

The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2021
JULY



RHA AWARDED THREE NAHRO AWARDS OF MERIT IN THE RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES CATEGORY AND HAS BEEN NOMINATED FOR THE 2021 NAHRO AWARD OF EXCELLENCE!

The Rockford Housing Authority is excited to announce that our Resident Awareness for Section 3, The Lifeforce Development Institute, and The RHA Digital TV Channel have won the NAHRO 2021 Award of Merit in the Resident and Client Services Category and has been nominated for the 2021 NAHRO Award of Excellence!

RHA'S SECTION 3 PROMOTION AND RESIDENT AWARENESS is a robust training program focusing within the RHA agency. RHA trains Section 3 qualified individuals in the day-to-day operations of RHA, including all departments such as; finance, maintenance, human services, housing choice voucher, and property management. The promotion of this program has been mainly focused on the Section 3 portal.

Over the last eight decades, HUD has evolved itself to continuously meet the needs of our community's most vulnerable families, which extend beyond the

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boundary of providing a safe, clean and affordable place to call home. Programs like Section 3 were created as a strategy that would empower residents of government-funded affordable housing programs and low-income workers to a life of self-sufficiency and independence.

Section 3 advocates for local economic development, neighborhood economic improvement, and individual self-sufficiency, requiring that HUD-funded contractors, to the greatest extent feasible, provide job training employment opportunities and contracting opportunities for low or very low-income residents in our community.

RHA created an online portal on their website for RHA Residents and community members to self-certify as low or very low income and register to receive notifications regarding training and job opportunities.

This portal has been a vital asset in connecting Section 3 residents to jobs and training opportunities, not only from RHA but with contractors servicing our properties. Since establishing the portal, RHA has exceeded the 30% new hires requirement for Section 3. Over 50% of all of our new hires for FY2020 were qualified section 3 residents, and we believe the creation of the Section 3 portal played a vital role in this result.



This Section 3 portal has brought a wealth of job and training opportunities to all registered individuals. Ours is unique in that we have opened the portal out to community partners to post their opportunities. This portal can be a springboard into a new job opportunity, tuition assistance, and increasing your work experience and knowledge when well used by the residents.

RHA'S LIFEFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE program partners with employers to ensure that the academic preparation, soft skills training, and other services are relevant to local industries and employment opportunities. Over twelve weeks, the students learn such things as positive attitude, adaptability, personal ethics, self-esteem, taking direction, critical thinking, and accepting feedback. They also learn how to overcome obstacles, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, punctuality, and attendance. In addition, RHA created the LDI training opportunity for individuals with multiple barriers to employment. This included individuals who have not yet received a diploma or GED, the unemployed, and the underemployed.

Through this endeavor, not only has RHA created a curriculum that enhances the participant's soft skills, education, and job training, while also building self-esteem and confidence, but the success of this program and its certification of completion are recognized and accepted by industries throughout our community as a continued education program.

THE RHA DIGITAL TV CHANNEL is a new approach to RHA communication was designed to provide residents, guests, and staff viewers with relevant and essential up-to-date and timely RHA news content. Effectively communicating health and safety protocols has proven lifesaving during this pandemic. Nothing is more important than keeping people safe. And in this case, keeping safe means staying informed. The Agency's digital signage goal was to engage more people with visual messages that are delivered instantly and reliably.

The overarching goal is to transform the way RHA internally communicates by running live, real-time data and RHA resident information. The initiative helps both residents and staff react to important announcements and security alerts, such as emergency procedures that may be immediately displayed and be viewed.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MICHAELA HARRIS, SECTION 3 COMPLIANCE MANAGER, AND ODESSA WALKER, DIRECTOR OF HUMAN SERVICES AND LDI DEAN, AND MULTIMEDIA MARKETING GROUP FOR THEIR HARD WORK AND DEDICATION.



RHA DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT JUNE 2021!

Congrats to the June Directors Spotlight winner Mr. Robert Lunsford! Robert has been with the Rockford Housing Authority for more than 4 years. During his time with the RHA, Rob has served RHA residents at various sites throughout the portfolio.

He consistently provides maintenance with the utmost care and proficiency. Robert has made a considerable and measurable impact on our agency's assets, reliability, and home quality standards. His efforts are evident by his endless resourcefulness, dedication, and willingness to go above and beyond, all of which benefit our staff, residents, and community.

"Rob is the Bob Vila of RHA Maintenance," States Lisa Olson, Property Manager of Scattered Sites/Bridge Rockford.

Advancing through the RHA maintenance department ranks, Rob has reached the level of "Maintenance Aide." Rob arrives to work every morning energetic, happy, prepared and organized. "Rob is extremely thorough and concise with describing maintenance issues and what it will take to fix it," States Brian Dugan, Assistant Property Manager of Scattered Sites/Bridge Rockford. He accepts every challenge each day regardless of its complexity without complaint. He regularly displays leadership through his efforts in training and mentoring trainees. Rob is a true benefit to the RHA. We are proud to have Rob Lunsford as part of our RHA team.

EMERGENCY HOUSING VOUCHERS FOR ROCKFORD COMMUNITY

The Rockford Housing Authority, through HUD, will be receiving 35 EHV (Emergency Housing Vouchers). According to HUD The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program is available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). In order to assist individuals and families who are:

- Homeless,
- At risk of homelessness,
- Fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or
- Were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability.

“EHVs represent an exciting opportunity for collaboration between Continuums of Care (CoCs) and local Public Housing Authorities” states HUD. RHA is working with the City of Rockford and other Partners: Home Start, Carpenters Place, YWCA, Family to Family, Rock River Homeless Coalition, among other to work through the continuum of care and wrap-around case management for these vouchers.

HUD'S CONTINUUM OF CARE PROGRAM

The HUD CoC is a community-wide commitment to ending homelessness, provides funding for efforts by nonprofit providers and governments to quickly re-house homeless residents to minimize trauma and dislocation; promote access to and effective utilization of mainstream programs; and optimize self-sufficiency among those experiencing homelessness. The Rockford Community Services Division serves as the Single Point of Entry (SPOE) where homeless living in a place not meant for human habitation in Winnebago and Boone Counties can be assessed and offered the best and quickest housing solution and related services appropriate for their needs. The Rockford Community Services Division also coordinates the application to HUD for CoC funding that enters the community plus administers the awarded grants. For more information on the community's efforts and successes to end homelessness, go to <https://www.rockriverhomelesscoalition.com/>

The Rockford Homeless Coalition is “a coalition of dedicated volunteers, non-profit agencies, public entities, businesses and faith-based organizations who believe that housing is a human right.” The coalition works with partners to help households that are homeless receive the services they need.

You can find more resources on EHV's here: <https://www.hud.gov/ehv>



RHA RESIDENTS CAN BENEFIT FROM A NEW SOLAR FARM IN ROCKFORD

A new solar energy program established for RHA residents, and the Rockford area community residents. These are individuals who have low and moderate incomes. You have the ability to save hundreds of dollars a year on electricity bills. You can get the benefits of solar and earn credits on your energy bill at the same time.

By subscribing to the community solar project such this. The solar farm is located at 1166 N. Horsman St., in Rockford. ComEd will pay for the community solar credits on behalf of customers and manage the identification and enrollment of subscribers to the project.

Rockford Housing Authority and other local support organizations are helping to locate potential participants. Eligibility requirements and other details of the program are available at www.ComEd.com/GiveARay.

THE FOLLOWING IS THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBILITY:

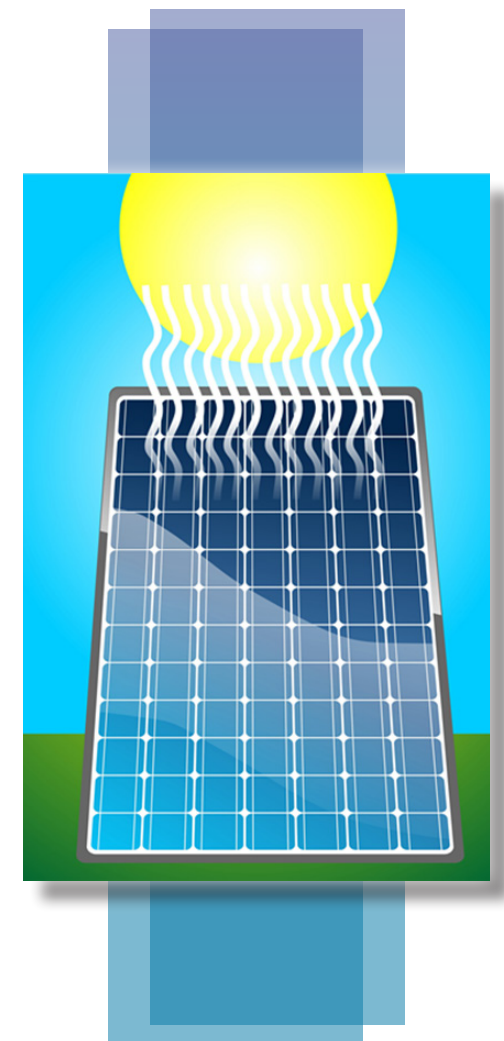
- Must have an active ComEd account
- Live in the Winnebago and Ogle communities
- At or below 80% area median income
- Not an active participant in the following programs:
 - Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)
 - Supplemental Arrearage Reduction Program (SARP)
- Have a past due balance at the time of subscription enrollment

HOW IT WORKS

The energy generated by Solar Farm flows to the smart grid and becomes part of the overall energy supply. ComEd then delivers energy through the smart grid to homes and businesses.

Rockford community solar farm will add more solar energy to the local grid when it begins operation in fall 2021. The farm will feature more than 6,600 solar panels with 2.6 megawatts of solar generation capacity. Nexamp, a community solar developer, is partnering with ComEd and the program is called www.ComEd.com/GiveARay.

Please Visit Here to Learn More or enroll today: <https://www.comed.com/SmartEnergy/MyGreenPowerConnection/Pages/GiveARay2.aspx>





COVID-19 UPDATE

As some of you may know there are new variants of COVID-19 circulating called Delta and Delta Plus. The delta variant has become dominant in coronavirus cases across the United States, accounting for more than half of cases nationwide in the week that ended on July 3, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Several clusters have been reported in states that are lagging on vaccinations, while vaccine numbers in Illinois are behind the national average.

Regions in the Midwest and South with lower vaccination rates are experiencing higher case rates than regions with high vaccination rates such as the Northeast, a trend that has become increasingly clear in recent weeks.

“Delta will certainly accelerate the pandemic” around the world, F. Perry Wilson, a Yale Medicine epidemiologist, said in a statement.

Andy Slavitt, a former member of President Joe Biden’s COVID Response Team, told CNN the delta variant is “the 2020 version of COVID-19 on steroids.”

“It’s twice as infectious,” Slavitt said. “Fortunately, unlike 2020, we actually have a tool that stops the delta variant in its tracks: It’s called vaccine.”

The CDC is closely monitoring these variants of concern (VOC). These variants have mutations in the virus genome that alter the characteristics and cause the virus to act differently in ways that are significant to public health (e.g., causes more severe disease, spreads more easily between humans, requires different treatments, changes the effectiveness of current vaccines).

Experts say masks are safe and effective in preventing spread of COVID-19

The US Centers for Disease Control recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated continue to wear face masks and maintain a physical distance in indoor settings and in crowded outdoor settings. Masks are safe and effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19, according to health officials and fact-checkers. Health experts have said that although the risk of getting sick from the delta variant is low for those who have been fully vaccinated, its spread could delay the end of the pandemic.

RHA COVID UPDATE- RHA WILL CONTINUE COVID 19 PROTOCOL FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING AND MASK MANDATES ON ALL RHA PROPERTIES

While the State of Illinois Phase 5 is now fully reopened since June 11, not all restrictions will be lifted. The State will lift its outdoor mask requirement for schools in line with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance. Fully vaccinated people should continue to get tested if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

To protect the health and continued welfare of the Rockford Housing Authority’s employees, residents, and guests, RHA will continue COVID-19 protocols for social distancing and mask mandates on all RHA Properties. Many of our residents are elderly and still at risk. COVID-19 best practices will be applied in common areas such as reception areas, community rooms, conference rooms, restrooms, and line/queuing until further notice.

While removing occupancy limits and other rules represents a step forward in the COVID pandemic, state officials have continued to caution all residents that it is possible for the State to move back to previous phases.

Please visit the RHA COVID-19 Updates page for more information:
<https://www.rockfordha.org/calendar/covid-19-resources/>



JULY IS UV SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

Nearing into the middle of summer and with temperatures rising RHA would like to shed light on UV Safety Awareness Month. We all love soaking in the sun and getting that nice summer tan, but everyone must remember to protect their skin and eyes from the damaging effects of the sun. The sun emits UV-A and UV-B rays that can damage the skin and eyes.

- UV-B rays have short wavelengths that reach the outer layer of your skin
- UV-A rays have longer wavelengths that can penetrate the middle layer of your skin

By learning about the risks and ways that you can protect yourself from these rays you can get back to having summer fun without worrying nor damaging you skin and eyes. Here are some things you can do to minimize the risk that come with being in the sun:

- Cover up: Wearing a hat or sunglasses can protect your eyes from the UV rays and wearing proper clothing can help too. Even if it’s hot, a light long sleeve shirt can still protect your skin.
- Wear sunscreen: Sunscreen is an essential part of your day in the sun. Sunscreen comes in many sun protection factors (SPF) ranging from 15% to 100%. Typically, people choose to go with the 50% option, but all percentages will protect you from the sun.
- Understand UV Index: UV Index is a scale used to tell how much UV radiation is reaching the earth’s surface. The scale ranges from 1-11+. From about 1 to 3 low to moderate and you can use minimal protection. If the UV is ranging from 4-7 it is moderate to high, meaning that protection is needed and to stay in the shade for some time. If the UV gets 8 or higher it is very high to extreme, meaning that extra protection is needed and you should stay inside or in the shade.

Bottom line is; use sunscreen and check the weather with UV index if you plan on being in the sun for long periods of time. RHA wishes everyone a fun and safe summer!



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DID YOU KNOW RHA OFFERS LDI?

The Lifeforce Development Institute is 12-week job readiness program that offers every week pathways out of poverty lessons, financial empowerment skills, and interview skills preparation and hopefully a job. "It's never too late to start over. If you weren't happy with yesterday, try something different today. Don't stay stuck, do better."

Registration for the next LDI semester is now open! The classes start on August 12th, 2021.

Apply here: <https://launchmyfuture.com/registration/>

The LDI course is 12- weeks and anyone 17 years or older, as a potential student, is required to fill out and turn in a copy of the LDI Participation Agreement.

Benefits:

- A weekly stipend is given
 - Computer
 - Professional clothing voucher
 - 90 days of Debt Management Plans with a professional debt management agency

The Enrollment Process Includes:

- Submit Application by Deadline.
- Interview for the program.
- Sign Participation Agreement.

Expected Outcome of LDI Graduates:

- Employment
- Certificate of Workforce Readiness
- Professional Development Mentor
- Continuous Educational Training

Don't wait! Launch your future today: <https://launchmyfuture.com/registration/>

