

# The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2021

NOVEMBER



## THE ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CHAIRMAN, VICE CHAIRMAN, AND THE INDUCTION OF A NEW BOARD MEMBER

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**JEFF DIBENEDENTO** is the Chairman of The Board of Commissioners. Jeffrey DiBenedetto has lived in Rockford all his life. He is a graduate of Boylan Catholic High School and Northern Illinois University. At NIU he studied at the College of Business and earned a Bachelor of Science in marketing.

Jeff is Executive Vice President of DiBenedetto & Associates, Ltd., a boutique wealth management firm in Loves Park IL. He currently serves on the Rosecrance Health Network board of directors, where he is most recently past Chairman. Jeff also serves on the Rosecrance Foundation board of directors, the Rockford Country Club board of directors, the Boys and Girls Club of Rockford board of directors, and as Chairman of the Boys and Girls Club of Rockford Foundation.



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**JESSICA WILSON** is the Vice Chairman of The Board of Commissioners. Jessica Wilson is a born and raised Rockford native who also has strong family ties from Greenville, MS. Jessica is a graduate of Jefferson High School in 2005 and Rock Valley College in 2015. While attending Rock Valley College, she studied Criminal Justice and earned an Associate's in Applied Science Degree. She also obtained a Certified Nursing Assistant Certificate in 2009 at RVC and has served her community as a CNA for 10 years.

In July of 2017, Jessica moved on to become an employee for FurstStaffing Employment Agency. She worked as an Onboarding Specialist where her job title was The Drug Test Administrator. She has worked for this company for the last 3 years learning many new skills.



**NEANGELA DIXON** is the newest RHA Board Member. She is an attorney with a passion for women's and children's advocacy and criminal justice reform. She has previously worked as a program director with a Chicagoland domestic violence agency and prosecutor specializing in criminal appeals and domestic violence cases. Currently she serves as general counsel for a state agency.

NeAngela is a graduate of North Central College and the Northern Illinois University College of Law. She was born and raised in Rockford and returned to the area in 2015. She enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her family. RHA is pleased to have NeAngela Dixon join the Board of Directors.

## THANKSGIVING 2021

Thanksgiving is a time for family, friends, and expressing gratitude. Thanksgiving started in 1621 when the Plymouth colonist's ad Wampanoag Native Americans shared an autumn harvest dinner that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

Thanksgiving celebrations include cooking, football, and parades. Thankfully in 2021, we can now gather with friends and family to share turkey and sides together. Turkey has become a staple of any Thanksgiving meal. Today nearly 90 percent of Americans eat Turkey on Thanksgiving Day, whether you deep fry, bake, or roast it.

Many families and individuals take the time on Thanksgiving Day to give thanks for all they have in their life. While doing this practice some of those individuals volunteer their day to help those in need- food drives, free turkeys, and hosting free dinners at a shelter.

give thanks

## READY TO LAUNCH YOUR FUTURE?

RHA is excited to announce that registration for the Lifeforce Development Institute's next semester is now open! The 12-week course will start on January 11th, 2022. LDI is a 12-week hands-on learning program covering Job/Career Readiness Skills and meeting the community's workforce goals. LDI includes:

- All Materials used in the Classroom
- Section 3 Self Certification
- Professional Development Mentor
- Guaranteed enrollment in the RHA Financial Wellness Institute
- Finding Resources to help with barriers such as:
  - Criminal Record
  - No high school diploma or GED
  - Gaps in employment
  - Housing or Homeless issues
  - Long-term welfare recipient
  - Job search skills
  - Domestic violence
  - Drug and/or alcohol abuse

## FAQ

- **WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE?** - The LDI Program provides employability skills training, and participants will be more equipped to secure and maintain employment. LDI Graduates will earn a certificate, the LDI Workforce Readiness Certificate. This certificate is recognized by local employers and can give you an advantage in being hired or promoted.
- **AM I GUARANTEED A JOB?** - LDI will work closely with you throughout the program to ensure you have available employment opportunities that match your career goals.
- **WHAT WILL THE INDIVIDUAL LDI SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDE TO YOU?** - The program is 100% scholarship-based, and it includes Job/Career Readiness-based training curriculum. Currently, the Rockford Housing Authority offers \$499.00 in individual scholarships for the Lifeforce Development Institute's Pre-employment-based training program to RHA Clients and Rockford Residents.

After graduating from LDI students will leave the program with 5 certificates. Also, a weekly stipend is given, a computer, professional clothing voucher, 90 days of Debt Management Plans with a professional debt management agency. The certificates include:

1. LDI Job Readiness/Career Readiness Certificate
2. Bridges Out of Poverty/ Getting Ahead Certificate
3. Personal Finance Education Certificate
4. Connect Home Digital Literacy Certificate
5. Work Keys Certificate

- The expected outcome of the LDI graduates includes employment, certificate of Workforce readiness, professional development mentor, and continuous educational training. The enrollment process is simple; apply, interview for the program, and sign a participation agreement. The LDI schedule is 12 weeks on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 9 AM to Noon. Apply at: <https://launchmyfuture.com/registration/>



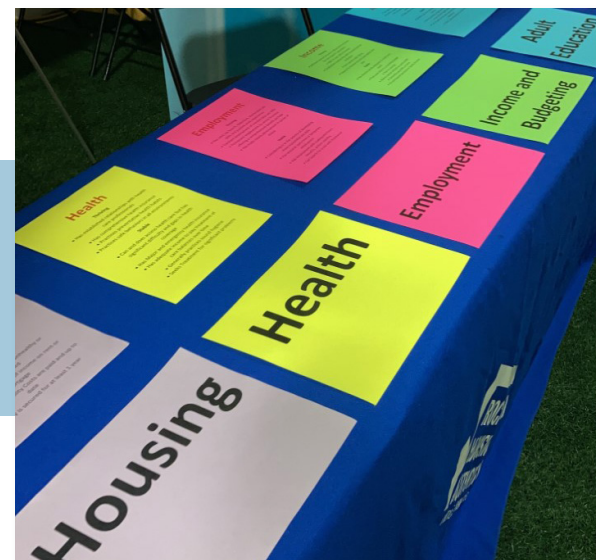


## RHA ATTENDS THE 10TH ANNUAL ACADEMY EXPO

Rockford Housing Authority attended the 2021 Academy Expo held on Wednesday, October 20, 2021. Alex Keedi, Jobs Plus Program Manager and Michaela Harris, Section III Compliance Manager saw almost 2000 freshmen from RPS 205 come through! They discussed careers in Human Services and the different opportunities for working in subsidized housing.

At the event, they played a simple game to show the steps our Human Services department takes each time a resident has a need. The six areas of need were: Housing, Food, Education, Health, Income & Budget, and Employment. The students rolled a dice to learn about one key area and how we helped our residents go from in-crisis, to stable, and then to thriving. Alex and Michaela Harris talked about how residents came to housing in varying levels of crisis and needed support and what resources were available to them.

“Whether partnering with a school or with a local employer, Alignment Rockford is the conduit for our community to enlighten today’s students. The 10th annual Academy Expo was no exception. We hosted more than 2,100 high school freshmen from across the Rockford Public School District. Students had the opportunity to connect with more than 100 local businesses and organizations,” states Anisha Grimmert Executive Director, Alignment Rockford. October 29th, was the last day Anisha was serving as executive director for Alignment Rockford to pursue her lifelong dreams. We wish her well in all her future endeavors!



## VETERANS DAY

Veterans Day is a day for honoring all military veterans who have served our country. Veterans Day was proclaimed first in 1919 when President Wilson declared November 11 as the first commemoration. The day was originally called “Armistice Day.” President Wilson said, “To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country’s service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.”

Veterans Day is always observed on November 11, no matter what day of the week, as it is the anniversary of the Armistice signing that ended World War I. The day of November 11, 1918, is regarded as the end of “the wars to end all wars.” In 1954 the holiday was changed to “Veterans Day” to account for and recognize all veterans in all wars.

Since Veterans Day is a federal holiday, many American workers and students have the day off. However, people often take this day to thank the veterans in their life, give back to veterans for their service, and spread awareness on the challenges many veterans face. Here in Rockford, there are several events taking place to honor all Veterans.

- Midway Village: Every Veterans Day at 11 AM, the Vietnam Veteran’s Honor Society members hold a memorial service honoring those who died in Vietnam and all other American wars at the LZ Peace Memorial on the walking trail.
- Veterans Memorial Hall: VFW Roscoe Post 2955 and VFW Auxiliary created an award-winning exhibit from poppy flowers that will be on display at the museum.
- A 5K Run/Walk to Benefit the Veterans Drop-In Center: The 9th annual Veteran Run will be held at Mercyhealth Sportscore One, Veterans Memorial Park. \$30 per participant, \$10 for children 17 and under. Register here: <https://runsignup.com/Race/IL/Rockford/Veterans5K>

In whatever way you observe Veterans Day this year, remember to thank the veterans in your life. RHA would like to take the time to thank all active duty and fallen veterans who have courageously fought and still fight for our freedom.





# RHA STAFF PROMOTIONS



## CARANDUS BROWN APPOINTED NEW HUMAN SERVICES MANAGER

Carandus Brown is the Human Services Manager for Rockford Housing Authority. He has been in the Public Housing industry for several years as the Resident Support Specialist and the ROSS-Resident Program Case Manager. Carandus has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Human Services. He obtained his master's degree in Human Services Administration in Counseling with the help of RHA's Tuition Reimbursement Program.

Carandus was responsible for all resident programs under the ROSS program. Coordinating services to ensure that residents are successful by providing unique services: Such as, digital empowerment, educational and financial literacy, health webinars, and employment services.

Carandus was born in Flint, MI, but considers Rockford to be his home. He is motivated, dedicated, and committed to serving the community's needs and helping to improve the lives of those less fortunate. Congratulations to Mr. Carandus Brown on your promotion!

## VINCENZO S. TARARA, MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR

Born, raised, and educated in Rockford, IL. Vincenzo Tarara serves as the Rockford Housing Authority's Maintenance Supervisor directly overseeing all maintenance staff.

Mr. Tarara began his career with the Rockford Housing Authority in October 2018. He began his career as a Maintenance Trainee III and was the first maintenance trainee to be fast tracked under the Accelerated Advancement Program and achieved advancement to a Maintenance Worker in just one year.

As Maintenance Supervisor Vince now works alongside maintenance and the property management team in all RHA facilities ensuring that our residents are served to the best of our abilities and in accordance with HUD standards.



## DERRICK PARCHMON

Derrick Parchmon has been employed with the Rockford Housing Authority for 26 years. Derrick is currently serving as the Maintenance Foreman over the RHA high-rise buildings.

He first started with RHA in 1992 working a summer program through Rock River Training. Derrick worked the summer program for a few summers, RHA then decided to bring him on board the RHA team as a maintenance employee.

# RHA AWARDED THREE NAHRO AWARDS OF MERIT IN THE RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES CATEGORY & 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 and The Lifeforce Development Institute has 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! The awards were presented at the board meeting on October 24th.

**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.

**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.

**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. In this case, keeping safe means staying informed.

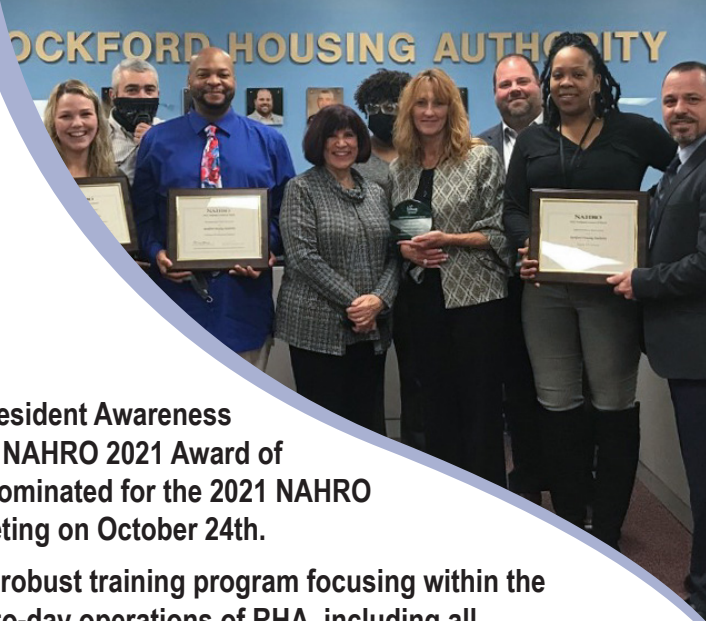
# WHY PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD COVID-19 SHOULD STILL GET VACCINATED

Many Americans have been putting off vaccination for many different reasons, one of the reasons being that they have already been infected with COVID19. However, evidence suggests vaccination plus natural immunity leads to superior protection against COVID-19 and its variants. What people are now calling "Hybrid-immunity," also known as natural immunity from an infection combined by the immunity through the vaccine, is much stronger protection than just the infection or vaccination alone.

According to NBCnews.com, "In a [study](#) posted to the preprint server BioRxiv, researchers at Rockefeller University in New York City looked at how different types of immunity would protect against potential variants. (Studies posted to preprint servers have not been peer-reviewed.) To do so, they designed a modified version of the coronavirus spike protein with 20 naturally occurring mutations to test how antibodies would work against it." The modified spike proteins were then tested in lab dishes against antibodies from people who had recovered from COVID-19, from those who had been vaccinated, and from individuals who have hybrid immunity. The spike proteins avoided the antibodies from the first two groups but not those with hybrid immunity.

The advantage of hybrid immunity, according to Crotty, stems in part of what is called memory B cells: immune cells that churn out the antibodies that fight off the virus. "Memory B cells are antibody factories with the lights turned off," Crotty said. "If the virus gets past your first line of defense, which is the circulating antibodies, the memory B cells can turn on and make more antibodies." These cells are trained to produce antibodies to specific viruses, including COVID-19, but only after they are exposed to the virus. The findings make Crotty hopeful that a vaccine against all coronaviruses is a possibility in the future.

In the end, everyone should be thinking about the vaccination if they have not already gotten it or started the vaccination process. Getting the vaccine will not only strengthen the way you combat COVID-19 but help you to continue to stay and keep others safe and healthy.







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## RHA ATTENDED ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AUTHORITIES ANNUAL MEETING

Laura Snyder: RHA CEO, Owen Carter: Director of Housing Operations, and Angel Mackey: Executive Assistant attended the 2021 IAHA Annual Meeting. Topics this year included a variety of both federal and state laws which impact the housing industry, including updates to the Illinois Human Rights Act for housing providers and employers.

The Illinois Association of Housing Authorities advocates for funding and policies, regulations, and legislature that assists its members in carrying out this mission of providing decent, safe, and sanitary housing to the tens of thousands of clients its members serve.

