

The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2022
MARCH



Carla Redd
—POLICE CHIEF



Jennifer Williams
—REGIONAL OPERATIONS MANAGER
DIVISION 1 AT ENVOY MORTGAGE



Dr. Sandra Martell
—PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATOR OF
WINNEBAGO COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Gabrielle Torina
—ROCKFORD ALDERWOMAN

THE 2ND ANNUAL WOMEN OF INFLUENCE EVENT

BARRIERS TO FEMALE LEADERSHIP

In the last 50 years, qualified women have jumped enormous hurdles in the corporate, and professional trades world. They have steadily advanced into top leadership positions. Even though the odds stacked against them these women, overcame persistent barriers regularly that obstruct their success. In spite of all those efforts to achieve equity in the workplace, women still face barriers to becoming recognized as leaders. According to a recent McKinsey report, professional women, especially of color, make up only a small fraction of senior leadership in organizations across the country. In today's reality, women hold only 21% of Chief of staff positions in the US and in our community, more work must be done.

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THE ROUNDTABLE LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION

You are invited to join us at the RHA's Roundtable Discussion as part of the day's Event, to hear stories from Women Leaders in our community to learn their insight and understand the journey of success and apply them to your life today. At the RHA's Annual Women of Influence Event you will learn, what are the barriers to women in leadership, and how can women overcome them? We will take an in depth look at those barriers, and challenges, to discuss how women can succeed in any industry. You will also discover how to leverage your strengths and tap into the right resources.

EMPOWER YOURSELF TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Learn from professional women who had the tenacity to push ahead and build equitable work environments where they thrive. Women like, Rockford Police Chief, Carla Redd, the Public Health Administrator of Winnebago County Health Department, Dr. Sandra Martell, Rockford Alderwoman, Gabrielle Torina, and Jennifer Williams, Regional Operations Manager Division 1, at Envoy Mortgage. All these female leaders, as well as other RHA panelists will provide insight, 'that in the face of these barriers to female leadership, women can indeed employ several strategies to help address the challenges.' The panelists will deliver an important dialogue about the needed steps to charge forward.

At the Annual Women of Influence Event, our panelist will also discuss career goals that empowers women to direct their paths and reach their growth objectives. You will broaden your understanding of how to deepen your relationships with supervisors and gain clarity about how to plan for your future.

The Annual Women of Influence Event will be held March 25, 2022, from 9AM – 4PM at the Veterans Memorial Hall 211 N Main St. The Event will encompass a resume workshop in the morning, a panelist discussion from women in leadership positions within our community, and then end with a job fair. It's an event aimed to empower residents in our community with the tools and knowledge for success.

When: March 25, 2022, from 9AM – 4PM.
Resume/Interview Workshop: 9AM – 10:30AM
Roundtable Discussion: 11AM – 12:30PM
Job Fair: 1PM – 4PM
Where: Veterans Memorial Hall
211 N Main St. Rockford, IL 61101



CREDIT EDUCATION MONTH

Each March, Credit Education Month is observed. Even if it's not still March, it is always a good time to educate yourself and others on the importance of understanding the ins and outs of credit and credit scores. Credit is a complex topic and there are many key concepts to understand. Here are a couple ways to educate yourself about credit:

1. CHECK YOUR CREDIT SCORE

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW YOUR CREDIT SCORE FOR MANY REASONS. ONE REASON BEING IF YOU HAVE A HIGH CREDIT SCORE RATING YOU ARE ABLE TO BORROW MONEY AT A LOWER INTEREST RATE. WHEN YOU BUY A NEW HOUSE, THEY WILL CHECK YOUR CREDIT RATING TO DETERMINE THE INTEREST RATE OF YOUR MORTGAGE.

2. FOCUS ON MEETING PAYMENT DEADLINES

ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO BUILD A GOOD CREDIT SCORE IS TO MAKE YOUR PAYMENTS ON TIME. IF YOU DON'T PAY BILLS IN A TIMELY MATTER, SETTING UP A PAYMENT REMINDER ON YOUR PHONE IS A GREAT WAY TO REMEMBER AND BUILD THAT SCORE!

3. ONLY OPEN NEW CREDIT ACCOUNTS IF NEEDED

APPLYING FOR MULTIPLE CREDIT ACCOUNTS CAN INCREASE YOUR DEBT AND LOWER YOUR SCORE, MEANING WHEN YOU NEED TO GET A NEW CAR OR HOME, THE MONTHLY PAYMENTS WILL BE HIGHER OR YOU'LL EVEN GET DECLINED.

4. CHECK YOUR CREDIT REPORTS

CHECKING YOUR REPORTS IS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN CREDIT EDUCATION. IF YOU FIND INACCURATE INFORMATION ON ANY CREDIT REPORT YOU CAN DISPUTE THEM WITH YOUR BANK AND HAVE IT CORRECTED.



Credit Education Month is important because it teaches people how to build credit, it reminds people the importance of credit, and it helps people improve their credit. Your credit score can make a huge impact on your financial life. Good credit is essential for getting manageable interest rates for all your financial investments. There are a lot of places to check your score. The major three bureaus are Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian. By law you are entitled to one free report from each agency per year. There are other free applications people use, like CreditKarma. Spend some time talking to your family and friends about the importance of credit education and take a look at your credit score!



WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: WOMEN PROVIDING HEALING, PROMOTING HOPE

The 2022 Women's History Month theme is a tribute to the continual work of female caregivers and frontline workers that has been demonstrated since the commencement of the pandemic in 2022. The theme this March, is also a recognition and acknowledgement of the thousands of ways that women of all cultures have provided both healing and hope throughout history, despite adversity, exclusion, and discrimination. Women have strived and sacrificed for equity and equality in our community and across the country. Today's women and girls acknowledge those steadfast individuals who came before them, the women heroines of countless numbers. This year's theme aids in reinforcing and helps continue to carry forward the mission of ensuring all daughters have the same opportunities as their counterparts.

A REFLECTION OF WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Each year, the month of March is set aside to honor women and their contributions in American History. Women's History Month started as a Women's History Week based in Santa Rosa, California was a local celebration. The Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women planned and executed a "Women's History Week" in 1978. The organizers set the week of March 8th corresponding with International Women's Day. Surrounding communities soon followed in the Women's History Week celebrations the next year.

In 1980 women's groups and historians—led by the national Women's History Project—successfully registered for national recognition. In February 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th as National Women's History Week.



*"FROM THE FIRST SETTLERS WHO CAME TO OUR SHORES,
FROM THE FIRST AMERICAN INDIAN FAMILIES WHO BEFRIENDED THEM,
MEN AND WOMEN HAVE WORKED TOGETHER TO BUILD THIS NATION.
TOO OFTEN THE WOMEN WERE UNSUNG AND SOMETIMES THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS
WENT UNNOTICED. BUT THE ACHIEVEMENTS, LEADERSHIP, COURAGE, STRENGTH, AND LOVE OF
THE WOMEN WHO BUILT AMERICA WAS AS VITAL AS THAT OF THE MEN WHOSE NAMES WE KNOW SO WELL."*

—PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER

Presidents continued to proclaim National Women's History Week in March until 1987 when Congress passed a public law designating March as Women's History Month. Since 1995, each president has issued a proclamation designating the month of March as Women's History Month.

FINDING THE MANY HEROINES WITH ONLINE RESOURCES

Online research now provides a fantastic opportunity to read about the contributions of women. There are highlights of hundreds of sources that tell the stories of women through a wide variety of perspectives and media. The focus, and attention can be on such themes, as the Equal Rights Amendment, Patriotism, Suffrage, and a myriad of similar topics created and developed by women.

These online resources can be a way to empower our young adults, and in all actually, our chance to celebrate women's achievements, raise consciousness about women's equality, lobby for gender equivalence, and to support all female focused opportunities! While the many heroines that can be discovered, would fill volumes of pages, we would like to pay tribute, and highlight two significant women in the work of female caregivers and frontline workers.

SUSIE KING TAYLOR: PROVIDING HEALING AND HOPE

According to the U.S. National Library of Medicine, African Americans in civil war medicine, one of many women truly stand out, Susie King Taylor, provided healing and hope on a daily basis. As a young slave girl, Susie had been secretly taught to read and write. Her abilities proved invaluable to the Union Army as they began to form regiments of African American soldiers, the 1st South Carolina Colored Volunteers. First as a laundress in 1862, her primary role was nurse to wounded soldiers and to teach those who could not read or write.



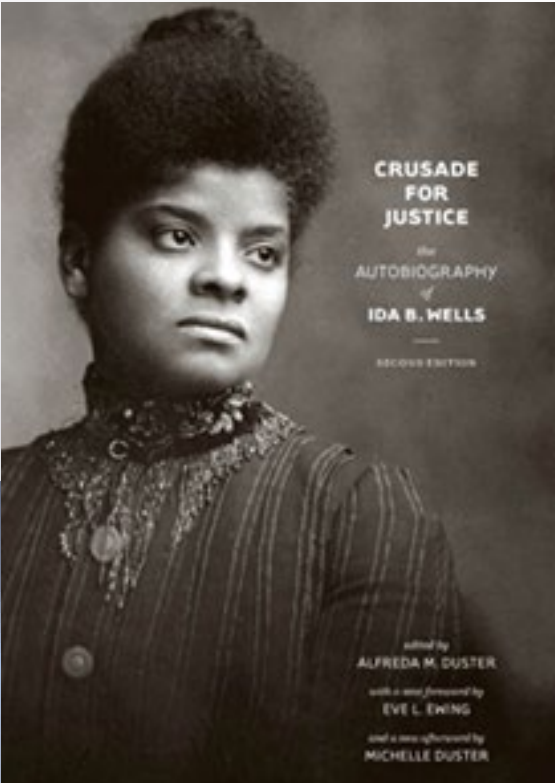
Taylor served for more than three years working alongside her husband, Edward King, a sergeant in the regiment. She treated the wounded on the battlefield but received no pay or compensation for her work. African Americans Nurses, both women and men, worked for the Union Army in hospitals and on battlefields.

Though most had no formal training, they provided care and comfort to thousands of soldiers and civilians. Many of these nurses were former slaves, who gained their freedom as the Union took over Confederate strongholds in the South. Once under the protection of the Union Army, these women took an active role in the fight for freedom by becoming nurses to wounded soldiers. Learn more about Susie King Taylor, and many other nurses over time here: <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/bindingwounds/nursing.html>

IDA B. WELLS, THE 19TH CENTURY PASSIONATE SUFFRAGIST

“SHE FOUGHT A LONELY AND ALMOST SINGLE-HANDED FIGHT, WITH THE SINGLE-MINDEDNESS OF A CRUSADER, LONG BEFORE MEN OR WOMEN OF ANY RACE ENTERED THE ARENA; AND THE MEASURE OF SUCCESS SHE ACHIEVED GOES FAR BEYOND THE CREDIT SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN IN THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTRY.”

—ALFREDA M. DUSTER



These words above, by Alfreda Duster, perhaps describe her best. There are few historical figures whose life and work speak to the current moment more than Ida B. Wells, the 19th century investigative journalist, civil rights leader, and passionate suffragist. During the prosperous years of 1830 to 1860, many homes were built in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Born a slave, Jim Wells, Ida’s father, became a skilled craftsman who served as carpenter during the construction of the Spires Bolling House. Ida B. Wells was born on the property. The historic value of the home now makes it an ideal location to pay tribute, for the [Ida B. Wells-Barnett Museum](#) today.

Ida worked her way through Rust College and taught school in Memphis, Tennessee. As a young woman and now a teacher, she refused to give up her seat on a train car that she was told was reserved for white women.

That incident launched the young Wells into her first public fight for justice. As she authored her words, the stories she wrote became a valuable tool to

analyze, debate, and persuade readers on the issues of the day, predominantly when it came to race and gender. Now as a writer, she became part-owner of a newspaper, the Memphis Free Speech. In May 1892, after the lynching of her close friend in Memphis, Ida now found a new kind of power in her pen.

“TRUTH IS MIGHTY AND WILL PREVAIL”
—IDA B. WELLS

Many months later, leaving Memphis and going to New York to write at the newspaper, ‘The Free Speech’, she began to reach many thousands of more people. “Free Speech,” they noted, “is not so easily suppressed as The Free Speech.” Ida continued to be an activist throughout her career.

She started several clubs and organizations including the Ida B. Wells Women’s Club and Alpha Suffrage Club, the first suffrage club for black women. She helped in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In 1930 she ran for a seat in the Illinois State Senate. She never stopped speaking the truth that she saw. The truth that she found through facts and figures. Her papers are at the [University of Chicago](#). She died on March 21, 1931.

THREE RESOURCES WORTHY OF YOUR INVESTMENT OF TIME:

- <https://www.womenshistorymonth.gov/>
- <http://idabwellsmuseum.org/>
- <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/ida-b-wells-barnett>



ST. PATRICK’S DAY

St. Patrick’s Day is celebrated each year on March 17th. The day usually consists of parties, parades, and the color green. The origin of St. Patrick’s Day dates back to the fifth century when St. Patrick died. The Irish has observed the day as a religious holiday for over 1,000 years. St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and its national apostle. He was born in Roman Britain and was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave at only 16. He ended up escaping, but returned to Ireland and was credited with bringing Christianity to its people.



Over the years, the Irish patriotism among American immigrants grew and so did the celebrations. In 1848, several New York Irish Aid societies united parades to form the one official New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade. Today the parade is one of the oldest parades and celebrations of St. Patrick's Day in the United States. Many other cities in America have their own celebrations like in Chicago, the Chicago River is always dyed green.

The tradition started in 1962, with city pollution control workers used dyes to trace illegal sewage and realized that the green dye might provide a unique way to celebrate the holiday. That year 100 pounds of green vegetable dye into the river and was actually enough for it to be green for a week. Today only 40 pounds of dye and stays around for only a couple hours.

Today people of all backgrounds celebrate St. Patrick's Day in many ways. One way is through food, recipes include Irish soda bread, corned beef and cabbage, and the Ruben sandwich. Other traditions include themed parties, the color green, and spreading luck.

THE IRISH MARCHING SOCIETY IN GREATER ROCKFORD AREA

For the past 46 years in Rockford, the vision of the Irish Marching Society, is to continue the American custom of Irish immigrants and their descendants marching down our city streets on St. Patrick's Day, while celebrating their Irish heritage and contributions. Thru those many years they have organized and promoted the Irish Culture in the greater Rockford area with a celebration that embraces the entire community. With a [new website](#) in 2022, the organization maintains a robust online presence to bring its materials to the wider community to promote understanding of their Celtic heritage. The image of the Irish language has changed in recent years, which is apparent by the number of people who speak and learn the language, not only in Ireland but in the US.

The Irish language, known as Gaelige in Irish, is a Celtic language. Today, it's estimated that there are nearly 75,000 daily Irish speakers in Ireland, with over 1.5 million learning it as a second language. It is an official language in Ireland, and if you have had the opportunity to visit the country, you will see the language on road signs and in the communities that you traverse. While you may not know any Irish yourself outside of fáilte ("welcome") or sláinte ("cheers"), some of our English vocabulary and slang we use today come from or is influenced by the Irish language.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ST. PATRICK'S DAY TRADITIONS:

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

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION & APPRECIATION

It came like a kitten, very quietly, on soft paws. Many of us did not recognize its presence on March 4. What was it, you ask? It was National Employee Appreciation Day, which reminds us all that strong employer-employee relations are at the very core of any tremendously successful organizations or businesses. However, we need not worry. Team Member appreciation, staff recognition, and acknowledgment can be any day, any month.

We commonly use "recognition" and "appreciation" interchangeably, although there is a significant distinction between them. The former is about giving positive feedback based on results or performance. On the other hand, the latter is about acknowledging a person's inherent value. This word distinction matters because recognition and appreciation are given for varied reasons.



Recognition is providing positive feedback based on employee results or performance. Sometimes this happens formally: a recognition award, a bonus, a promotion, a simple verbal thank-you. All of these methods can be meaningful. Appreciation, conversely, is about acknowledging a person's inherent value. It is not just their accomplishments. It is their worth as a team member, colleague, and a human being. Recognition is about what people do. Appreciation is about who they are. Employee recognition and appreciation are vital to the agency, and we believe in the genuine core values of our organization. The RHA Core values touch everything we do on a daily work basis. The initiative was vital when faced with the changes at the onset of the pandemic.

"SPOTLIGHTING," THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLLABORATION

In the spring of 2020, the RHA Leadership Team conceived and created "The Director's Spotlight Appreciation & Recognition Award." The new award program for co-workers was to illuminate achievements and increase confidence in each other during that unprecedented time. The recognition and appreciation award continues to "spotlight" the advancement of collaboration. Teamwork and collaboration were vital for team members working remotely or in their home offices to foster successful outcomes.

The first RHA Award commenced in March 2020 and was presented to Linda Dorsey-Tillman, Procurement, Contracts, and Section 3 Compliance Manager. When the COVID-19 directive by Gov. Pritzker was announced for social distancing, Linda, in 48 hours, deployed 20 laptops for use by RHA staff members to work from home. This included wiping the computers clean, loading all necessary software, and enabling the computers to allow staff to continue their daily duties, while working remotely. Then, Linda swiftly moved forward and configured work-related cell phones, for employees who had previously not been issued an RHA phone, with hotspots needed by those who did not have internet service at home.

A WORK ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERYONE FEELS VALUED

Over the past two years, each month, we have highlighted one or more of our Ten Core Values that the recognized team member has demonstrated consistently. The program has helped our team members feel more accountable and connected them to the vital work they perform. All submissions are provided by employee peers and finalized for the month. A time and place are set for the nominated employee to come together with our staff, either remotely or when possible, together.

The Director's Spotlight Award is our way of telling our stories of how we overcome. Our Ten Core Values of RHA is our 'True North.' The Director's Spotlight is an excellent communication vehicle that demonstrates how we improve our agency products, resident services, employee communication, and our interpersonal skills through our employees.

BE BOLD, CREATIVE, & FEARLESS

Our team member's recognition and appreciation is part of our corporate culture. It is more significant than a single day. Our continued goal is to create a work environment where everyone feels valued; "that we genuinely care and appreciate their time, energy, sacrifices, and commitment." The recognition and appreciation program's objective are to help employees see that the agency values them and their contributions to the success of the whole RHA team. It helps build a sense of individual value and welcomes their outstanding work.

Employee recognition and, yes, appreciation are vital to the agency's work to our residents and the community. Think of the RHA Director's Spotlight, if you will, as "audacious appreciation and recognition," and practice it however you think best. It may well lead you to discover other ways of constructing great, bold, creative, and fearless ways to honor your staff in your organization year-round.

DIRECTOR'S SPOTLIGHT

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARILYN TAYLOR!

Ms. Marilyn Taylor has been with Rockford Housing Authority for more than four years and is considered a valued team member within RHA. During her time here, she has served as an Assistant Property Manager working within our high and low rise developments.

Having assisted several different Property Managers in the past three years, Marilyn has played an integral part in allowing for and assisting in a smooth transition process. "Marilyn's quality of work and determination to provide accountable and professional property management...has allowed for a seamless transition", stated Brian Dugan, Property Manager of Park Terrace and the Low Rise developments.

Marilyn performs her duties, displaying a caring and professional attitude in all that she does. Her continued professionalism and reliability have made a considerable impact on the agency and those we serve. While in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Taylor received a call from a resident regarding a management issue. During the call, Marilyn noticed that the resident continued coughing uncontrollably. Understanding that the resident was experiencing difficulties with breathing, she kept the resident on the line while she immediately used another phone to call 911.

She remained on the line with the resident, attempting to keep him calm and catch his breath, until paramedics arrived. He was then transported and admitted to the hospital for extensive treatment. The resident and his family graciously thanked Marilyn for her caring act and stated that her actions were believed to be considered life-saving.



Ms. Taylor's dedication and initiative have demonstrated her outstanding character and caring nature. Her motivation and willingness to assist her residents are all traits that make her deserving of the Director's Spotlight Award for February 2022. We are proud to have Marilyn Taylor as a team member, and we look forward to her future at RHA!

TO SEE MARILYN'S TRIBUTE VIDEO, VISIT:

<https://www.rockfordha.org/about-us/resident-services/the-directors-spotlight/>

MS. STEPHANIE PENIX PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM WINNER

We are excited to announce that Ms. Stephanie Penix, Maintenance Trainee/Driver, was the PEER-TO-PEER RECOGNITION PROGRAM winner for February 2022. Beginning with last month's Peer-to-Peer winner, Nicole Bourbon, we will continue to introduce authors monthly of what each sees and feels about their peers. the 'Scriptwriter' of the Peer-to-Peer Recognition Program shares and demonstrates how

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. Stephanie's Nomination of Ms. Marilyn Taylor, who she speaks of her 'motivation and willingness to assist her residents are all traits that make her deserving of the Director's Spotlight Award.' Stephanie describes one of Marilyn's many actions in this way. *"While in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Taylor received a call from a resident regarding a management issue. During the call, Marilyn noticed that the resident continued coughing uncontrollably. Understanding that the resident was experiencing difficulties with breathing, she kept the resident on the line while she immediately used another phone to call 911. She remained on the line with the resident, attempting to keep him calm and catch his breath, until paramedics arrived. He was then transported and admitted to the hospital for extensive treatment. The resident and his family graciously thanked Marilyn for her caring act and stated that her actions were believed to be considered lifesaving."*

Stephanie's teamwork, enthusiasm, and support of her fellow employees is an example of the RHA Core Values and the importance of the 'Scriptwriter' for the February 2022, Peer-to-Peer Recognition. She is able to see firsthand through a peer-to-peer observation and opinion. Stephanie visits each site daily and is often in service to our residents and is always there to lend a hand and brighten the day with her smile for her coworkers. Through the RHA team members, we are all able to see The Director's Spotlight, as our way of telling our stories of overcoming adversity with opportunity.

The words of Ms. Linda Dorsey-Tillman sum it up best, "Stephanie Penix is an all-around friendly individual that absolutely loves RHA and the staff here at RHA. She always goes over and above her job duties, and she likes to see things done right away, not waiting until the last minute. She is a great example of a dedicated, devoted, and committed employee."





Rockford Housing Authority
223 S Winnebago Street
Rockford, IL 61102

DID YOU KNOW?

This Month in 2020, the world hit a sudden and drastic change with the spread of COVID-19. Children were sent home from school, work places shifted to remote, and businesses closed their doors. Now looking at March 2022, we have made tremendous improvements in beating COVID-19. We have a vaccine now, alone in the state of Illinois, over 76% of Illinoisans are vaccinated and there are now 217 million people in the world fully vaccinated.

In Illinois, Governor Pritzker announced at the end of February that the mask mandate was lifted due to the declining rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations. At RHA we have made the decision to maintain our current policy of all residents, guests, and staff are required to wear face coverings.

To see the full announcement of the RHA COVID-19 policy, please visit the [COVID-19 Resources Page](#) on our Website www.rockfordha.org.

