.org).

Meetings are held at the Neighborhood Resource Center, 815 Crosby St., Houston, TX 77019.

### ► **Open Enrollment for Affordable Care Act November 15**

Open Enrollment period for 2015 health coverage is November 15, 2014 to February 15, 2015. Coverage can start as soon as January 1, 2015.

If you haven't been able to afford insurance in the past, the Affordable Care Act makes it possible to find affordable coverage and to help pay for it through subsidies and tax credits. If you haven't been able to qualify for insurance because of a health condition, it makes coverage available to you. If you've had insurance with restrictions that made it hard to cover all your health care needs, new rules remove some of the limits usually included in health coverage in the past. For additional resources and to enroll visit [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) or [www.becoveredtexas.org](http://www.becoveredtexas.org).

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[www.linkedin.com/company/houston-housing-authority](http://www.linkedin.com/company/houston-housing-authority)

Houston Housing Authority is providing you with more ways to connect with us. Follow us online to learn about events and meetings that are important to you. There are plenty of pictures of people you may know and activities happening at the properties. Come and join in on the fun!

## Putting Residents to Work

As a part of our initiative to make our communities more energy efficient, we held an energy audit this summer at each of our properties. Auditors visited apartment units and community rooms to inspect and determine the methods and possible equipment we can install to make our communities more environmentally friendly. Among the auditors working on the project was Cuney Homes resident Damion Lowry. The single father of four kids was hired to complete the job through our Section 3 program.

The purpose of Section 3, an initiative of the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is to help low-income residents gain the education and skills needed to become self-sufficient. Houston Housing Authority's Section 3 program has made strong commitments to promote education, training, and job placement.

Lowry worked in social service positions for over 15 years counseling, mentoring, and aiding youth and adults. His ultimate goal is to continue working with young people and possibly open a youth center. As an auditor, he says it gives him a steady income to support his family and allows him to continue working in the community.

## Breathing Easier

On January 1, 2014, we initiated our smoke-free policy at our 25 public housing and tax credit properties throughout the city. The smoke-free policy bans smoking inside resident units, common areas, offices and 25 feet from all main entryways—smoking is only allowed in designated areas. The new policy is an effort to protect non-smokers, especially children, from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

We partnered with various organizations to provide resources to our residents who want to quit smoking. A community partner, MD Anderson Cancer Center, worked with us to register residents for its smoking cessation program. Historic Oaks of Allen Parkway Village resident William Whitfield was among the residents that signed up for the year-long program. Whitfield says he began smoking at a young age because he saw his father smoking and thought it was cool but now at 26 years old, he wants to quit. "I'm tired of smoking but the addiction is hard to shake," Whitfield said. "The program has helped me realize my triggers and has given me the tools to help me quit smoking."

Before Whitfield signed up for the program, he was



Cuney Homes' resident Damion Lowry inspects the community center at Historic Oaks of Allen Parkway Village as part of his job, which he received through the Section 3 program.

"I hope that I can be a positive influence on the youth in the community," said Lowry. "They have to be accountable for their own life and take advantage of every resource made available to them including the Section 3 program."

smoking two packs of cigarettes a day but now he is down to half a pack of cigarettes—he looks forward to the day that he no longer has the need to smoke. Whitfield says that he now has more energy, more money and his friends (most of whom do not smoke) feel more comfortable being around him now that he is smoking less. With all the good changes that are happening in his life, Whitfield says that the most important thing to him is being a good role model for his 4-year-old niece and other young family members.



Historic Oaks of Allen Parkway resident William Whitfield is one of several HHA residents participating in MD Anderson Cancer Center's smoking cessation program.

"I felt like a hypocrite telling them not to smoke because it's bad for you but I do it," Whitfield said. "Now I am leading by example, which makes me feel good."

For more information on the MD Anderson Cancer Center program and to enroll, please contact Project ACTION staff at 713-563-9891.

## Keeping Children on Track

We teamed up with the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation (BBHLF), Houston Public Library (HPL) and its partners Schlumberger, Jack and Jill of America, Inc., Houston Independent School District, and KBXX 97.9FM to host our Family Back-To-School Fair at Cuney Homes. The festive environment included music, crafts, a gaming truck, a tumbling bus and free food for families.

“We want to send our residents back to school with all the tools that they need to have a successful school year, and it’s great that we have wonderful community partners who will work with us to make it happen,” said Houston Housing Authority President & CEO Tory Gunsolley. “We’re not just in the business of providing quality, affordable homes but also changing lives. Providing our young residents with the resources that they need to excel in their classes is a step towards a brighter future.”

The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation donated more than 200 gently used books, journals, T-shirts, school supplies and backpacks. The Houston Public Library had its Mobile Express bus on-site and Pop Up Library sessions, which provided residents with a backpack that held free items including a free book, an activity sheet, and passes to the Children’s Museum of Houston. In addition, residents had the opportunity to stop by

## Preparing for Success

This summer we welcomed nine young students from our public housing communities into our offices to participate in our annual summer internship program. This year’s participants were Kelly Village resident Tiara Flowers, Clayton Homes resident Mjiwa Hassan, Cuney Homes residents Alyrick King and Jahtera King, Kennedy Place resident Matthew Malvo, Lincoln Park resident Kyla Wiley, Historic Oaks of Allen Parkway Village residents Alexis McGrough, Cameron Nixon and Chase Taylor. The eight-week internship program provided the students the opportunity to develop career skills and improve their social skills.

Now a high-school senior, Kyla Wiley credits her experience as a student intern for helping to prepare her for her most rigorous school year. “I learned to be more patient and to communicate better with others,” Wiley said. The students visited local universities and colleges and received guidance on career and life goals from weekly guest speakers who are leaders in their profession. Wiley’s goal is to become an engineer.

HPL’s table to learn more about library services and local programs at nearby Smith Neighborhood Library and Young Neighborhood Library.

Support for this project was also provided by Paula Harris an HISD Trustee for the Cuney Homes area, Chair of the Jack and Jill of America, Inc. and a leader at Schlumberger. Jack and Jill of America, Inc. and Schlumberger each donated 200 books. Visit our Facebook page for more pictures and information at [www.facebook.com/housingforhouston](http://www.facebook.com/housingforhouston).



Our Family Back-To-School Fair held at Cuney Homes provided 225 children literacy supplies.

While Wiley has another year before entering college, Alyrick King started her first year at Houston Community College this fall. King participated in the internship program for two summers and believes that the experience helped her to feel more comfortable and confident in college. “The internship prepared me to meet new people and taught me how to speak to important people such as my professors, advisors and counselors,” King said.



Our eight-week summer internship program gave high school students from our public housing communities the opportunity to develop career skills and improve their social skills.

## Working Together

Working with community partners, we are able to provide our youth, adult and senior residents with a variety of resources including adult literacy classes and after-school tutorial programs. Our partnerships with Rainbow Housing Assistance Corporation, Portfolio Resident Services and Favored With Hope has provided on-site resident services to our public housing residents at Heatherbrook, Lincoln Park, Oxford Place, Historic Oaks of Allen Parkway Village, Victory Place and Fulton Village. As the new school year approached, the resident service agencies at our communities, worked with us to make sure that our young residents were ready for school.

Heatherbrook resident Shantel Walker was among the parents who brought her children to Rainbow's school

supply giveaway. Her 10-year-old and 12-year-old daughters both received free backpacks. Both girls are avid participants in Rainbow's after-school program. The program is structured for the children to receive help with their homework for up to an hour, followed by a snack, an academic activity, and finally, an exercise to close off the program. "The program is great and has helped my girls to make new friends," Walker said. "They are learning and being introduced to new activities."

To learn more about the youth, adult and senior programs offered by Rainbow Housing Assistance Corporation, Portfolio Resident Services or Favored With Hope in your community, please speak with your Property Manager.



There were 180 children who received school supplies during the Back-to-School celebration held at Oxford Place through our partnership with Portfolio Resident Services.



Heatherbrook resident Shantel Walker and her daughters were among the residents who received free backpacks through partnership with Rainbow Housing Assistance Corporation.

## Meeting Residents' Needs

The Houston Housing Authority is taking the lead in establishing the Texas chapter of the Regional American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC), a national organization that provides guidance, training, and sets professional standards for resident service coordinators. Started as a result of a survey issued in 1998, which showed a need for a national professional association for service coordinators, AASC has chapters in 13 states and currently has over 3,200 members. Membership has expanded from service coordinators to also include public housing authority staff, quality assurance personnel, family service coordinators, housing owners and managers.

*continued on page 6*



Members of the newly created Texas chapter of the American Association of Service Coordinators, an organization that provides guidance and training for service coordinators.

## Keeps Getting Better

On September 26, the courtyard at Lyerly senior apartments was filled with food and laughter as residents came together to celebrate the completed renovation projects at the property. Among the renovations that were completed during the summer was the installation of a placard at the entry way, addition of a coffee bar at the community room, upgrades to the leasing office, installation of a planter box outside the leasing office, repairs to the sidewalk and improvements to the courtyard. As the residents enjoyed the barbecue meal provided by Lyerly's staff, during the celebration, many of the residents took time to admire the community vegetable garden. The residents have taken on the responsibility of maintaining the garden, and are

extremely proud of the vegetables that they grow, which include peppers, squash, okra, and tomatoes.

Luther Vanderburg has lived at Lyerly for 11 years and is among the residents that takes care of the vegetable gardens that are located in the courtyard and backyard area. "Having a vegetable garden gives me something to do that I also enjoy," Vanderburg said. "Between the garden and all the renovations happening here, this place is looking really good."

As part of our continued efforts to provide quality housing to our residents we are planning on making upgrades to our properties throughout the year.



Top: Lyerly residents during the barbecue luncheon at the newly renovated courtyard. Bottom: Lyerly residents proudly display their vegetable gardens, which are located in the courtyard and backyard area of the community.

### Meeting Residents' Needs, *continued from page 5*

The Houston Housing Authority has five resident service coordinators that provide support services and activities for youth, adults and seniors living at our public housing properties. Each service coordinator is a member of AASC.

With the creation of the Texas chapter of AASC, service coordinators can now receive local training and attend local meetings, allowing for them to better meet the critical

needs of their clients. The officers of Texas Regional AASC Chapter are President, Judith Lazo-Tillson with Pasadena Interfaith Ministries; Vice President, Renee Lewis with Houston Housing Authority; and Secretary, Margaret Montana with Volunteers of America. For more information on AASC please contact Judith Lazo-Tillson at 713-475-8300.

# Community Resources

## What's Up at METRO

METRO is changing and your transit options are increasing

METRO opened its second light rail line in December, extending service from 610 South, through the Texas Medical Center, through downtown, and with the addition of the new North (Red) Line, to the Houston Community College Northline Campus.

METRO's light rail system will nearly triple in size when two additional rail lines, the East End (Green) and Southeast (Purple) lines open to the public. Additionally, METRO is in the process of evaluating and redesigning its entire local bus network.

## Why Reimagine METRO's Transit Network?

The Houston region is changing faster than our transit system has adapted. And the public asked for improvements to better meet those changes. The METRO Transit System Re-imagining Project has the potential to significantly improve METRO's transit system for many of its riders. METRO hopes to make the system easier to use and understand — resulting in a better experience that more people will want to take advantage of.

METRO's System Reimagining is a sweeping plan to revamp the local bus network to achieve the following:

- **Respond to your feedback!** You've asked for simpler, faster, more frequent service, better service on week-ends, and more ways to get where you're going.
- **The bus is always coming.** On the new Frequent Network the bus is always coming within the next 15 minutes.
- **Go when you want to go, including weekends!** The routes in the proposed network run all weekend, just as frequently as the weekday midday. Getting around on Saturday and Sunday will be much easier than it is today.
- **Service you can remember.** The routes themselves are simpler, straighter and easier to remember and since most routes come more often you can spend less time waiting or worrying about the schedule.
- **More reliable.** Many of our delays result from buses stopped by freight trains and are compounded by long,

complicated routes. The proposed network reduces the number of street level freight rail crossings by 30% each day. The new routes are shorter, come more often, and have virtually no branches so we can do a better job of keeping them on time.

With the approval of METRO's Board this fall, implementation could begin in the summer of 2015.

For more information about METRO System Reimagining go to: <http://www.transitsystemreimagining.com/>

For general information about METRO services go to: [www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org) or call 713-635-4000.

## Need Help Quitting Smoking? People needed for a research study

**The purpose of this study is to test programs to help people quit smoking cigarettes.**

**Those who are interested must be:**

- ✓ **Current cigarette smokers**
- ✓ **Willing to try to quit smoking**
- ✓ **At least 18 years old**
- ✓ **English or Spanish speaking**
- ✓ **Not pregnant**
- ✓ **Not in another smoking program**

**Participants enrolled in this study will be:**

- ✓ **Compensated for their time**
- ✓ **In the study for 1 year**

Cigarette smokers who want to join the study should come to

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about this study, please contact Project ACTION staff at (713) 563-9891

**Project ACTION**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
**MD Anderson  
Cancer Center**  
Making Cancer History®



# HOUSTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

2640 Fountain View Drive  
Suite 400  
Houston, TX 77057

### Board of Commissioners

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- Bobbie Figures**, Commissioner
- Tina Arias Peterman**, Commissioner
- LaRence Snowden**, Commissioner
- Nicola Toubia**, Commissioner
- Phillis Wilson**, Commissioner

**Tory Gunsolley**, President & CEO

### Important Telephone Numbers

#### Customer Service Hotline:

713.260.0377

**Fraud Hotline:** 713.260.0724

#### Neighborhood Resource Center:

713.655.1940

#### City of Houston Service Helpline:

311

**United Way Helpline:** 211



### OCTOBER

- 10/13** Columbus Day – HHA closed
- 10/21** Board of Commissioners Meeting at Clayton Homes at 3 p.m.
- 10/28** Nutrition Class at Oxford Place at 10 a.m.
- 10/29** Fall Festival at Oxford Place at 4-6 p.m.
- 10/31** Halloween Party at HOAPV at 5 p.m.
- 10/31** Halloween Party at Long Drive at 12 p.m.-2 p.m.

### NOVEMBER

- 11/11** Veterans Day – HHA closed
- 11/18** Board of Commissioners Meeting at The Pinnacle at 3 p.m.
- 11/20** Thanksgiving Dinner for seniors at HOAPV at 5 p.m.
- 11/20** Senior Thanksgiving Luncheon at Irvinton at 11 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 11/21** Senior Thanksgiving Dinner at Oxford Place at 4-6 p.m.
- 11/26** Thanksgiving Dinner at Fulton Village at 6-8 p.m.
- 11/27-28** Thanksgiving Holiday – HHA closed

### DECEMBER

- 12/16** Board of Commissioners Meeting at Kelly Village at 3 p.m.
- 12/18** Christmas Dinner for seniors at HOAPV at 5 p.m.
- 12/19** Christmas Dinner for seniors at Fulton Village at 5-7 p.m.
- 12/19** Pictures with Santa Claus at Oxford Place at 4-6 p.m.
- 12/20** Senior Christmas Luncheon at Irvinton at 12 p.m.
- 12/23** Christmas Giveaway at Forest Green at 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- 12/25** Christmas Day – HHA closed
- 12/31** Night Watch Service at Irvinton at 10 p.m.-2 a.m.

*The Home Edition* is produced by the Houston Housing Authority.

### Houston Housing Authority

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### Claudia Nwaogu

Communications Coordinator

Comments, articles and photographs are welcomed for *The Home Edition* newsletter. All submissions must have a name and a phone number to be considered. Due to space limitations, the editor reserves the right to reject or edit copy as necessary.

Email submissions to  
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