

# The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2022  
JUNE



## JUNETEENTH 2022

Juneteenth, National Independence Day is a US federal holiday and it was signed into law by President Joe Biden on Thursday June 17, 2021. The day is also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Black Independence Day, and Juneteenth Independence Day, and is a holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States, observed annually on June 19. In 1863, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln, issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared more than three million slaves living in the Confederate states to be free. More than two years would pass, however, before the news reached African Americans living in Texas. It was not until Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, that the state's residents finally learned that slavery had been abolished. The former slaves immediately began to celebrate with prayer, feasting, song, and dance.

The original observances included prayer meetings and the singing of spirituals, and celebrants wore new clothes as a way of representing their newfound freedom. In the following few years, African Americans in other states were celebrating the day as well, making it an annual tradition. Celebrations have continued across the United States into

the 21st century and typically include prayer and religious services, speeches, educational events, family gatherings and picnics, and festivals with music, food, and dancing. Here in Rockford there are Juneteenth celebrations happening the weekend of the 19th. Juneteenth 1865 holds celebrations each year that include a community cookout, music, live performances, Juneteenth Queen Competition, a community church service, and many other events. The event this year is on Saturday, June 18th and Sunday, June 19th at Sinnissippi Park.

"Our ancestors went through a lot. As a nation, as a collective, we've never really acknowledged the 246 years of slavery, and the depth of it, nor the trauma it caused. They endured hundreds of years of slavery, and then another hundred years of discrimination. I created Juneteenth 1865 to educate young individuals and all individuals to grasp that they sacrificed so that we'd have a better life."  
— Tommy Meeks, President of ICRG (Inner City Reconstruction Group) and Founder of Rockford Juneteenth

For more information on the Juneteenth celebrations in Rockford, please visit:  
<https://www.juneteenth1865.com/>



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## CONGRATULATIONS JANA JANES, LEANNA CLARK & FELICE WOITYNEK!

RHA would like to congratulate Jana Janes, Leana Clark & Felice Woitynek on their well-deserved promotions! These ladies are self-motivated, dedicated and extremely helpful employees. Their dedication to our residents is unmatched.

### **Jana Janes, Finance Director**



Jana Janes joined RHA as the Accounting Manager in the finance department. Jana is a graduate of Rockford University with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Business Administration in Finance with a minor in Economics. Prior to coming to RHA, Jana has served as Director of Finance as well as Controller with experience in federal funding, federal grants, non-profit, and property management.

### **Leanna Clark, Accounting Manager**



Leanna currently serves in the position of Accounting Manager. Before holding this position, Leanna served as an Accountant since joining RHA in 2018. Leanna brings 20 years of accounting experience in accounts payable, accounts receivable, and payroll. Attending Columbia College, Leanna studied for a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Accounting degree.

### **Felice Woitynek, Policy, Compliance, and Security Systems Manager**



Native to Freeport, IL. Felice joined the Rockford Housing Authority team in 2017 as the Property Manager. She has over 15 years of experience in management, 9 of which were dedicated to Public Housing management. She is a certified Public Housing Manager and Rent Calculations Specialist focusing on program integrity and customer relations. In 2005 Felice graduated from Highland Community College with an Associate of Arts degree with an emphasis on Criminal Justice. She enrolled at Columbia College pursuing her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice-Probation & Parole. She is also a proud graduate of the Workforce Development Institute-Freeport, IL, in 2017.

## NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH 2022



National Homeownership Month is observed every year in June. It shines light on supporting the dream of homeownership in America. It is also a time to educate and recognize the organizations that help families and individuals achieve that goal of being a homeowner. From originations like the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development to city Housing Authorities, there are people all over dedicated to helping the people of their community become a homeowner and have the feeling of security in a home that is theirs. History of National Homeownership Month

Most Americans had no way of technically owning a home in the 1800s. Mortgages became common only after the U.S. banking system came into being after the 1860s National Bank Acts. During the Great Depression, the banks didn't have money to lend and borrowers didn't have any cash. As a result, people couldn't afford to buy homes and existing homeowners often failed to pay their debt. To stabilize the housing market, the U.S. government created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1933, the Federal Housing Administration in 1934, and the Federal National Mortgage Association (now known as Fannie Mae) in 1938. All these institutions took homeownership to new heights and helped prevent a crash in the housing

market. In its 87 years of existence, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) has saved America an almost \$4 trillion loss of household wealth.





It has helped more than 44 million citizens to become homeowners. National Homeownership Week began in 1995, which was a strategy of the administration under President Bill Clinton to increase homeownership across America.

Later, in 2002, President George W. Bush expanded the period of observance from a week to the entire month of June. National Homeownership Month is important because, not only does it benefit the community, by when home sales rise, jobs go up too, but also for people to have a sense of belonging. Homeownership gets an individual more invested in their community and neighborhood. Meeting neighbors, new hobbies, and just a feeling of security and belonging.

The Rockford Housing Authority's FSS Home Ownership Program Presently we have 175 families in the program with a capacity of 210. The program can be a very good experience for families that are transitioning into the home buying market or families that have the desire to gain employment or education to improve their living options. The Housing

Choice Voucher (HCV) homeownership program allows families that are assisted under the HCV program to use their vouchers to buy a home and receive monthly assistance in meeting homeownership expenses. The HCV homeownership program is available only to families that have been admitted to the HCV program.

To participate in the HCV homeownership program, the HCV family must meet specific income and employment requirements (the employment requirement does not apply to elderly and disabled families), be a first-time homeowner as defined in the regulation, attend and satisfactorily complete the pre-assistance homeownership and housing counseling program required by the PHA, and meet any additional eligibility requirements set by the PHA.

#### Steps to take:

- Meet with your HCV Occupancy Specialist and a FSS Specialist
- Attend credit and budget classes to establish, repair, or maintain a minimum credit score of 640
- \*Some home buying programs may work with a lower score\*
- Attend and obtain a certification by the First Time Home Buyer guidelines for most mortgages (can provide the buyer with down payment assistance)
- Research and apply for best fit mortgage provider (bank, credit union)

For more information on the RHA, FSS Homeownership Program please visit:

<https://launchmyfuture.com/rha-resident-services/homeownership/>



# RHA COVID UPDATE

As we approach Summer, COVID-19 remains a part of our lives. As we shift from a pandemic to an endemic state, we will need to retool to allow us to live with the reality of the virus. As we look to Summer 2022, we are in a much different position than in Spring 2020. Vaccines, boosters, and new viral treatments provide us with tools not at our disposal two years ago. In addition, vigilance with masks remains an integral part of our country's response. RHA continued to require mask requirements indoors for all staff, community members, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. I believe it has served our residents and us well.

As the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, government officials at all levels are reevaluating health and safety protocols and adjusting workplace guidance based on the ever-shifting case and vaccination metrics.

Therefore, beginning Tuesday, May 31st, 2022, RHA will return to "Business as usual" except for our development community rooms and temperature readings. We will open our office doors to regular business hours. We will resume in-person meetings without occupancy restrictions and lift mask mandates. Our development community rooms and computer labs will now open at 8:00 am without the restriction of occupancy. However, we will close each room daily at 4:00 pm to allow our maintenance staff to sanitize the space. In doing so, each site will need to ensure that our sanitizing stations remain fully stocked, and we encourage our residents to use the supplies to sanitize areas after use. RHA offices will be open to the public without the requirement of an appointment, and we will resume regular business hours. All safeguards will remain in place in meeting areas. Because temperatures are not noticeable, we will continue requiring temperature readings when entering our facilities and ask those with a fever not to enter the RHA offices. As we always have, we encourage you to protect yourself, get vaccinated, and continue wearing your mask. However, most importantly, please stay home if you are not feeling well. As we have done throughout, we will continue to communicate with the community through periodic messages with updated information as it becomes available. Please also look to RHA's COVID-19 page for the most current information.



## FATHER'S DAY 2022



Father's Day is on June 19th, and has been celebrated since 1910. The day is a celebration of all the Father's and Father figures in our lives. Father's Day was first celebrated only in Washington DC until 1972, 58 years after Woodrow Wilson made Mother's Day official, and June 19th, became a nationwide holiday in the United States.

The origin of Father's Day was not met with the same enthusiasm as Mother's Day, as one florist explained, "fathers haven't the same sentimental appeal that mothers have." On July 5, 1908, a West Virginia church sponsored the nation's first event explicitly in honor of fathers, a Sunday sermon in memory of the 362 men who had died in the previous December's explosions at the Fairmont Coal Company mines. This celebration was only a one-time event and not an annual holiday. It wasn't until the following year that a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd, one of six children raised by a widower, tried to establish an official equivalent to Mother's Day for male parents. She went to local churches, the YMCA, shopkeepers and government officials to drum up support for her idea, and she was successful: Washington State celebrated the nation's first statewide Father's Day on June 19, 1910.

The holiday quickly spread to the rest of the nation as President Wilson honored the day with telegraph signals in 1916 and then in 1924, President Calvin Coolidge urged governments to observe Father's Day. While we no longer send telegrams as a Father's Day present, we all have our own Father's Day traditions we share with that special Father in our lives. Most commonly families will get together and have cook outs, go to sports outings, or have a celebratory dinner. Much like Mother's Day,

Father's Day is viewed as a "day off" for Fathers where they can enjoy a day all about them and their families. Rockford Housing Authority would like to wish all the fathers and father figures who care and love for the children in their lives a very happy Father's Day!



# HABITAT FOR HUMANITY SUMMER 2022 EVENTS

The Rockford Area Habitat for Humanity is a nonprofit housing developer and lender. They build safe, quality, and affordable homes in the Rockford area and sell them for affordable mortgages. They work in local communities across all 50 states in the U.S. and in approximately 70 countries. Habitat's vision is of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. RAHFH will accept mortgage applications throughout the month of August 2022, here are the steps to apply:

The basic requirements to qualify for a mortgage with RAHFH are:

1. An ability to maintain a monthly mortgage payment as demonstrated by:
  - a. meeting a minimum household income (income guidelines are included at end of letter)
  - b. an evaluation of credit history, and
  - c. a total debt-to-income ratio under 41%
2. A current need for safe, affordable housing
3. A willingness to partner with Rockford Area Habitat for Humanity and complete 200 partnership hours if approved for a mortgage (by volunteering, taking classes, etc)
4. Residence in Winnebago County

## YOU CAN APPLY A NUMBER OF WAYS:

1) Attend one application event at one of the following times and locations – please note that locations vary by date. These events include a presentation at the beginning and are a good way to learn more while you apply:

- Thursday, August 4 at 5:30 pm @ Crusader Community Health 1200 W. State Street
- Monday, August 8 at 5:30 pm @ Crusader Community Health 1200 W. State Street
- Saturday, August 13 starting at 10:00 am @ RPL Nordlof Center 118 N Main Street
- Wednesday, August 17 starting at 10:00 am @ Crusader Community Health 1200 W. State Street
- Saturday, August 27 starting at 10:00 am @ RPL Nordlof Center 118 N Main Street

2) If you cannot attend one of the application events above, please come to the Rockford Area HFH office during designated application office hours below (volunteers will be available to assist with applications during these times):

- Wednesdays in August (3, 10, 24, 31) any time between 2:30 & 6:30 pm
- NO office hours August 17th
- 5183 Harlem Road in Loves Park – door faces Harlem Road

3) If none of the options above work with your schedule, please call our office about an accommodation – 815-636-4573





# FOURTH OF JULY 2022

The Fourth of July, also known as Independence Day has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1941, but the tradition of Independence Day celebrations dates back to the 18th century and American Revolution. When the Continental Congress voted in favor for independence on July 2nd, 1776, it took two days for delegates from the 13 colonies to then adopt the Declaration of Independence. From 1776 to now, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American Independence, with celebrations of fireworks, parades, and barbecues. Did you know? John Adams believed that July 2nd was the correct date on which to celebrate the birth of American independence, and would reportedly turn down invitations to appear at July 4th events in protest. Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826—the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. In the pre-Revolutionary years, colonists held annual celebrations of the king's birthday, which traditionally included the ringing of bells, bonfires, processions and speechmaking. By contrast, during the summer of 1776 some colonists celebrated the birth of independence by holding mock funerals for King George III as a way of symbolizing the end of the monarchy's hold on America and the triumph of liberty. Festivities including concerts, bonfires, parades and the firing of cannons and muskets usually accompanied the first public readings of the Declaration of Independence, beginning immediately after its adoption. Fireworks are a staple of the Fourth of July, state to state, you will always find a Fourth of July Firework show. The first fireworks were used as early as 200 BC. The tradition of setting off fireworks on the 4th of July began in Philadelphia on July 4th, 1777, during the first organized celebration of Independence Day. Ship's cannon fired a 13-gun salute in honor of the 13 colonies. In 1870, Congress established Independence Day as an official holiday. By 1898, a reporter would note that "the American Fourth of July is the greatest event the maker of firecrackers knows," historian James Heintze recorded in The Fourth of July Encyclopedia. Rockford Housing Authority would like to wish everyone a safe and fun Fourth of July and as a reminder, the offices will be closed on Monday July 4th, 2022!



## LIFEFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE GRADUATION

On June 30th, 2022, RHA will hold the Lifeforce Development Institute (LDI) Graduation ceremony at the Nordlof Center in downtown Rockford. The graduation is to commemorate the recent LDI & FSS graduates in completing the Job/Career Readiness Skills-based training. Family Self-Sufficiency, (FSS) is a voluntary program established to promote economic self-sufficiency. RHA does this by connecting individuals to employment opportunities, social & economic resources to affect positive changes.

The Lifeforce Development Institute (LDI) Curriculum addresses the foundational skill gap in the workforce with a 12-week, hands-on learning program covering Job/Career Readiness Skills meeting the community's workforce goals. 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. To learn more about the RHA 'Launch My Future,' please visit: <https://launchmyfuture.com/>

RHA is so proud of the recent graduates and all the challenging work they put forth the last 12 weeks, we can't wait to see what the future holds!





# TIME TO VOTE!

THE ELECTIONS FOR COUNTY, STATE, AND FEDERAL positions will be on June 28th this year but there are still other ways to vote and register to vote. If you are interested in voting by mail, ballots get mailed this week, on May 19th, 2022. There is an option to file for permanent vote by mail status. The Rockford Board of Elections has implemented that, whereas County will implement after the June 28, 2022, primary for the general and all future elections.

Please follow these links to choose which voting method works best for you:

## **Vote By Mail**

### **Vote by Mail Online Form:**

<https://voterockfordil.gov/vote-by-mail-ballot>

### **Printable Vote by Mail Application:**

<https://voterockfordil.gov/images/pdf/vote-by-mail-2022-updated.pdf>

For those worried about making sure your ballot is counted you can track the date when the app was processed, ballot mailed and ballot received. You can also use drop boxes at the County Clerk's office and Rockford Board of Elections. Ballots will be mailed May 19, 2022. For more information please visit: [voterockfordil.gov](https://voterockfordil.gov).

## **Early Voting**

Voters may vote before Election Day beginning 40 days before any election. Early voting allows voters to avoid lines or bad weather on Election Day and pick the day and time they cast their vote according to their own schedule. Early voting is available at the main office of the Rockford Board of Elections and at other sites to be determined before each election. More information on early voting will be made available 40 days before each election.

<https://voterockfordil.gov/for-voters/early-voting>

## **Election Day voting at the polling place**

Voters may vote at their polling place on Election Day.

Polls open at 6 a.m. and close at 7 p.m. You can find your polling place by following the link below.

<https://voterockfordil.gov/for-voters/polling-place>





Rockford Housing Authority  
223 S Winnebago Street  
Rockford, IL 61102

## DID YOU KNOW?

### THE LIFEFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE CURRICULUM

Classes for the next LDI Semester will start on August 9th, 2022! Registration is now open!

The LDI Curriculum introduces you to a new way of viewing yourself and others. Learning these foundational skills will help you stay ahead of various changes and make the most of all the opportunities in the years ahead. If you are lacking pre-employment skills such as teamwork, decision-making, and communication, then the curriculum will help you grow and develop new opportunities. If you want to become an even more effective employee, then LDI is for you!

Please take a look at the videos of previous LDI Graduation Ceremonies, testimonials, and if you are interested and want to Launch Your Future today, please follow the link to start your application process! <https://launchmyfuture.com/ldi/>



***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.***