

The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2021

MARCH



RHA Women's History Month

Happy Women's History Month! Women's History Month is a celebration of those that identify as a woman and their contributions to society, culture and history. It is a time to reflect on the past and lay the foundation for the future. By highlighting the different achievements among women, it opens doors to endless possibilities for young women everywhere.

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HISTORY-

In Santa Rosa, California, Women's History Month started as a local event. In 1978, the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women's Education Task Force organized and conducted a "Women's History Week" celebration. The week of March 8 was chosen by the organizers to coincide with International Women's Day. Many groups began their own Women's History Week celebrations the next year, spreading the initiative around the world. In 1980, the National Women's History Project (now the National Women's History Alliance) led a coalition of women's organizations and historians in successfully lobbying for national recognition. It was the same year that President Jimmy Carter would issue the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the week of March 8 to be National Women's History Week. It was 1987 that Congress designated March as "Women's History Month."

2021 THEME-

Every year, the National Women's History Alliance declares a theme for Women's History Month. The theme for 2021 is "Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to be Silenced." Women have voted at higher rates than men during every Presidential Election since 1984. While the theme observes the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote, it was not until 1965, that the Voting

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Karen Hoffman
Chairman

Rights Act lifted the restrictions that prevented African Americans and Indigenous Americans from voting.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY-

March 8 is designated as International Women's Day.

In support of International Women's Day, the colors worn are purple, green, and white to symbolize justice, dignity, and hope. International Women's Day is so important that the entire world celebrates women and helps drive the initiative for gender equality. The day is used to empower and celebrate the women in your life.

HOW TO CELEBRATE-

You do not have to be a woman to celebrate Women's History Month!

One way that you can celebrate Women's History Month is researching the history of women's rights. While there has been a tremendous amount of progress on advancing women's rights, there are challenges that still remain. Another way to celebrate is by spreading awareness on social media by sharing articles, women centric content, infographics, and inspirational quotes. Some other ways to celebrate include supporting women-owned businesses, participating in political advocacy for women, volunteering at a women's shelter or health clinic, or donating to charities.

Karen Hoffman, RHA Chairman, has been working on the Board of RHA commissioners since 2013. In 1979, she began working for the Winnebago Department of Human Services (formerly known as Public Aid) as a caseworker for family cases and all related refugee programs. In 1990, she was appointed as Administrator of the Boone County Department of Public Aid. In 1997, Mrs. Hoffman returned to Winnebago County after also serving in the Elgin office; all of these experiences made her a community activist.

Karen is president of the American Association of University Women, an association fighting for women's equality and equity. AAUW fights to remove the barriers and biases that stand in the way of gender equity. They train women to negotiate for pay and benefits and to pursue leadership roles. And they advocate for federal, state, and local laws and policies to ensure equity and end discrimination. Karen advises young women in the workplace to "Pay attention; you can learn from bad leaders."

Karen's goal for RHA is to have residents become homeowners and own their homes in the years to come. "I want residents to say "I live at" instead of "I stay at" I want to see better housing in the community where people in low-income housing become homeowners." Karen's dedication to RHA, the community, and activism makes her a great woman to highlight for Women's History Month. "Believe in yourself and take every opportunity to learn; get out there in the community, be part of the answer." – Karen Hoffman

Leadership comes in many shapes and sizes, and one of the essential attributes of good leadership is a good follower; Laura Snyder, the RHA CEO, is one of those individuals. Laura has been working at RHA as the first women CEO for two and a half years. Laura has been in RHA CEO's position since September 2018 and is the first female to take on this leadership role for the community since the organization began 70 years ago. With over 21 years of experience with Public Housing, Laura has helped develop our safety and security programs and currently holds certifications as a Housing Choice Voucher specialist, Public Housing Manager, and Tax, Credit specialist. "Being the first women CEO of Rockford Housing Authority gives me great hope for the future of equality of women in the workforce."

– Laura Snyder.



Laura Snyder
CEO

ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY'S, BOARD COMMISSIONER, SANDRA SIGALA, WINS INTERNATIONAL TRADESWOMEN HEROES AWARD!

Rockford Housing Authorities' very own Sandra Sigala won the February 2021 International Tradeswomen Heroes Award! The award recognizes workers that set an exemplary example both on and off the job site. Sandra was born and raised in Rockford. She attended Boylan Catholic High School and Rock Valley College, studying Art, Child Care, and Child Development.

Sandra is a Foreman Painter with 15 years of experience; she is responsible for overseeing the job site, including staffing arrangement of materials and production schedules.



Sandra's passion has granted her a multitude of appointed leadership positions such as Recording Secretary for IUPAT LU 607, Recording Secretary for the Rockford Labor Day Committee, Delegate for Rockford United Labor, Trustee for the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, Trustee for PDC 30's National Women's Committee and most recently appointed by the Mayor of Rockford and approved by City Council as a Commissioner to the Rockford Housing Authority.

Sandra was nominated since she achieved great things in her career and also in her personal life. Fifteen years ago, Sandra Sigala worked as a classroom academic assistant and was experiencing significant life changes.

As a single mother of two, Sandra was determined to find a career that could provide her with a good wage and benefits. After speaking with the local union and the apprenticeship school, Sandra was armed with enough information to know that she was ready to start a new career in the finishing trades. She became a member of IUPAT Local 607, enrolled in the painter apprenticeship program, and began working for her brother's company.

"Sandra's passion and integrity are greatly appreciated at the Rockford Housing Authority, and her passion and involvement for the community are one of the many ways she is an asset to the RHA Board of Commissioners."- Laura Snyder, RHA CEO.

Congratulations Sandra!

RHA COVID-19 FAQs

Big or small, your life has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking for information surrounding COVID-19 can become confusing or overwhelming. Since there is so much information out right now about COVID-19 and its vaccines, here are a few answers to some questions you may be asking.

Who is the current vaccine safe for?

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is approved for safe use on individuals 16 and older. The FDA recommends that those with a history of severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) to any components of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, should avoid this vaccine as stated in the healthcare vaccination providers' fact sheet. Any other allergies unrelated to COVID-19 such as food, mold, animals, environmental, medications, should be fine to receive the vaccine, the CDC says.

The Moderna vaccine is approved for safe use on individuals 18 and older. The Moderna vaccine and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are both 95 percent effective. For children and pregnant women, clinical trials are still in the works to determine whether or not the vaccine is safe to administer. A conversation with your healthcare provider about the risks and benefits by receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, may help you make a more informed decision.

Those with a compromised immune system due to cancer or an autoimmune disorder are ineligible to receive the vaccine.

How much does it cost, and do you need insurance to get it?

According to the CDC, the COVID-19 vaccine will be given to U.S. citizens for free. If vaccine providers do charge an additional fee for the administration of the vaccine, the fee can be reimbursed by recipients' insurance. If uninsured, the Health Resources and Services Administration's Relief fund can reimburse you as well.

Do I need to be vaccinated if I've already had COVID?

Yes, you do need to be vaccinated if you have already had COVID-19. Those that had a COVID-19 infection more than 30 days ago are currently recommended to get the vaccine. It is possible to delay vaccination for at least 90 days after the COVID-19 infection since evidence suggests reinfection is uncommon. Those that currently have COVID-19, are ineligible to receive the vaccine.

Once vaccinated, are masks and social distancing still necessary?

Yes. Unfortunately, getting vaccinated against the coronavirus does not mean you're free to go maskless and head to crowded bars.

Yes. Once you are vaccinated against COVID-19, Wearing masks, social distancing, and washing your hands will continue to be necessary precautions for preventing the spread of the virus until at least most of the population is immunized. Some health experts are now recommending double masking.

When is the next vaccine going to be available—and how is it different?

On February 27, the FDA issued Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine—a single-shot dose developed by Janssen Pharmaceutical Company. During the J&J global trial, results showed that the vaccine is about 66 percent effective for moderate to severe cases.

The J&J vaccine is recommended for individuals that are 18 and older. Compared to the Pfizer and Moderna COVID vaccines, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine has a different mechanism of action that uses mRNA. Dr. Passaretti states the J&J vaccine, "is a viral vector vaccine. This means that it uses a different type of virus as a sort of Trojan Horse: A non-pathogenic virus (which is incapable of causing disease) is injected, and that virus has been modified to produce the SARS CoV 2 protein that your immune then responds to and prepares your body. So, if you are exposed to the COVID virus naturally, it's shut down at the door before it can make you sick."

How long does immunization last?

Trials are still in the works to determine how long immunization will last. The hope is to provide vaccines where immunity lasts from at least several months to a year or two.

Are the vaccines still effective against the new strains of COVID?

The most data available surrounds the strain from the U.K that is detected widely throughout the United States. Both Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech have reported their vaccines are still effective against the U.K. and South Africa variants. However there appears to be slightly less protection for the South African variant; medical experts are working on a booster shot to combat it.

Resources: www.realsimple.com/health/preventative-health/coronavirus-vaccine-faq?

RHA VACCINE INFORMATION FOR SENIOR AND DISABLED RESIDENTS

Rockford Housing Authority and the Winnebago County Health Department collaborated to provide COVID-19 Vaccines for senior and disabled RHA residents as they are considered part of the “priority group.” Each resident from North Main, Olesen Plaza, Park Terrace, Buckbee, Midvale, and Summit Green received packets to fill out, including a Vaccine Fact Sheet. A total of 165 forms have been submitted from all locations. The Illinois Department of Health released a Vaccination Plan for Illinois, one of the packets given to residents. The plan includes Vaccination preparedness planning, phased approach to COVID-19 Vaccination, critical populations, etc. IDPH states in Section 4: Critical Populations that “IDPH will continually review additional guidance provided by the federal government and updates to ACIP recommendations regarding allocation priorities and the populations that will be served successively as vaccine supplies increase.” After the target priority groups have been vaccinated and additional vaccines come available, “IDPH will ensure that communities suffering disproportionately from COVID-19—including communities of color, older adults, people with disabilities, and people with comorbidities—are prioritized appropriately; for vaccination.”



Rockford Housing Authority wants to stress the importance of getting a COVID-19 Vaccine for our senior and disabled residents, especially living in such proximity to one another. With the Winnebago Health Department and IDPH, priority groups have been set up to ensure that at-risk people get the first round. The vaccine offered to RHA residents in the housing listed above is the Moderna Vaccine. Here are some facts:

How Is The Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine Given? The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine will be given to you as an injection into the muscle. The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine vaccination series is two doses given one month apart. If you receive one dose of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, you should receive a second dose of the same vaccine one month later to complete the vaccination series.

Will The Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine Give Me Covid-19? No. The Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine does not contain SARS-CoV-2 and cannot give you COVID-19.

What Should You Mention To Your Vaccination Provider Before You Get The Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine?

Tell your vaccination provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have any allergies
- have a fever
- have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner
- are immunocompromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant
- are breastfeeding
- have received another COVID-19 vaccine

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- Ask the vaccination provider
- Visit CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Visit FDA at <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/>
- Contact your state or local public health department



RHA DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT FEBRUARY 2021

Ms. Lynn Feirn has been with the Rockford Housing Authority for more than a decade. Throughout her career with RHA, Lynn has assisted hundreds of families in obtaining a quality home. Lynn has also displayed her willingness to help others, which many of her peers have thoroughly cited.

Lynn's dedication, motivation, and willingness to assist her fellow employees are traits deserving of the Director's Spotlight Award for February 2021. Lynn's initiative and commitment demonstrate consistency and resourcefulness, two fundamental core values for our agency. She is a dedicated worker whose attention to detail is most welcome. She exhibits consistency in her daily duties and is willing to take the necessary steps to ensure the success of her development and assist a colleague in need. Ms. Felice Woitynek states, "Lynn has been a constant source of knowledge, guidance, and motivation in my RHA work-life." "Lynn knew there was a need, and she did not stop until she was able to provide some type of assistance." Lynn's attention to detail and resourcefulness have contributed significantly to her property and our agency as a whole.

We are proud to have Lynn as a team member; we look forward to her future with RHA. Congratulations and well-done, Lynn.





RHA ST PATRICK'S DAY ARTICLE

Happy St. Patrick's Day! St. Patrick's Day originated as religious holiday but has since transformed into one of the most festive holidays of the year in America. People around the world, especially Irish communities, come together to party and celebrate Irish heritage.

The dress code entails anything and everything green. Nothing will top off your outfit like shamrocks, hats, and fun glasses. Luckily for you, wearing all this green will prevent any leprechauns from pinching you! Maybe you will even find the leprechaun's gold.

Once you got your outfit, it is time to celebrate. This year's celebration is a bit different than last years' thanks to COVID-19. Instead of going out to the pub, find creative ways to celebrate at home! Whether that's drinking your favorite Irish beer, eating corned beef and cabbage, making crafts, or watching past St. Patrick's Day parades. Unfortunately, all St. Patrick's Day parades are cancelled due to COVID-19.

Did you know that St. Patrick's Day parades actually originated in America, not Ireland?

As the potato famine swept Ireland in 1845, at least a million Irish immigrants fled to America to seek a new life. Upon St. Patrick's Day, Irish Americans celebrated by gathering together to hold St. Patrick's Day parades in honor of their heritage. As Irish Patriotism magnified in America, Irish organizations unified to establish the official New York St. Patrick's Day Parade in 1848. With over 150,000 participants, this is the largest civilian led parade in America, today.

While cities like Boston, Philadelphia, and Savannah also celebrate with parades, Chicago takes it a step further by dying their river green. If you decide to go to the annual dyeing, make sure you show up on time since the green vegetable dye only lasts a few hours to help minimize environmental damage.

St. Patrick's Day has so many fun traditions to participate in while honoring Irish culture. Wherever and however, you decide to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, continue to social distance and stay safe!

Resources:

<https://www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day/history-of-st-patricks-day>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/03/17/st-patricks-day-traditions-green-holiday/81868808/>

<https://www.history.com/news/st-patricks-day-origins-america>



Rockford Housing Authority
223 S Winnebago Street
Rockford, IL 61102

NOW TAKING APPLICATIONS FOR RHA HIGH-RISES

Rockford Housing Authority is now taking applications for select high-rises; Park Terrace and North Main Manor.

North Main Manor- 505 N. Main St.- Rockford, IL 61103 187 units- North Main Manor is located in the downtown area surrounded by Parks and near the scenic Rock River; convenient to Rockford Public Library, churches, banks, and downtown activities. The building has a diverse selection of floor plans and amenities, including full cable service, on-site laundry facilities, private off-street resident parking, and modern TV entry system. Heat, water and gas are provided. There are some accessible units available at North Main Manor.

Park Terrace- 1000 Chamberlain- Rockford, IL 61107 183 units- Park Terrace is centrally located near Rockford's downtown area with convenient access to the East side business district. With its spacious apartments and other amenities, Park Terrace offers the enjoyment of a beautiful park like surrounding with friendly people. Enjoy active, independent living. Appliances are furnished for each apartment. Private off-street resident parking. On site laundry facilities. Located on the RMTD bus line. Full cable service is available with local TV stations. There are one- and two-bedroom units available. There are some accessible units available at Park Terrace. Heat, water, and gas furnished.

Olesen Plaza- 511 N. Church St.- Rockford, IL 61103 151 units- Olesen Plaza is centrally located near Rockford's downtown area surrounded by parks with convenient access to cultural centers, an art museum, and the main branch of the public library. There are also several financial institutions within easy walking distance of the building. Each apartment is furnished with appliances and an air conditioner sleeve. Convenient parking for residents is provided on the grounds. Full cable service is available with local television stations. A coin operated laundry is on the premises.

For additional information contact management at (815) 489-8663 or by cell phone at (815) 509-9576 for either of these properties.

