

# The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2021

DECEMBER



## HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM RHA

The Rockford Housing Authority would like to wish everyone Happy Holidays & New Year! In 2021 we continued to face unprecedented times, but we had many advances this year; many people went back to work/school, and vaccines are now available for everyone. RHA would like to express our gratitude to our fantastic staff, partners, and residents for all their work, dedication, and support.

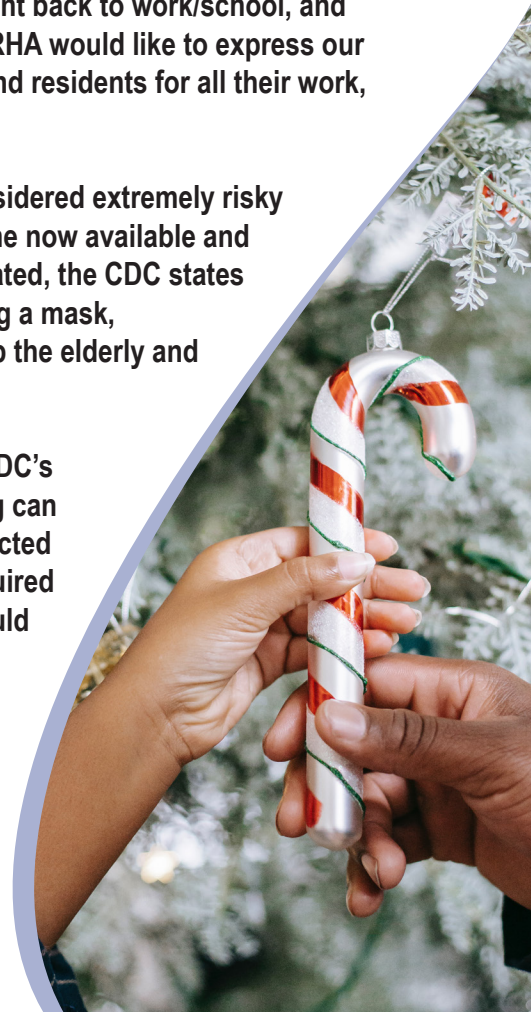
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Last year hosting a holiday party was considered extremely risky due to COVID-19. This year with the vaccine now available and around 57% of Americans are fully vaccinated, the CDC states that if you do go to a holiday party, wearing a mask, regardless of vaccination status, may keep the elderly and children safe.

If you plan to travel for the holidays, the CDC's guidance is that frequent COVID-19 testing can help reduce your chance of becoming infected and infecting others. While masks are required on all forms of transportation, people should still be fully vaccinated before getting on planes, trains, and buses, especially during the busy holiday season. If your family cannot get fully vaccinated, maybe consider a more extended road trip if you visit others that house high-risk individuals.

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The CDC first posted a list of guidelines stating opening a window or having a fan on for increased ventilation. Still, now in an updated list, the CDC is stressing the need for mask-wearing and vaccines for eligible individuals. The CDC's list of safer ways to celebrate the holidays include:

- Protecting others not yet eligible for vaccination, such as young children, by getting your vaccine.
- Wear a well-fitting mask over your nose and mouth if the celebration is in public or indoors.
  - Even if you are fully vaccinated, you should wear a mask in public indoor settings
- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces
- If you are sick or have symptoms of COVID-19, do not attend or host a gathering
- Get tested before going to the gatherings as an added peace of mind

By working together, we can get back to a regular holiday season and safe traveling. For more information on how to stay safe during the holiday season, please visit the official website for The CDC here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/celebrations.html>

From everyone at RHA, have a safe and fun holiday season & the happiest New Year to all!

## HUMAN RIGHTS MONTH

December is universal human rights month. This month is the 70th anniversary and is a time for people worldwide to join together and stand up for the rights and dignity of all individuals. The theme for Human Rights Month and the day it is mainly celebrated on December 10th is "Equality- Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights."

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the heart of human rights.

December 10th is the day that Human Rights Month is commonly observed. It is the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. According to the UN, the UDHR is a milestone document proclaiming the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being- regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political, national, or social origin, property, birth, or other status. The First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, at the time, was a driving force behind the document, and she was Dubbed "First Lady of the World," Eleanor Roosevelt was a principal architect of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and served as chair of the declaration's drafting committee.

Since signing the UDHR has remained a touchstone for actions by the government and individuals. As we continue to face unprecedented challenges, we can all be thankful for this document coming to life. You can join the fight for universal human rights by supporting human rights organizations. These organizations are fighting for the rights and voices of communities around the world.



## LDI REGISTRATION IS STILL OPEN!

The next semester of LDI starts on January 11th, 2022. Registration is still open on the Launch My Future website! The Lifeforce Development Institute is a 12-week job readiness course helping students prepare for interviews, resume assistance, and hands on learning. Launch My Future, as the phrase implies, are multiple intensive, accelerated training programs designed to move your life in a new direction. The skills that are gained in the various programs offered by the RHA Human Services Department are pivotal to workplace success.

Together, job readiness & life skills are the difference between you getting an adequate job or your ideal job. Our community employers are looking for folks like you who can become their leaders. This leadership depends on many of these key foundational skills. Over 12 weeks, you will learn such things as positive attitude, adaptability, personal ethics, self-esteem, taking direction and accepting feedback. You will also learn how to overcome obstacles, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, punctuality and attendance. Through the Lifeforce Development Institute, we have seen that the knowledge gained helps you secure the right job and, eventually, a full-time position that was not attainable prior to the Lifeforce Development Institute's initiative.

### THE LDI PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- All Materials used in the Classroom
- Light Breakfast & Snacks
- Transportation Within 7 Miles
- Section 3 Self Certification
- Professional Development Mentor
- Job Shadowing
- Guaranteed enrollment in the RHA Financial Wellness Institute
- Finding Resources to help with barriers

### EXPECTED OUTCOME OF LDI GRADUATES

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

### ENROLLMENT PROCESS

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

Register today! <https://launchmyfuture.com/registration/>





## JOBS PLUS FIRST MONTHLY MEETING

The Jobs Plus Initiative Team and the RHA Community Partners met in November to discuss the initial action plan. The meeting was designed to learn how we can ‘all come together to help support and uplift the housing authority residents.’ The HUD Initiative is specifically designed to help folks living in public housing increase their levels of employment and earnings.

### THREE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE JOBS PLUS INITIATIVE

The first of many meetings surrounding the Jobs Plus Initiative and its partners was an immense success. Everyone got to meet each other and participate in a comprehensive overview of what the next four years will encompass and the anticipated outcomes. Topics of the meeting included the Initiative’s three components: employment-related services, increasing the earned income disregard, and community wide support of work. These three key components are the backbone of the Jobs Plus Initiative and are the components of a well-rounded program for the RHA residents. Other topics of discussion included how the Jobs Plus team and its partners can work together to cultivate a team of people and businesses with the same goal in mind: To help residents achieve employment, while also creating a greater understanding and insight into financial literacy. Residents will gain empowerment and knowledge of how to move to a higher level of achievement. At its core, Jobs Plus is structured around these three mutually reinforcing components, all of which focus on improving residents’ employment, earnings, and well-being.

### ENHANCING THE JOBS PLUS IMPLEMENTATION

The Rockford Housing Authority believes that community partnerships are critical to creating a successful Jobs Plus Initiative in our community, as each partner brings its own area of expertise to the program, and the Initiative requires an array of partners to work with RHA residents who may have multiple needs and barriers to employment. Jobs Plus develops locally-based, job-driven approaches to increase earnings and advance employment outcomes through work readiness, employer linkages, job placement, educational advancement, skills development, and financial literacy for public housing residents. In addition, this place-based program supports economic resilience for residents by incentivizing and enabling employment through income disregards for working families, benefitting the entire community, and keeping a culture of work. RHA looks forward to enhancing the Jobs Plus implementation by working collaboratively with all our community partners.



## DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to Ms. Tanya Woody!

Ms. Tanya Woody has been a valued team member with the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) for more than four years. Tanya is an integral part of our agency, serving as a janitress she prepares units for occupancy. She is a committed employee whose attention to detail is greatly appreciated. Tanya exhibits consistency in her daily duties and is willing to take the necessary steps to ensure that our residents feel at home.

In October, Tanya saw there was a need to uplift the residents of Park Terrace. She did so by rearranging the lobby furniture and hanging decorations for all to see during the Halloween season.

Ms. Linda Dorsey-Tillman, Procurement Manager for the RHA said it best by stating “A portion of our mission statement says that responsible and respectful people deserve the opportunity to contribute to attain a comfortable quality home and neighborhood that all can have pride in. I know the residents of Park Terrace are happy for the decorations.”

Tanya’s actions presented an uplifting spirit to the residents of Park Terrace through her dedication and display of caring for our residents.

Through persistent dedication to her work, she has assisted in providing a quality, safe and sanitary home to countless individuals and families. Tanya’s dedication and initiative have demonstrated outstanding character. Her motivation and willingness to assist our residents are all traits that make her most deserving of the Director’s Spotlight Award for October 2021.

## WHY YOU SHOULD GET A BOOSTER SHOT

November 19th Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the CDC, supported an advisory committee’s advice and expanded the group of people who can now get a COVID-19 Booster shot to include all adults over 18.

Since more people are now eligible to get the booster dose, people question if they need one immediately or if the initial vaccination is no longer working. The CDC states that “all adults who had received the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine are eligible to get a booster at least six months after their second dose.” However, before the CDC made a clear distinction between those over the age of 65 and with underlying health conditions, they said they “should” get a booster shot and those living in high-risk areas who “may” get the booster shot.

“Right now, we are facing more than 90,000 new infections a day [on average], we are entering the winter season, and people are gathering for the holidays,” says Dr. Leana Wen, professor of health policy and management at George Washington University. “We know immunity to symptomatic infection wanes substantially at the six-month mark, and immunity even to severe disease wanes too.”

The urgency to get a booster shot isn’t as great as the urgency to get fully vaccinated. Studies show that the initial doses of all three vaccines continue to protect people from needing to be hospitalized. The agency’s decision to recommend booster shots is because of growing evidence from countries like Israel that infections among vaccinated people are possible and that some people are sick enough to go to the hospital.

The bottom line, getting the booster shot is your choice. It is something that could affect friends and family and be an added layer of protection for yourself. The stigma that the booster shot is somewhat of a luxury and not something people need to get “needs to change urgently,” states Wen.





# RHA RAISING AWARENESS FOR SENIOR & ELDERLY HOUSING

Rockford Housing Authority has been working on a Housing Community Awareness-Raising Campaign to provide information about the opportunities for the senior and elderly living in the community. This Awareness-Raising is for folks looking for housing options for themselves, an aging parent, relative, or friend. The Campaign provides a helpful guide for making the right choice for RHA Senior and Elderly Apartments, including North Main Manor, Park Terrace, and Olesen Plaza. These apartments are convenient and accessible high-rises. In addition, the RHA units are independent living-type apartments. For older adults, these homes can provide an opportunity for residents to participate in all facets of community life, have choice and control over their independence.

## STABLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

With over 70 years of on-the-ground experience, RHA has learned that stable and affordable housing positively impacts our seniors, families, and community. While we know this firsthand, seeing lives and our community change, it is also supported through a large and growing body of research on housing security for seniors and the elderly. As older adults age, they face declining incomes, increased medical costs, and housing that may not be designed to meet their needs.

RHA's is creating and producing virtual video tours of all high-rises for potential residents, to show and tell this story. The video tours will assist them as to which apartment location may suit them the best, what amenities are available, and what they will need to know to get started. The virtual video tours focus on each property and its amenities such as laundry rooms, community rooms, computer rooms, the exterior location of the building, and the units themselves. While the vast majority of adults over 50 hope to remain in their homes as long as possible, seniors often face barriers to aging in place, including rising housing costs, physical safety issues, and access to adequate care. Seniors may significantly benefit from affordable housing with supportive services, such as on-site maintenance or RHA Resident Service Coordinator. This type of housing model has the potential to improve health and quality of life for our residents.

Working with Apartments.com, as part of the Housing Community Awareness-Raising Campaign, the Rockford Housing Authority, has set up accounts for each high-rise location to provide all prospective residents with photos and videos of the units. Each high-rise also has a brief description of the area surrounding the sites. In addition, links are provided directly to the RHA Website for additional information, current availability, and taking the next step.



## VIRTUAL VIDEO HOUSING TOURS

RHA understands that where you live plays a big part in someone's life. As part of the Housing Community Awareness-Raising Campaign, the virtual housing tours will aid the people currently planning to move with information and insight. These presentations certainly will help our seniors and their family who may not be able to come and see the units in person," states Owen Carter, RHA Director of Housing Operations. Continuing, "The goal of the virtual tours is to give potential residents an in-depth view of the RHA high-rises for our senior and disabled living while doing so from their homes." While we all still battle the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, many seniors and the elderly are at potentially elevated risk, this is an opportunity to give them some peace of mind, knowing they can see the units and buildings from the safety of their homes as a first step.

To lean more about RHA affordable housing visit: <https://www.rockfordha.org/housing/>

## DID YOU KNOW

As the baby boomer generation ages, demographers project significant increases in the proportion of the American population age 65 and older. The Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) projects that the number of U.S. adults age 65 and older will grow from 48 to 79 million over the next two decades. By 2035, JCHS expects that 50 million households — approximately 1 out of every 3 in the United States — will be headed by someone age 65 or older, and the number of people age 80 and older will double to 24 million.

OFFICE OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH (PD&R)







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## DID YOU KNOW

The Rockford Housing Authority has been serving the Rockford community since June 4th, 1951. Throughout these 70 years, RHA has made it our mission to create a quality home, and we believe it is the foundation of society & community: quality home life provides hope and the pathway to our goals. Responsible and respectful people deserve the opportunity to attain a comfortable quality home and neighborhood all can have pride in.



Rockford Housing Authority has been working for the community for almost 70 years. As a result, we have gotten to know and experience the community and its needs. Through this, we have devised ten attributes to govern our business by – we call these our Core Values.

These Core Values, which are fundamental to us, are the cornerstone of the Rockford Housing Authority. We put them at the forefront of every plan, event, and project because we care about our employees, residents, strategic partners, and the greater Rockford community.

### ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY'S TEN CORE VALUES:

- Leadership
- Quality
- Integrity
- Resourcefulness
- Collaborative
- Respectful
- Accountable
- Consistent
- Caring
- Professional