

The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2020



RESTORE ILLINOIS

Illinois Governor JB Pritzker provided an update on taking a public health approach to safely reopen our state on a region-by-region basis. There are four regions, such as northeast Illinois, north-central Illinois, central Illinois, and southern Illinois. The northern Illinois region, including Winnebago, Boone, Ogle, Stephenson, and Lee counties, are in the North-Central region. Governor JB Pritzker announced a 5-phase plan to reopen Illinois. We are currently in phase three of the program, the Recovery stage. Things will still be somewhat remote, but state parks are to resume open, and bars and restaurants can have outdoor seating.

In Rockford, the City has allowed for restaurants to utilize parking lots, alleyways and the closing of some streets during specific hours to allow for outdoor dining. Retail will open with capacity levels, and masks will still be required in public settings. The earliest that regions can move into phase 4 that would allow indoor dining and gatherings of 50 people or fewer is June 26th. Phase 4 is called Revitalization, meaning this stage is where employees can return to work, education can start with guidelines, and all outdoor activities are open. To keep informed of COVID-19 updates, please visit our web page: www.rockfordha.org/coid-19-resources/

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A Message from Laura Snyder,
Chief Executive Officer

I would like to thank each of you for your patience, understanding, flexibility, and dedication during these challenging times related to COVID-19. We have all had to adjust to a “new normal” and our agency has had to adapt to and overcome numerous obstacles as a result. I believe we have done so in a reliable and professional manner and with integrity and transparency. However, as of today, the end is not in sight. We are still under the Governor’s Executive Order and have a great deal more to do. As the State begins to relax the original restrictions imposed through its Five-Phase Plan, we, too, will start to phase in the return of employees and services.

To remain vigilant about the possible spread of this virus through person to person contact, working with the Collective bargaining groups business associates, we have drafted a policy on how to safely return to work. This policy has daily health screening procedures that will require your understanding and cooperation, as we try to protect your health and the health of your loved ones. Please remember, we are doing this for you, not to you

All RHA offices will remain closed to the public, and all public meetings and personal contact interactions will be canceled. This includes all internal and external meetings, events, briefings, HQS inspections that are not health and safety-related, work-order services that are not health and safety-related, and resident activities. Our maintenance staff will return to their assigned sites on a full-time basis addressing emergency (health and safety) work orders, vacant unit

turns, preventive and exterior maintenance. Property Management, Resident Services, and Finance will return to the 50/50 schedules, ensuring that they remain accountable as well as accessible to meet the needs of our residents, contractors, and the community

These policies and practices are not intended to supersede or modify our current policies or procedures or CBA’s and are temporary in nature. We ask that you remain vigilant and continue to the utilization of safety measures and equipment, currently in place and ask that you use all products in good conscious.

We all look forward to the time where we can all return to our “normal” way of work and life. We will get through all of this together....We Can – We Will - RHA Strong!

Laura Snyder
Chief Executive Officer

OUR “HOMETOWN HEROES” WHO ARE THE FRONTLINE WORKERS

These groups of dedicated personnel who are on the frontline in our community continue to work every day to support each of us. Individually and as a group, they continue to work tirelessly. During this unprecedented time, The Rockford Housing Authority’s leadership team wants to show our appreciation, awe, and gratitude to not only the dedicated RHA Frontline Staff, Our Rockford Police Team, and the RHA community partners who support resident food deliveries but to all the amazing community healthcare workers, essential first responders, police officers, firemen, and paramedics.

ALL THE QUIET “HOMETOWN HEROES” WHO ARE ON OUR SIDE

Through these uncertain times, we have immense gratitude for all of our essential workers in the Rock River Valley area. Not only our frontline workers, but also our silent heroes that work behind the scenes to make sure we as a community are protected and stay healthy. While the list is long, it is far from complete, these silent heroes, to name a few: pharmacists, janitors, maintenance staff, cleaning teams, garbage collection workers, dishwashers, postal workers, and delivery drivers. We see you, we appreciate you, we thank you. RHA has produced a video in tribute to our frontline workers.



“Together we can,
Together we will”

Delivery Drivers

Today, we have a very special ‘shout out’ as we praise these home heroes. This acknowledgment is directed toward Stephanie Penix from our

Maintenance Department, who is the RHA Driver. Steph love’s providing a top-level resident service and is consistent every single time. She treats all the RHA residents with great respect. To her, every delivery is equally as important as the last.

Steph knows that it is her job to get the delivery or RHA residents to their destination always safely and on time. Whether it is people, food, clothing, cleaning supplies, or any other essential item we need, these “Home Town Heroes” bring, they do this regularly while being in the middle of a pandemic, but they continue to do it still today fearlessly. They are putting other people before themselves. We see you, and we thank you.

Maintenance Staff

One of our silent hometown heroes, our maintenance staff. The people behind the scene of it all, making sure we are living comfortably and safely.

These workers are working long hours just like all of our other essential personal, making sure that your houses are warm and all of your essential needs in your homes are working properly. They too are working to the best of their ability to make sure the community is at ease in the mists of crisis. We see you, we thank you, we appreciate you.



THE DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

The Director's Spotlight is an important way for folks in the greater Rockford area to learn about all the amazing work the RHA Team members perform daily. This acknowledgment involves recognizing something at the core of every employee: Their passion, which is the foundation of our Core Values.

Why is Director's Spotlight important?

The Rockford Housing Authority Leadership Team believes in the genuine values of our organization. These values touch everything we do on a daily work basis. They consist of Ten Core Values, which are fundamental to us. They are the cornerstone of the Rockford Housing Authority. We put them at the forefront of every plan, event and project we do, because we care about our employees, our residents, our strategic partners and the greater Rockford community.

What we believe:

The values and guiding attributes we follow are based on our mission and vision of the organization. A quality home is the foundation of society & community: quality home life is the foundation to provide hope and the pathway to our goals. Responsible and respectful people deserve the opportunity to contribute to attaining a comfortable quality home and neighborhood all can take pride in.

We believe, through our most important asset, the RHA Staff that:

RHA is moving toward and becoming a leader in housing and sustainable communities by developing additional, non-HUD revenue streams, increasing our asset base and offering state of the art resident initiatives. The Rockford Housing Authority Leadership Team will continuously acknowledge and recognize the important contributions that individuals have added to the success of the organization through Caring.

Caring, as part of the RHA corporate culture, is a practice for creating conditions that bring out the best in people and situations. It is a method that helps people respond to circumstances in ways that create results that improve one's quality of life.

RHA DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT MARCH 2020

First Award presented to Linda Dorsey-Tillman, Procurement, Contracts and Section 3 Compliance Manager for March 2020. When the COVID-19 directive by Gov. Pritzker was announced for social distancing, Linda, in a 48-hour time period, deployed 20 laptops for use by RHA staff members to work from home. This included wiping the computers clean, loading all necessary software and enabling the computers to allow staff to continue their daily duties, while staying home. She also configured work related cell phones, many with hotspots, for employees who had previously not been issued an RHA phone, with hotspots needed by those who did not have internet service at home.

Linda was awarded \$100.00 for her outstanding efforts during this unprecedented time and given a Door Dash gift certificate for lunch since attending lunch at restaurants currently is unavailable. We are so very proud of Linda and her service to RHA to allow us to maintain the level of service that we do, and imparting her commitment to our core values.

To view the video and for more information visit:
rockfordha.org/the-directors-spotlight

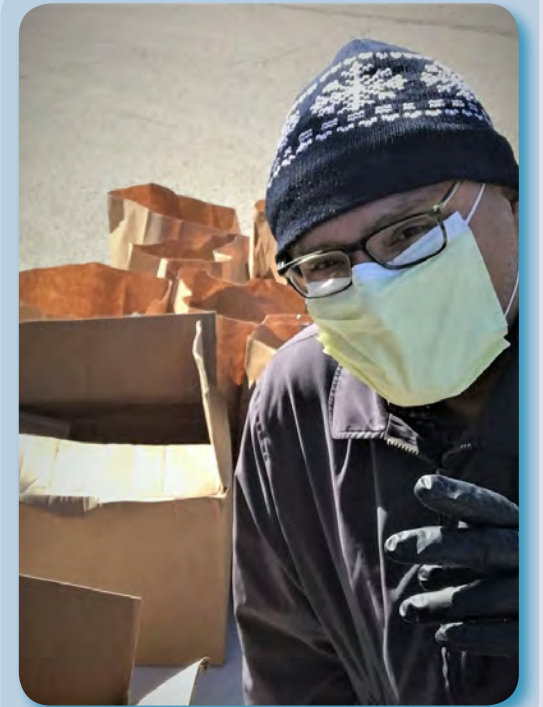
RHA DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT APRIL 2020

WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE OUR APRIL 2020, DIRECTOR'S SPOTLIGHT WINNER, MR. ELIAS SORIA!

Throughout his 20 + career at RHA as a Family Self-Sufficiency Specialist, Elias has always stepped outside of his responsibilities to lend a helping hand where needed, and he always does so with a "positive attitude and joking spirit." The important role that Elias plays in RHA's team is assisting each person in FSS with a plan that helps them reach their goals for the next five years.

He has helped many individuals throughout his time with RHA and continues to do so even working remotely. Knowing that his team is currently facing material and capacity challenges to safely provide essential services to our most vulnerable populations, our children, and our elderly, Elias is quick to joke or utter a quick poem to lift the spirits of his coworkers and the RHA residents. Elias has hopes to introduce "an open mic contest with inspiring residents who love to write as a motivational outlet in their lives".

His continued dedication to the well-being and financial security of our residents, his passion toward his job, and his devotion to his RHA family, demonstrates our Vision, Mission, and Core Values in a manner that is unparalleled.



ROCK HOUSE KIDS

Rock House Kids is a safe haven for Rockford children since 1999. While they provide a safe, warm, and nurturing environment for children aged 6-18, they are still helping the community's kids during the pandemic. Rock House Kids are doing food and clothing deliveries every Monday to homes.

Because of their generosity and lending a helping hand in these times, they have gotten a donation from several organizations, including; Aldi, The Ironman Foundation, Northern Illinois Food Bank, and the United Way of Rock River Valley. Receiving over \$11,600 in grants, the money will go toward feeding kids during the pandemic and programming for when they can open back up.

Rock House has provided Rockford families with bags of food for pick up or delivery during the stay at home order. If you know any RHA resident that needs this, go to their website

<https://rockhousekids.org/>

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS PHASE IN ROCKFORD

In addition to the 5 phases that Governor J.B Pritzker has established for the state, the city of Rockford has reopened a little earlier than the rest of the state. Mayor McNamara has decided that we are able to start reopening the city step by step, according to local health experts they have determined that we can safely, responsibly and sustainably open back up based on the public health metrics for Winnebago County.

These businesses include child care providers, churches, and restaurants are able to reopen, with some modifications such as restaurants providing outside dining only, curbside pickup and delivery will continue. Wearing a mask is still required while in public settings. Through these challenging times, businesses have had to get innovative and will continue to do so as we progress through the 5 phases. Our local businesses have pivoted and changed the original products and services they have offered. Our community has continued to support these businesses through the purchase of curbside pickup, gift cards, and delivery. In return, many of our local businesses have been giving back whatever they can to help our frontline workers, local charities, and folks in need.

COVID 19 TESTING SITES

If you or someone in your family is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 including fever, shortness of breath and cough, learn more with these resources: The Winnebago County Health Department <http://www.wchd.org/>

This RHA website page is dedicated to our residents, the community and the RHA Team. Visit RHA: <https://rockfordha.org/covid-19-resources/>

Testing sites in Illinois:
<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/testing>

For additional information related to COVID-19, please visit www.dph.illinois.gov. You can also get your COVID-19 questions answered at any time of day by calling the COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-889-3931.

THE MANY HOUSING ISSUES FACING THE ELDERLY IN OUR COMMUNITY

Today, we are here to further explore the many housing issues facing the elderly and people with disabilities in the current Covid19 crisis. The effects of this pandemic on the lives of those who need our assistance is a concern to all of us in our community. For people with disabilities, including disabilities that result from aging, accessibility in a home is a crucial step in independent living. For some, access may be as simple as adding grab bars and a tub seat in the bathroom. For wheelchair users, access may require ramping entrances, widening doorways, lowering counters, adding lever or loop-style hardware to doors and drawers, and modifying storage areas. The RHA recognizes these needs and offers many comfortable and safe accommodations for people with disabilities.

We are all currently aware that our community has been faced with the impact of the past weeks. This crisis has an effectively direct influence on housing and jobs. Obviously, those cuts have had an adverse effect on the elderly and disabled, who are already struggling to maintain some level of a standard of living. Research has shown there are health benefits when people are stably housed. Housing stability helps people focus on their medical needs and improves health outcomes. Seniors and disabled residents represent a large portion of those who traditionally pay 50% or more of their income on

housing expenses. One of the more essential pieces is that two-thirds of renter growth was among households 45-64. Sometimes difficulties are perceiving, communicating, traveling, navigating unfamiliar circumstances, transitioning, or even managing emergencies.

The Rockford Housing Authority provides assistance through a variety of programs established by Congress and funded through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. We have made a continued commitment to developing affordable housing for persons with special needs as well. If you know someone who is a senior or disabled and need information about how we serve our community members, please look at the FAQ Page at: <https://rockfordha.org/about/about-faq/>

Answers to Questions about Affordable Housing in the Community





Rockford Housing Authority
223 S Winnebago Street,
Rockford, IL 61102

DID YOU KNOW?

Rockford Housing Authority owns 292 scattered sites, which are houses and duplexes “scattered” throughout the City of Rockford. The current value of these homes and duplexes is over \$19 million. RHA’s strives to make our scattered-site program an asset to not only our residents but also the neighborhood and the greater community. We do this by investing in physical development so that the units are not identifiable as public housing; they fit well into the neighborhood and create a sense of pride for the tenant. We also invest in the tenant by offering support and programming to prepare them for the increased responsibility of taking care of a home, being a good neighbor, and becoming an active member of the neighborhood and community.

TWO NEW MEMBERS JOIN RHA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RHA would like to thank our outgoing Board Commissioners Ken Oliver and Ziyad Shihadah for their service to our Board and the Rockford Community.

We also extend a welcome to our new board members, Jessica Wilson, who replaces Ken Oliver as our Resident Commissioner and Sandra Sigala, who replaces Ziyad Shihadah.

