

The RHA IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2022
SEPTEMBER



CONGRATULATIONS TO LAURA HOWELL, JOB PLUS PROGRAM MANAGER

Congratulations to Laura Howell on her new promotion of Jobs Plus Program Manager. "I have recently accepted the role of the Jobs Plus Manager. I joined Rockford Housing Authority in January of 2022 as an Employment Specialist for the Jobs Plus Program." Laura has 10+ years of experience in the human services field. For the last few years, she has worked in our local workforce development system alongside persons with disabilities and low-income populations to achieve their self-sufficiency goals. Laura states "I have worked with individuals from all walks of life."

"My goal/mission has always been to provide individuals with barriers with the resources needed to succeed. I am passionate about serving my community and being an advocate for individuals in need."

The Jobs Plus Initiative is a free initiative aimed to help residents gain higher wages and increase their income without increasing their rent – with the goal of reaching a self-sufficient living wage. The initiative will provide an employment specialist that will work one-on-one to help residents reach their employment goals. In addition, the Employment Specialist will be able to provide: Employment counseling, employer linkages, job placement, and access to FREE education and training dollars for advancing their education. Those participating in the Jobs Plus initiative also have the opportunity to join in JPEID (Jobs plus earned income disallowance), which allows them to keep their earnings without increasing their rent to assist residents with other financial needs.

Everyone at the Rockford Housing Authority could not be more excited to see what the future holds for the Jobs Plus Program and for Mrs. Laura Howell.



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THE STRONG FAMILIES “BACK TO SCHOOL FASHION FUN IN THE SUN” 2022 ANNUAL EVENT!

Folks came full of energy and dressed in some of the best summer outfits, with positive vibes to win cash and door prizes at the event held on August 12th.

Hosted as part of The HUD Strong Families Initiative, by The Rockford Housing Authority, the day also included, a Job Resource Fair hosted by the RHA Leadership Team and the Human Services Specialists. “Behind every child who is confident, self-assured, and resilient is a parent who believed and encouraged them first,” states, Carandus Brown, RHA Human Services Manager.

Our continued mission is to strengthen, empower and improve the quality of life of families living in HUD assisted housing communities by providing access to a variety of services through a strategic collaborative approach in the areas of health, education, and economic empowerment.

By working with our community partners and organizations, The RHA Human Services Team can facilitate effective and sustainable engagements focused on strengthening and empowering families. By providing resources, knowledge, contacts, and guidance RHA can collectively and positively impact the Rockford community and neighborhood challenges.



THE HUD STRONG FAMILIES' INITIATIVE

Over 22,000 fathers, mothers, children and partnering organizations have participated and provided services and resources. There have been over 1200 events held at more than 400 HUD assisted housing communities since its inception in 2011.

Learn More at: <https://www.hud.gov/strongfamilies>



NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

From September 15 to October 15, National Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated. The month traditionally honors the cultures and contributions of both Hispanic and Latino Americans and all heritage rooted in all Latin American Countries.

Hispanic refers to a person from, or a descendant of someone from, a Spanish-speaking country.

Latino/a or *Latinx* refers to a person from, or a descendant of someone from, a country in Latin America.

Hispanic Heritage Month began in June of 1968 and was only celebrated for a week. California Congressman George E. Brown first introduced it. The push to recognize the contributions of the Latinx community had gained more popularity in the 1960s when the civil rights movement was at its peak, and there was awareness spreading across the nation, of the United States' multicultural identities.

On September 17, 1968, Congress passed Public Law 90-48, officially authorizing and requesting the Presidents to issue annual proclamations, then declaring September 15th and 16th to mark the beginning of the National Hispanic Heritage Week. The timing of the month coincides with the Independence Day celebrations of several Latin American Nations.

From 1968 until 1988, presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan issued the yearly proclamations, setting aside a week to honor Hispanic Americans. Then in 1987, U.S. Rep Esteban E. Torres of California proposed expanding the observance to cover its current 31-day period. The bill was passed on August 17, 1988, and on September 14, 1989, President George H.W. Bush became the first president to declare the 31 days from September 15 to October 15 as National Hispanic Heritage Month.

You can celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month by supporting local Hispanic businesses, researching the culture, and check out the YWCA La Voz Latina; "YWCA La Voz Latina maintains a strong focus on helping Latino/Hispanic families achieve self-sufficiency and become active and productive members of our community".

YWCA La Voz Latina offers a wide variety of services and programs for the Latino community in the northwestern counties of Illinois. The department maintains a strong focus on education for youth and adults, health promotion, and strong families." Visit their website here to view all the programs they offer:

<https://www.ywcanwil.org/la-voz-latina/>





DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

The winner of the July Director's Spotlight goes to Ms. Courtney Williams! Courtney currently performs the role of an Occupancy Specialist for our HCV (Housing Choice Voucher) department. Courtney's commitment to ensuring the team succeeds with all tasks, duties, and projects and her willingness to excel above and beyond daily tasks, especially when the workload is relentless, speaks to both her inner strengths and work ethic as an Occupancy Specialist.

Ms. Rosalind Gulley states, "Courtney could not believe her assigned workload when she first started the job, which was the process of stacks of recertifications every day from everyone's caseload until we got caught up. The task felt endless and lasted her about 3 – 4 months, which was a lot to handle & I know she felt like giving up. But she hung in there, not realizing her strength as an Occupancy Specialist. Her personality and honesty are a true blessing to be desired, and I admire her."

Courtney's respectful and caring nature toward all she may come into contact with exemplifies one of RHA's underlying core values, professionalism. With changes occurring spontaneously and with little to no warning, Courtney's ability to self-lead and safeguard our most valuable asset, our clients, is more valuable than ever. Here at RHA, we are truly thankful and fortunate to have Courtney as a committed team player and a team player who is passionate and intentional in providing only the best service to the families we serve.



PEER-TO-PEER

Ms. Rosalind Gulley's nomination for July 2022, Director's Spotlight, is an example of true leadership. She took the time to recognize the outstanding work being done by Ms. Courtney. Rosalind makes sure she brings encouragement & a smile to everyone, which always boosts our spirits, especially when it's needed the most. Her positive attitude & recognition of team members significantly impact the agency. Having Ms. Roz on the team makes all the difference!

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



NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

There is an average of 123 suicides each day in this country. It's the tenth leading cause of death in America — second leading for ages 25-34, and third leading for ages 15-24. In order to create awareness and strengthen the fight against suicide, the entire month of September is Suicide Prevention Month. This month is a time to raise awareness of this stigmatized, and often taboo, topic. People and organizations use this month to shift public perception, spread hope and share vital information to people affected by suicide. RHA's goal in this month and in this article is to shed light on the topic of mental health, and make sure the community knows of all the resources that are available to them.

Originally established in 1979 as a support group by family members of individuals diagnosed with mental illness, the National Alliance on Mental Illness is a United States-based organization that serves as a resource on this highly taboo topic. NAMI helps those affected by suicide, assists with sourcing effective treatment services, and raises awareness for educating others on its prevention. NAMI chooses a highlighted campaign; this year the highlight is "Together for Mental Health" campaign. The campaign encourages people to "bring their voices together to advocate for better mental health care." After years of advocacy and preparation, 988 is now available nationwide as the new number to contact for mental health, substance use and suicide crises — a simple, easy-to-remember way for people to get help. This new number will allow people to quickly connect with support during a crisis, 24/7, no matter where they live.



Mental health and suicidal thoughts can affect any individual, any age, any race, and any gender.

Individual Impact:

- 79% of all people who die by suicide are male.
- Although more women than men attempt suicide, men are nearly 4x more likely to die by suicide.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among people aged 10–34 and the 12th leading cause of death overall in the U.S.
- The overall suicide rate in the U.S. has increased by 35% since 1999.
- 46% of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental health condition.
- While nearly half of individuals who die by suicide have a diagnosed mental health condition, research shows that 90% may have experienced symptoms of a mental health condition.

Community Impact:

- Annual prevalence of serious thoughts of suicide, by U.S. demographic group:
 - 4.9% of all adults
 - 11.3% of young adults aged 18-25
 - 18.8% of high school students
 - 45% of lesbian, gay and bisexual high school students
- The highest rates of suicide in the U.S. are among American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic white communities.
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are 4x more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth.
- Transgender adults are nearly 9x more likely to attempt suicide than the general population.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for people held in local jails.

Data from CDC, NIMH and other select sources



A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The tragic event of 9/11 happened 21 years ago. What happened on that day shaped and changed The United States forever. The 9/11 Memorial & Museum will be having events and tributes for the victims and their families. “During this day, we will share the history and lessons learned with a new generation, teach them about the ongoing repercussions of the 9/11 attacks, and inspire the world with memories of our fortitude, strength, and resilience.”

Each year on the exact anniversary of 9/11, the families will gather at the Memorial Plaza in New York City to read aloud the names of the 2,983 men, women, and children whose lives were taken on that tragic day. In addition, the museum is also offering an “Anniversary in the Schools Webinar” that provides the chance for students and teachers worldwide to commemorate the 20th anniversary. The webinar is entirely free, and it will feature personal stories from the 9/11 family members, first responders, and a live chat where people can ask questions. <https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/anniversary-schools-webinar>



History

According to the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, “9/11” is shorthand for four coordinated terrorist attacks carried out by al-Qaeda, an Islamist extremist group, that occurred on the morning of September 11, 2001. Nineteen terrorists from al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airplanes, deliberately crashing two planes into the upper floors of the North and South Towers of the World Trade Center complex and a third plane into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. The Twin Towers ultimately collapsed because of the damage sustained from the impacts and the resulting fires. After learning about the other attacks, passengers on the fourth hijacked plane, Flight 93, fought back, and the plane was crashed into an empty field in western Pennsylvania about 20 minutes by air from Washington, D.C. The attacks killed 2,977 people from 93 nations: 2,753 people were killed in New York; 184 people were killed at the Pentagon and 40 people were killed on Flight 93.

Take the chance to learn about this day by reading an article, donating to the museum, or asking questions. We will never forget this day as a nation. <https://www.911memorial.org/>

COVID-19 UPDATE!

On August 11th, 2022, the CDC streamlined it’s COVID-19 guidance to help people better understand the risks and how to protect themselves and others, and what actions to take test positive for the virus. COVID-19 continues to circulate the community and globally, but with the many tools available for us to reduce the severity of COVID-19 (vaccines, testing, and masks) there is less of a risk of hospitalization compared to earlier in the pandemic’s upbringing.



“We’re in a stronger place today as a nation, with more tools—like vaccination, boosters, and treatments—to protect ourselves, and our communities, from severe illness from COVID-19,” said Greta Massetti, PhD, MPH, MMWR author. “We also have a better understanding of how to protect people from being exposed to the virus, like wearing high-quality masks, testing, and improved ventilation. This guidance acknowledges that the pandemic is not over, but also helps us move to a point where COVID-19 no longer severely disrupts our daily lives.”

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In support of this update CDC is:

- Continuing to promote the importance of being up to date with vaccination to protect people against serious illness, hospitalization, and death. Protection provided by the current vaccine against symptomatic infection and transmission is less than that against severe disease and diminishes over time, especially against the currently circulating variants. For this reason, it is important to stay up to date, especially as new vaccines become available.
- Updating its guidance for people who are not up to date on COVID-19 vaccines on what to do if exposed to someone with COVID-19. This is consistent with the existing guidance for people who are up to date on COVID-19 vaccines.
- Emphasizing that physical distance is just one component of how to protect yourself and others. It is important to consider the risk in a particular setting, including local COVID-19 Community Levels and the important role of ventilation, when assessing the need to maintain physical distance.

What to do if you are exposed or test positive:

- Recommending that instead of quarantining if you were exposed to COVID-19, you wear a high-quality mask for 10 days and get tested on day 5.
- Reiterating that regardless of vaccination status, you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19.
 - o You should also isolate if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have test results.
 - If your results are positive, follow CDC's full isolation recommendations.
 - If your results are negative, you can end your isolation.
- Recommending that if you test positive for COVID-19, you stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home. You are likely most infectious during these first 5 days. Wear a high-quality mask when you must be around others at home and in public.
 - o If after 5 days you are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication, and your symptoms are improving, or you never had symptoms, you may end isolation after day 5.
 - o Regardless of when you end isolation, avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19 until at least day 11.
 - o You should wear a high-quality mask through day 10.

Winnebago Health Department Update

Winnebago County is now at High Community level.

- Wear A Mask while in public indoor settings, regardless of your vaccination status
- Avoid Crowded Indoor Settings.
- Stay Up-To-Date on your vaccinations: it is important to get your COVID-19 vaccination and your eligible booster shots
- Know Your Risk and Plan Ahead. For those who are at higher risk of getting really sick from COVID-19, talk to your healthcare provider about
 - o if you need to wear a mask or a respirator in public indoor settings
 - o treatment available through your healthcare provider or test-to-treat locations if you do test positive for COVID-19

Test Positive, Get Treatment

Paxlovid Treatment For COVID-19, Now at WCHD - Click here to register for Paxlovid Treatment if you have COVID-19.

- Talk with your healthcare provider as soon as possible to see if you are eligible for one of the COVID-19 treatment
 - o You can also find a Test to Treat Site and get treatment where you get tested.
- You must start treatment within a few days after symptoms start, so do not wait, contact your healthcare provider or go to a Test to Treat Site promptly.

For more information on COVID-19 please visit: <https://rockfordha.org/calendar/covid-19-resources/>



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DID YOU KNOW?

Rockford Housing Authority and Project First Rate are excited to announce that we will be hosting The Women at Work Convention!

Registration will be needed to attend the event, and it is open to all RHA residents and Rockford community members. The convention will be in late fall and in person featuring “Tradespeople of Color and Construction Entrepreneurs.” The Women at Work Trade Convention is an opportunity to learn from women in the trades such as construction, painting, and electricians and to look at the Apprentice Trainee Positions available. The trades industry is a male-dominated career, but many women still manage, work, and love these jobs. This trade convention is a time to explore jobs that many women don’t think about strictly because they don’t know about them. Registration will be open soon, and we hope you join our presenters and us!



*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.*