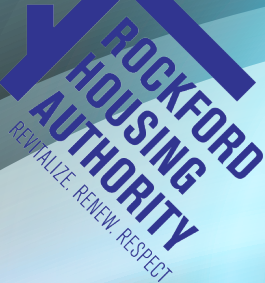


The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2022
FEBRUARY



HUD DESIGNATES THE ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY AS A MOVE TO WORK AGENCY

A Milestone for The Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) and the Rockford Community has been achieved today. "The RHA leadership Team is so pleased for the approval from HUD, that RHA has been designated as a Move to Work (MTW) Agency. This important program designation will serve the residents and the community in a new way. With this new MTW business model we are able to provide incentives for our landlords to encourage them to participate in the HCV program thereby giving our resident's greater access to areas of higher opportunities," states Laura Snyder, RHA CEO.

RHA is committed to actively exploring and aggressively seizing opportunities that move the agency forward in the fulfillment of its mission and strategic goals in ways that are reflective of local housing needs, while implementing activities designed to meet one or more of the MTW statutory objectives. The MTW designation, creates and accesses opportunities that continue to be key in meeting these milestones, whether it be implementing increased program efficiencies, leveraging resources to preserve increase affordable housing or encouraging the improved well-being of the individuals and families that we serve.

RHA'S MTW MISSION AND VISION

The RHA was established in 1951 to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing to low and moderate-income individuals and families. While partnering with community agencies to promote increased self-sufficiency and a higher quality of life for its residents. Today, RHA manages 1284 public housing units and 1716 housing choice vouchers (HCV), serving nearly 10,000 residents in total. RHA's long-term vision for its participation in the MTW demonstration program integrates this local mission with the federal statutory objectives of the MTW program. The result is a carefully crafted list of local goals, which tailor the federal objectives to the specific needs of the Rockford community.

1. Increase the number and quality of affordable housing choices throughout the Rockford community.
2. Increase the number of families moving toward self-sufficiency.
3. Increase and strengthen the number of community partnerships benefitting residents
4. Reduce the Agency's administrative costs while limiting the administrative burdens placed on staff and residents.

"We are excited to see the future of RHA and the Rockford community through the MTW program. We cannot wait to start implementing the local goals that we have set in order to help residents and the community." Laura Snyder, RHA CEO.

Learn more about the RHA MTW Program on the [About Us](#) page on our website www.rockfordha.org



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Each year from February first to March first, we celebrate Black History Month. During this month, we recognize and acknowledge achievements made by African Americans throughout history. Since 1976, every U.S president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

This month's story began in 1915, only half a century after the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. That September, Carter G. Woodson and minister Jesse E. Moorland founded an association called "Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH)" this organization was dedicated to researching and promoting achievements made by African Americans. The organization is still up and running to this day. The Association for the Study of African American Life and History serves various events, jobs, and programs.

In the following decades, mayors of cities across the country began issuing yearly proclamations recognizing Negro History Week. By the late 1960s, in part with the civil rights movement and growing black awareness, Negro History Week had evolved into Black History Month. Finally, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976. He told the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Each year the ASALH determines a theme for the year. The 2022 Black History Month theme is "Black in Health and Wellness." The theme focuses on the importance of black health and wellness, acknowledging black scholars and medical practitioners in western medicine and other ways of knowing (e.g., birth workers, doulas, midwives, naturopaths, herbalists, etc.)

Happy Black History Month everyone! To learn more about African American History Month, please visit: <https://asalh.org/>

Honoring the RHA Management Team

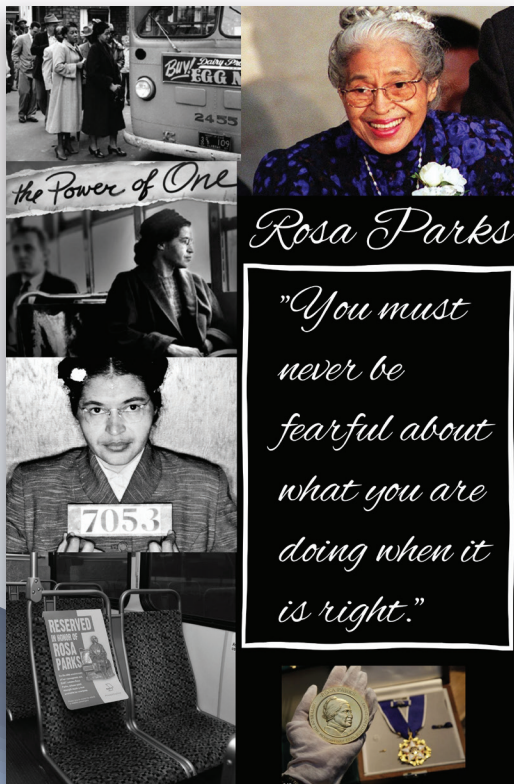


THE WORK VALUES, SPIRIT, AND UNITY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

This year's Black Health and Wellness theme is particularly appropriate, as our community continues to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Black Health and Wellness not only includes one's physical body, but also emotional and mental health. This month and throughout the year, let us all be mindful of the poet, novelist, activist, and mother, Audre Lorde's words, "we are doing more to move forward holistically or the betterment of ourselves, our bodies, our relationships, our communities, and our planet."

The RHA Leadership Team wants to acknowledge the strength of our team throughout this year. Each member works tirelessly, harnessing all their energy and skills to meet the needs of our residents, partners, stakeholders, and the community. During this Black History Month, we especially want to recognize the efforts of five members of the RHA management staff and their African American Heritage.

We would like to take this opportunity to identify the following RHA Team members, Odessa Walker, Director of Human Services, Carandus Brown, Human Services Manager, Linda L. Dorsey-Tillman, Procurement and Contracts Manager, IT, & Phones, Angel Mackey, Executive Assistant, and Derrick Parchmon, Maintenance Foreman. We are proud of the work values, spirit, and unity of contributions they have made. Each one of them continuously supports our valued residents and the community.



This is an opportunity to honor the rich cultural heritage, of our colleagues and the individual investments they have made to the Rockford Housing Authority, which makes all the difference as we move forward together. Our management team as a group, has had to adjust during the pandemic and to focus on our residents needs quickly and adeptly. We have heard the many positive residents' comments in the last two years. Thank you for bringing your best to work every single day.

At RHA, diversity and inclusion have always been the bedrock of our core values which help ensure that everyone sees themselves represented and included. It is a crucial part of who we are. Black History Month serves as both a celebration and a powerful reminder that Black history is American history, Black culture is American culture, and Black stories are essential to the ongoing story of America, our faults, our struggles, our progress, and our aspirations.

Underlying the current economic and social disparities that exist which have accelerated and intensified during the global pandemic, we are committed to continuously starting new conversations, listening intently, and always doing what is right. Together, as a community, we must overcome all forms of racism, now and into the future.



ODESSA WALKER
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN SERVICES

I've been serving in this field for over a decade. One of the speeches that stick out to me the most was Martin Luther King Jr when he stated: "It's alright to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps, BUT it is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself by his bootstraps." This quote is one of the quotes I live by when serving our RHA Families. I realize everyone we serve is not at the same phase of the self-sufficiency spectrum, and this is why we offer a diverse selection of practical programming, making sure no family is left bootless.

ANGEL MACKKEY
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Black History Month is about appreciating and recognizing key African American achievements, past and present. It cannot be contained or limited to a month. But it is a good reminder of Black peoples' indelible imprint on world history.



CARANDUS BROWN
HUMAN SERVICES MANAGER

What defines me in Black history is my belief, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I am passionate about helping motivate and participate in making a difference in negating the evils within the world we live. Through my commitment to serve and share love to all, I believe defines the humanity needed to help make positive changes, one person at a time.

LINDA DORSEY-TILLMAN
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTS MANAGER, IT, & PHONES

My parents were hard working and inspired us to do any job that is entrusted unto us to perform and do it to the absolute best of my ability. I have been inspired all my life to continue that same concept. I treat everyone with the upmost respect, always have a heart for the people and work hard. My religious belief extends my inspiration to always show love to everyone and always do what is right. My favorite quote comes from Martin Luther King, Jr. "The time is always right to do what is right."



DERRICK PARCHMON
MAINTENANCE FOREMAN

My name is Derrick Parchmon I am the Foreman over The Highrise building I always believed in this quote "If my mind can conceive it and my heart can believe it - Then I can achieve it."

PRESIDENTS' DAY

Presidents' Day is a federal holiday celebrated on the third Monday in February. This year is landing on Monday, February 21st. The day was established in 1885 in recognition of President George Washington; the holiday soon was known as Presidents' Day after it was moved as a part of 1971's Uniform Monday Holiday Act; an attempt to create more three-day weekends for working Americans.

The origin of Presidents' Day begins in 1800 following the death of George Washington in 1799; his February 22nd birthday became a recurrent day of remembrance. At this time, Washington was revered as the most important figure in American history, so events like his birth and the start of construction of the Washington Monument in 1848 were cause for national celebrations. However, in the late 1870s, Washington's birthday became a federal holiday.

Senator Stephen Wallace Dorsey of Arkansas was the first to propose it, and in 1879 President Rutherford B. Hayes signed it into law. At the time, Washington's Birthday joined four other nationally recognized federal bank holidays—Christmas Day, New Year's Day, the Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving—and was the first to celebrate the life of an individual American. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, signed into law in 1983, was the second.

Comparable to Independence Day, Presidents' Day is traditionally viewed as a time of patriotic celebration and remembrance. In 1932, the date was used to reinstate the Purple Heart, a military decoration initially created by George Washington to honor soldiers killed or wounded while serving in the armed forces.

In the modern-day, Presidents' Day is celebrated by many people having a day off work and spending it celebrating and hosting events such as, family gatherings, going to museums, or just relaxing on their day off. Several schools around the United States will teach students about the accomplishments of past Presidents in the days leading up to Presidents' Day.



BUILDING TRADES CAREER EXPO

FEBRUARY 22 – 24TH, FROM 10AM – 3PM

The three-day event provides students with hands-on activities, demonstrations, and information on careers in the skilled trades.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The trades represent a meaningful career path and have a significant impact on our local economy.

Learn More on the Project First Rate website

www.projectfirstrate.com/workforce/



INTERNATIONAL STAND UP TO BULLYING

Twice a year International Stand Up to Bullying Day encourages people to take a stance against all forms of bullying whether it be, cyberbullying, homophobia, racism, discrimination, or any other unwanted aggressive behavior. International stand Up to Bullying day is observed on February 25th, 2022 and schools across the world will host events or lessons about bullying and how to deal with it. Many school staff and students will wear a pink shirt to signify solidarity against bullying. The color of the shirts is based on a campaign started by Travis Price and David Shepherd, two students who took a stand for a fellow student who was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school.



The first International Stand Up to Bullying Day took place in February of 2008, the initial event, over 125,000 students and staff registered to take a stand against bullying and wore pink to unite themselves for the cause. Since then students all over the world have taken part in this important day held twice a year in February and then again in November.

While recognizing bullying twice a year on a larger scale is amazing, we should not forget that bullying still happens to 20% of children in the United States between the ages of 12 and 18 on a regular basis. On a global scale that is one-third of the worlds youth that are bullied. In the digital age we live in where teens have access to more social media and texting services than before. Of all the social networks, kids on YouTube are the most likely to be cyberbullied at 79%, followed by Snapchat at 69%, TikTok at 64%, and Facebook at 49%.

SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT NATIONAL PINK DAY

Since National Pink Day is still a fairly recent occurrence, and it affects kids who might not know about it yet, this is a great day to tell everyone about these anti-bullying efforts. Tell friends about National Pink Day in advance, and then make plans for what to wear and how to honor the day. Take a selfie or a photo of friends wearing pink and share it on various social media platforms to get the word out to everyone.

THROW A NATIONAL PINK DAY PARTY

School teachers and parents can show their support by allowing students to have a party in celebration of National Pink Day. This is an ideal day to get everyone involved in working toward eliminating the struggles faced by so many kids today. Have everyone wear a pink shirt in support of the day, decorate the party room in pink balloons and streamers, and even serve pink colored foods. For more resources please visit: www.stopbullying.gov



DIRECTORS SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to Martha DeLuna!

Since joining the RHA Team just over 6 months ago, Ms. Martha DeLuna has been a valued team member with the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA). Martha is truly an integral part of our agency, serving as receptionist, she is the first contact for all who visit our main office, she is truly the face of RHA. She is a committed employee whose attention to detail is greatly appreciated.

As stated by many of her peers, Martha provides outstanding customer service on a daily basis. Ms. Rosalind Gulley said it best “She handles many different challenges daily, whether it be by phone or in person with such professionalism”. Serving as the receptionist, is anything but a simple task and comes with numerous challenges as well as increased understanding of the various agency departments and programing.

Appreciation for her role is most evident by anyone who has had to perform her regular duties, even for a brief moment. In spite of this, Martha is always willing to lend a helping hand to her fellow colleagues. “She has never declined to help any of her co-workers. She has transformed the office with her organizational skills which is a crucial element to a successful business. We [staff] can all find what we need in the office, and should we need to fill in at the receptionist area, we can do so with confidence”, stated Ms. Nichole Bourbon, HCV Occupancy Specialist. Martha’s dedication and initiative have demonstrated outstanding character. Her motivation and willingness to assist our residents and fellow staff are all traits that make her most deserving of the Director’s Spotlight Award for January 2022.

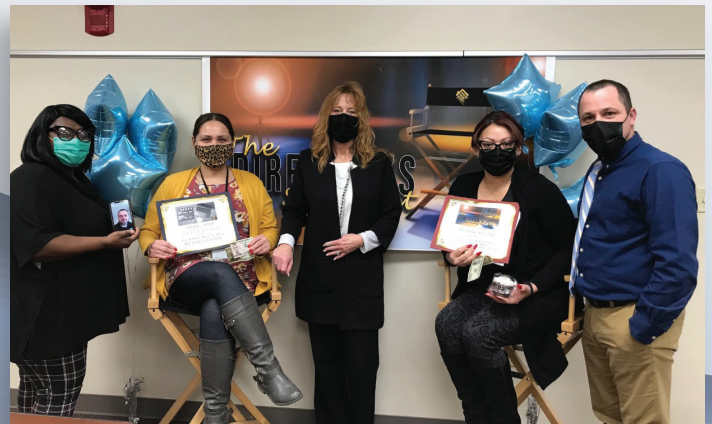


INTRODUCING THE PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM

For The RHA Leadership Team, a monthly high point is announcing the Director’s Spotlight awards. The monthly award recognizes the RHA staff, demonstrating one or more of our Ten Core Values. Dealing with obstacles and challenges is a regular part of working life. The Director’s Spotlight is our way of telling our stories of overcoming adversity with opportunity.

The Director’s Spotlight awards nomination is submitted monthly by the RHA staff as a peer-to-peer observation and opinion. Beginning with this month’s Peer-to-Peer winner, Nicole Bourbon, we will introduce authors monthly of what each sees and feels about their peers. In addition, the ‘Scriptwriter’ of the Peer-to-Peer Recognition Program shares and demonstrates how The Director’s Spotlight nominee has improved our agency products, resident services, employee communication, and interpersonal skills.

Nicole’s nomination for the January 2022, Director’ Spotlight is an example in whom we honor. She writes about her peer and colleague, Ms. Martha DeLuna, who joined the RHA Team just over six months ago, as the RHA Receptionist. “She has never declined to help any of her co-workers. She has transformed the office with her organizational skills which is a crucial element to a successful business. We [staff] can all find what we need in the office, and should we need to fill in at the receptionist area, we can do so with confidence.”



The Peer-to-Peer Recognition Program is significant because it comes from people who really know what their colleagues do, who know their peers for what they have accomplished. They want to let others know as well and appreciate outstanding work ethics. To let others, know that colleagues appreciate them, to show respect, and caring, is gratifying beyond words. Thank you, Nicole Bourbon, HCV Occupancy Specialist.

WHOM DO WE HONOR

They have done something particularly praiseworthy.

They have initiated something successful and overcome obstacles.

They've been responsible for achieving a particular goal, and they've turned something around to make a difference for our residents

They've turned something around and at the same time demonstrated their exemplary leadership.

ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY'S FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM RECEIVES FEDERAL GRANT

Representative Cheri Bustos announced in a statement to the media on Wednesday, December 22, 2021, that the Rockford Housing Authority was one of seven 17th District agencies to receive a Federal Housing Grant. RHA is set to receive a grant of \$180,000 dollars from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

The grant will fund services such as childcare, transportation, education, job training, employment counseling, financial literacy, and homeownership counseling to improve upward mobility for local families, as part of Rockford Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

In a statement announcing the grant for seven agencies in the 17th District, Representative Cheri Bustos said: "Every family deserves access to safe, affordable housing and opportunities to grow in their community," said Congresswoman Bustos. "I'm pleased to announce more than \$860,000 in federal grants that will help remove the barriers facing too many families and set folks up for success. Across Northwest and Central Illinois, these grants will help hardworking families reach their financial goals."



"The Grant will assist our Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) which is a program to assist families in achieving economic independence, Self-Sufficiency, and freedom from dependence on various governmental assistance programs. We do this by connecting families to employment opportunities, social and economic resources to affect positive changes in a families' life, which lead to this independence," states Laura Synder, RHA, CEO

To learn more about the RHA Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS), please visit launchmyfuture.com



Rockford Housing Authority
223 S Winnebago Street
Rockford, IL 61102

DID YOU KNOW? FREE AT-HOME COVID-19 TESTS

Free at-home rapid COVID-19 tests are available to order through a new government website that started on Wednesday, January 19th, 2022. Each household can order up to 4 tests, and they will be shipped to your home with no fees. The website and White House states that “tests will typically ship within 7-12 days of ordering” through the U.S. Postal Service.

The at home test you receive will vary. The federal government has secured more than 420 million tests for distribution through covidtests.gov already, with plans to increase the order to 1 billion tests in the coming weeks.

To order your tests and for more information please visit: www.covidtests.gov

For More COVID Updates Please Visit the [COVID-19 Resources Page](#) on our Website www.rockfordha.org



THE ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS BEEN SERVING THE ROCKFORD COMMUNITY SINCE JUNE 4TH, 1951. THROUGHOUT THESE LAST ALMOST 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.