

The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2022
NOVEMBER



CONGRATULATIONS, TEQUILA POWELL-BROWN, NEW RHA STAFF MEMBER

Congratulations to Tequila Powell-Brown on her new job Affordable Housing Manager.

Tequila Pollard- Brown has worked in the Housing Industry since 2010. Prior to service with the Rockford Housing Authority, she served in many different capacities in both the public and private sectors of the industry. Some positions include Accounting Assistant, Property Manager, Regional Manager of Operations, and Director of Housing. Tequila is community and resident focused and an advocate for safe affordable housing for all.

Educationally, Mrs. Brown holds several public and affordable housing certifications, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and an Associate of Business Administration and Accounting. Her free time is spent travelling with family, cooking, and creating perfumes.

Everyone at the Rockford Housing Authority could not be more excited to see what the future holds for the Affordable Housing Manager, Mrs. Tequila Powell-Brown.

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LIFEFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE FALL 2022 GRADUATION



The Fall LDI Graduates walked the stage on October 27th and received their certificates. The RHA LIFEFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE instructors could not be prouder of their hard work and dedication to this program!

Congratulations to Marieelena Mullins-Garcia, Lakesha Graves Bey, Robbie Webster, Terry Milton, Connie Simmons, Breanna Bailey, and Codi Climenhagay!!



Breanna Bailey, a recent LDI Graduate, states, "I was looking for more skills to add to my resume to bring me forward in life. We all had so much fun while learning, and the instructors never gave up on me; they saw something in me that I didn't see in myself."

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The Rockford Housing Authority proudly supports and recommends the LifeForce Development Institute's Job/Career Readiness Skills-based Training, which is open to the community and RHA residents. Robbie Webster, LDI Graduate talks of her journey through the LDI program "I learned more about myself. I thought at my age it was over, but I wanted to work and be full of life again. They really care about you, and I am a new person because of LDI."

The LDI curriculum includes help with the foundational skill gap in the workforce with a 12-week hands-on learning program that covers job/career readiness skills to meet the community's workforce goals. In addition, the LDI instructors strive to help better every student's personal, professional, and financial lives. "Listening to your stories and how far you've come, I am so proud of you; you guys are amazing people because you never quit." RHA Commissioner Anisha Grimmett stated, "I want you to use your skills to enhance your talents and career to ultimately make your family and human life better. It's time for action, people. Congratulations!"

For more information about the program and to hear past LDI graduates journey through the program, please visit <https://launchmyfuture.com/ldi/>



Connie Simmons



Codi Climenhaga



Terry Milton



Lakesha Graves Bey

SCAN ME





Chip Stoner *President/CEO Boys and Girls Club of Rockford*

Experienced President with a demonstrated history of working in the nonprofit organization management industry. Skilled in Nonprofit Organizations, Philanthropy, Fundraising, Leadership, and Nonprofit Management. Strong business development professional with a Bachelor's degree focused in Political Science & Economics from University of Iowa, Rockford East High.

The Rockford Boys and Girls Club is committed to the Rockford Housing Authority to provide services in:

- Youth Development
- Healthy Living Education & Exercise Classes
- Character, Career, Leadership & Personal Development

The Boys & Girls Club never takes a single approach to help kids succeed. It takes caring mentors, such as our trained Club staff. It takes a safe place, like our Clubs that are consistently there for kids they serve. It takes innovative, quality programs designed to empower youth to excel in school and lead healthy productive lives. We do whatever it takes to ensure all kids have a great future.

Mission

The mission of the Boys & Girls Club of Rockford is to improve the quality of life for youth in our community, regardless of sex, race or economic background.

Vision

Provide a world-class Club Experience that assures success is within reach of every young person who enters our doors, with all members on track to graduate from high school with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship, and living a healthy lifestyle.



The mission of the Boys & Girls Club of Rockford is to improve the quality of life for youth in the community regardless of sex, race, or economic background. Since 1908, the Boys & Girls Club of Rockford has provided area youth with building-centered programs where they can go to feel safe and at the same time be exposed to positive, caring adult role models who have developed programs to help them succeed in school and in life. Research shows that these programs play a key role in reducing delinquency, increasing academic achievement, and enhancing member's access to technology and tech skills, as well as increasing career goals and improving their attitude toward school. The organization's overall vision is grounded in a multi-faceted approach toward life-long learning; building the foundation for the future. In support of this approach, programs are designed to build character and leadership skills; to promote education and career

development; to foster health and life skills; encourage participation in the arts, sports, fitness, and recreation; to build cultural diversity; and deepen knowledge of technology.



DIRECTOR'S SPOTLIGHT



Leanna has been with the Rockford Housing Authority since October 2018. Leanna has always gone above and beyond for the finance team. As a result of Leanna's hard work and dedication Leanna was promoted to Accounting Manager in May, 2022 and has moved gracefully into her new position in finance.

"Even at her busiest of times, she stops what she is doing to help out the team." Sheila Suggs

Leanna is always teaching staff new things and helps the finance department become more efficient. Her time and patience is a virtue.

Leanna demonstrates the agency's core values through her knowledge and work ethics. She does extensive research on tasks that have been put in front of her. If she doesn't know the answer she will find the answer.

Leanna is a great asset for the team and we have all learned so much from her.

Leanna is the finance team's reverse engineer. Leanna truly takes the time to get the job done and tries to make finance work easier.

We are blessed to have her!! Sheila Suggs

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



PEER-TO-PEER

Ms. Sheila Suggs gratitude for coworkers is demonstrated in her detailed nomination of September's Director Spotlight winner, Ms. Leanna Clark. Sheila is always speaking up in team meetings, acknowledging the work of her fellow team members. Her positive attitude is genuine and contributes to the agency's strength. We are excited to have Sheila on the RHA Team!

<https://rockfordha.org/peer-to-peer-recognition-program/>



NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

During the month of November, we observe Native American Heritage Month, or commonly referred to as American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month. This campaign is a time to celebrate and acknowledge the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories of the Native American People. Heritage Month is also a time to educate yourself and others of the important contributions of Native people.

Heritage month started at turn of the century as an effort to gain a day of recognition for the contributions the first Americans made to the growth of the U.S, resulted in a whole month designated for that purpose. According to NativeAmericanHeritageMonth.gov "Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian, who was the director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, N.Y. He persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the "First Americans" and for three years they adopted such a day. In 1915, the annual Congress of the American Indian Association meeting in Lawrence, Kans., formally approved a plan concerning American Indian Day." The first American Indian Day was declared on the second Saturday in May of 1916 by the governor of New York and several states celebrated the fourth Friday in September. Here in Illinois, legislators enacted such a day in 1919.

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In 1990 President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 “National American Indian Heritage Month.” Similar proclamations, under variants on the name (including “Native American Heritage Month” and “National American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month”) have been issued each year since 1994.

As of 2022, there are 574 federally recognized Tribes in the United States. However, numerous others are still advocating for recognition. Although many Native Americans still reside on reservations, approximately 71 percent live in metropolitan areas. Despite Tribal citizens making up about 2.5 % of the U.S. population, their history has been overlooked, forgotten, or disrespected, that is why this month is so important. This month can serve as a reminder of America’s indigenous people, traditions, and history. To better understand the importance of certain cultural dress, traditions, and customs, NNAHM can be spent attending Native American-centered events, such as Powwows or reading books written by Native American authors. You could also support Native American-owned businesses.



SCAN ME



VETERAN'S DAY

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ONE OF OUR OWN Chase Jansen, RHA Maintenance Trainee III, served in the Marine Corps in 2017. During his service, Chase's assignment was in the infantry as an infantry rifleman stationed at Camp Pendleton.

We thank you, Chase, for your service and sacrifice in defending our nation. You have allowed this country and our community to continue enjoying the freedoms and privileges that are often taken for granted. You work with an organization that does its best to take care of individuals like you who have taken great care of us when needed. Please remember that you are supported and appreciated by a grateful nation.

THE RHA LEADERSHIP TEAM

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.

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.



THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a time for family, friends, and expressing gratitude. Thanksgiving started in 1621 when the Plymouth colonist's and 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, we can now gather with friends and family to share turkey and sides together. Turkey has become a staple of any Thanksgiving meal. Did you know 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.

The Rockford Housing Authority would like to take this time to express our gratitude to our staff members, our community partners, and of course our residents. We are wishing everyone a great Thanksgiving Day!



RHA'S TRUNK OR TREAT!

RHA's Trunk or Treat event was held at the RHA Central Office, on October 31st. Children from the Rockford area were greeted by our RHA staff and their trunks dressed in the spookiest decorations. Not only was our staff there to facilitate activities to make the event memorable and terrific for our residents, they also participated in the trunk or treat fun! This event was offered as a safer alternative to the traditional door to door trick or treating. "The continuous goal is to ensure our children have a very safe and fun "Trunk or Treating" experience," states Carandus Brown, RHA Human Services Manager.

The children of our residents received treats, dressed up in their spookiest costumes, and had a wonderful Halloween experience. This event was hosted by the Rockford Housing Authority's endeavor to move our kids forward and upward through partnerships such as these.



TODAY, FORTY-SIX MILLION PERSONS IN AMERICA ARE CLASSIFIED AS “POOR”

As you may know, housing affordability today is the worst in decades. Rent prices have risen more than 30 percent in many markets, and single-family home prices have increased nearly as much.

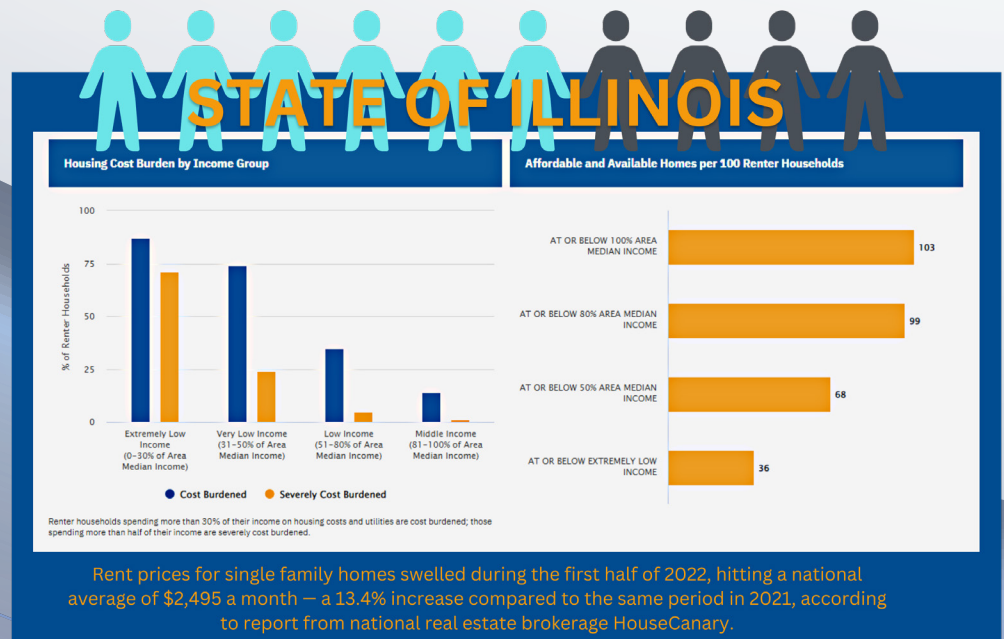
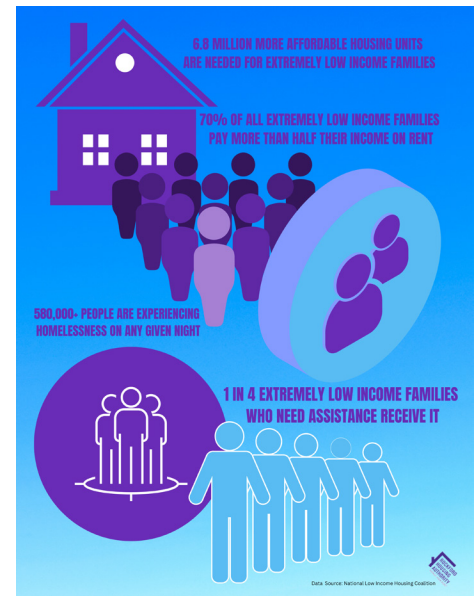
RHA is committed to providing solutions for affordable housing that is safe and accessible for all. A prime objective for the Rockford Housing Authority is building community partnerships to address current housing instability and leverage new resources to improve housing options. Various emerging and established opportunities are available through our ongoing community partnerships, which can help people stay in or return to housing in the community.

“We know by working in conjunction with Landlords in the Rockford community through the RHA Housing Choice Voucher program (HCV), we are able to contribute fresh ideas, solutions, and innovations for current issues and challenges that confront the apartment housing industry,” states Laura Snyder RHA, CEO. Today, these relationships with our community partners are more important than ever. Housing is the centerpiece of an individual’s personal life across their lifespan and a cornerstone to living independently. Accessible, affordable housing for Individuals, families, people with disabilities, older adults, and people experiencing homelessness is vital to supporting overall well-being in our community.

37.9 MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN POVERTY

Locating affordable housing is a challenge in virtually every community throughout the country, and this is exceptionally difficult for folks as both housing prices and rents rise across the country. The average rent in the US was \$1,717 in July, according to the National Multifamily Report from real estate information company Yardi Matrix. That’s a 12.6% increase compared to July 2021. The US Census Bureau collects data and publishes income and poverty estimates to evaluate national economic trends and has found that over one in ten people in the US live in poverty. The official poverty rate in 2021 was 11.6 percent, with 37.9 million people in poverty. The poverty rate for women is even higher at a rate of 12.6 percent, while the poverty rate in 2021 increased by 1.4 percentage points for those sixty-five and older. While in the meantime, combined with rising interest rates, the income needed to become a first-time homebuyer has nearly doubled, according to the National Housing Conference.

Understanding poverty as a direct correlation to homelessness in America and, likewise important, our community requires looking at evidence-based numerical values and the living conditions of the individuals that the government deems to be poor.



Individuals living in poverty are less likely to have access to health care, healthy food, stable housing, and opportunities for physical activity. Through the 2023 RHA five Year plan, RHA is committed to providing solutions for affordable housing that is safe and accessible for all. *The mainstays of all our overarching bedrock goals are to:

1. Decrease the proportion of people living in poverty
2. Increase employment in working-age people
3. Reduce the proportion of families that spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing

THE TWELVE MILLION WORKING POOR

However, the statistics noted above and understanding poverty in US requires looking behind these numbers at the living conditions of the individuals the government deems to be poor. For most of us, the term “poverty” implies near destitution. It is the inability to provide food, clothing, and reasonable shelter for your family. But only a small number of the approximately 46 million persons classified as “poor” by the Census Bureau fit that description.

For example, a family of four living below the poverty line, with a family income of less than \$46,000 annually, represents one in every three people. The poverty line is what it means to be classified as the ‘working poor.’ Working poverty has increased dramatically over the last three decades. The pandemic had made this crisis even more acute, as millions of low-income renters were put out of work and at risk of eviction.

6.8 MILLION MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS ARE NEEDED FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

While a large number of that 100 million living at or below 200 percent of the poverty line are children and seniors, over 12 million are full-time workers between the ages of 25 and 64. Of these full-time workers earning less than 200 percent of poverty, 56 percent are workers of color. Working poverty has increased dramatically over the last three decades, from less than 7 million in 1980 to today’s 137.9 million. Today, it is still hovering around 11 to 13%, which is demographic dependent, while in Winnebago County, Illinois, 14.6% live in poverty compared to the national average. “I Believe that everyone can effectively advocate for housing programs with our Members of Congress, and other policymakers at the State, County, and City level,” reflects Ms. Snyder. “RHA will continue to lead efforts to advance fair, affordable housing and other important regulations, affirmatively furthering our work under the New Move to Work Initiative in conjunction with HUD. In October, RHA provided a public participation process that included publishing a notice to hold a hearing regarding the MTW Plan and application package. The hearing discussed the RHA Cohort MTW Plan and Building Initiatives and invited the public to comment. The need for affordable housing continues to grow. To meet the needs of low-income families, we need 6.8 million affordable housing units added to the current supply.” The severe shortage of affordable homes for the lowest-income renters is systemic, affecting every state and metropolitan area. The Rockford Housing Authority’s ongoing mission is that a quality home life provides hope and the pathway to goals. Responsible and respectful people deserve the opportunity to contribute to attaining a comfortable quality home and a neighborhood all can have pride in—a place to call home.

NOTE TO READERS: The U.S. Census Bureau which provides the data and publishes estimates on income and poverty in this article. To Learn More, download the complete PDF “Poverty in the United States: 2021” at RHA Links & Resources: <https://rockfordha.org/contact-us/resources/>





Rockford Housing Authority
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Rockford, IL 61102

DID YOU KNOW!

THE LIFEFORCE DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE CURRICULUM
Classes for the next LDI Semester will start on January 9th, 2023!
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/>



HOLIDAY HOURS!

We will be closed for the holidays on Dec 23, 26 and 30.

We want to wish you a Happy Holidays from everyone at RHA!

