

The RHA

# IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2023

AUGUST

**Register for The Lifeforce Development Institute!**



LDI is open for registration! LDI is designed to meet the needs of job seekers, employees, and employers and is a 12-week hands-on learning program. Classes are now back in-person, but LDI offers online learning for certain circumstances. The program covers Job/Career Readiness Skills and meeting the community's workforce goals.

The expected outcome of the LDI graduates includes employment, a certificate of Workforce readiness, a professional development mentor, and continuous educational training. The enrollment process is simple; apply, interview for the program, and sign a participation agreement.

"I enrolled to change my future. Joining LDI would be the best option out of any option to learn how to be professional. I am going to keep pushing to give my children the best future, just like I imaged." – Past LDI Graduate, Abria Mathis.

"I joined LDI because before the class I didn't have very much hope left or anything to look forward to. I learned a lot from my classmates and instructors. LDI helps you find a career suited for you personally." - Past LDI Graduate, Lori Tresemer

"I was looking for more skills to add to my resume to bring me forward. We all had so much fun while learning and they never gave up on me, they saw something in me that I didn't see in myself." - Past LDI Graduate & RHA Jobs Plus Administrative Assistant, Breanna Bailey

Register today at:  
<https://launchmyfuture.com/registration/>



**One of RHA's Ten Core Values: 'Understanding'**

*Laura Snyder, CEO, Page 14*

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# Landlord Information

## Landlords!! We have some incentives for you!

### New Landlord Incentives:

- RHA will offer a one-time payment of up to \$1,000 or equal to one month's rent whichever is lesser to landlords who are new to the Housing Choice Voucher.
- New Landlords includes an additional \$250 per additional unit, up to five units.

### Existing Landlord Incentives:

- RHA will offer a \$500 payment to existing landlords who lease a unit to a HCV participant. The incentive doesn't apply to those who transfer new units owned by the same landlord.
- Legacy Landlords include an additional \$500 per unit for up to five units per year.

### Limited Damage Claims:

- RHA will offer a one-time payment, not to exceed one month's contract rent or \$1,000 to the landlord where an HCV participants tenancy ends and there is a tenant caused damage to the unit that exceeds the security deposit collected by the owner.

## The RHA HCV Landlord Program

The Rockford Housing Authorities' Housing Choice Voucher Program provides rental assistance for very low and low-income households. Rental assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual participants to private landlords. Program participants are responsible for choosing the type of housing they feel best suits their household. They can select a single-family home, townhouse, or an apartment.

Once the participant has chosen their housing unit and the landlord is willing to accept the housing voucher towards the payment of rent, the housing authority will inspect it to assure that it meets the federal minimum housing quality standards and any local building codes. All rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety.

A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by RHA on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount by the program.

Stay tuned for the next Landlord Lunch and Learn and if you are interested in becoming a Landlord, visit: <https://rockfordha.org/housing/landlord-information/>





# National Nonprofit Day

On August 17th, we observe National Nonprofit Day. This is a day set aside to recognize the immense effort nonprofits and charities put into making an impact in their communities and across the globe. Nonprofit day started when the Tariff Act was signed into law on August 17th, 1894. It provides exclusions from the federal income tax levied on corporations for charitable organizations and charities. Despite changes over the years, the exemptions remain stable.



Sherita J. Herring, an author, and respected speaker launched National Nonprofit Day. Its goal was to educate and empower everyone to be the change we want to see in the world. Recognizing that there are individuals in our midst that require assistance is the first step toward positively changing our society. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there are 1.8 million registered organizations in the United States. These organizations play a vital role in community development by offering services such as food banks, affordable housing, medical care, legal counsel, and education.

As a Nonprofit agency, RHA would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that help our agency everyday to provide a safe and sufficient life for our residents.

Following one of the RHA's 10 core values, Caring, as part of the RHA corporate culture, is a practice for creating conditions that bring out the best in people and situations. It is a method that helps people respond to circumstances in ways that create what is possible. [To paraphrase John Quincy Adams, "your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more."](#)

RHA not only models our work through caring we have shown it by our actions in the community. RHA not only cares about providing safe and affordable homes, we care about building a safe and sustainable community. Rockford Housing Authority has promoted numerous events for the betterment of the community and will continue to do so with strategic community partners.

## HOW TO OBSERVE NATIONAL NONPROFIT DAY

### 1. Research your community's needs.

Determine what is needed in your neighborhood and how you might help to improve things. It might be as simple as beginning a project or spending your time in a local business.

### 2. Volunteer

You may help out at a local food bank or homeless shelter by volunteering. Many nonprofit groups operate on a shoestring budget and would be delighted to receive free assistance.

### 3. Raise awareness

Contribute to the efforts of nonprofits around you by posting on social media to raise awareness. You can also start a blog to showcase the charity or nonprofit to the world.





# Celebrating Black Owned Business Month

Black Business Month is celebrated in August and it's a time to acknowledge and appreciate black-owned businesses across the nation and all that they represent in the country's continual striving for diversity and equality. Denise Moore, CEO of the Black Business Alliance in Peoria, Illinois, has this to say about the importance of Black Business month: "Black Business Month is exciting because it gives us an opportunity to focus on a community that is far too often underrepresented when it comes to access to capital and opportunities to build wealth."

From tech startups to family-run restaurants, this observance is an opportunity to show support for businesses that have been historically underrepresented in the marketplace. Whether you are looking for new products or services, now is the perfect time to discover amazing black-owned businesses and help them thrive!

A few black owned businesses in Rockford you can support for the month of August are:



**FAB Dance & Fitness Academy:** Offer weekly fitness classes along with the heels class including a baddie bootcamp class, get fine Fridays, and Zumba classes. Make sure to check them out on Facebook at FAB Dance and Fitness Academy.

**TNT Funnel Cakes:** Once you've smelled the sweet aroma of a funnel cake, nothing else will satisfy you until you eat one. Luckily, you'll have options with TNT Funnel Cakes. We fry funnel cakes from scratch in a wide variety of flavors for anyone to enjoy. Check out the delicious menu here TNT Funnel Cakes.



**Creative Juices:** Revitalize your health with Creative Juices Fresh, natural, & delivered. Cleanse. Reset. Restore. Check it out on Facebook at Creative Juices.

**KFACT:** Not for profit youth development and mentoring program established to alleviate opportunity gaps among. Give them a like! KFACT.



**Tastebud's by Jerk Bae da Chef:** There is a huge variety of meals that Jahzlyn prepares. Give them a follow-on Facebook: Tastesbuds.

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**Salon Works:** Salon Works is a one-stop salon & spa that caters to all your beauty needs. We believe in Real Beauty. Give them a like here: Salon Works

**Urban Intellectuals 815:** Urban helps provide a safe space for youth, Financial Literacy Classes, Early College Drives, and Mentoring all at no charge. Check them out: Urban Intellectuals 815



**Bloom Building Lives:** They believe in Entrepreneurship and is dedicated to helping our community by teaching, mentoring, empowering, and uplifting the next generational leaders of youth. Check them out here: Bloom Building Lives.

## The 815 Pizza Lady

**The Pizza Lady:** The best loaded pizzas in town! Grab a pizza tonight! The Pizza Lady.



## Voices of Inspiration

**Voices of Inspiration:** "Our Mission is to feed one person, one family, one neighborhood at a time." You can donate and learn more on Facebook: VOI.

**Ripe Life Juice Co.:** Creating a clean eating and healthy life in Rockford with fresh juices and fruit smoothies! Give them a like here: Ripe Life.





# Women's Equality Day

August 26th, 2023 is Women's Equality Day! Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day" in 1973. The date was selected to commemorate the 1920 certification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote and this year, 2023, marks the 103rd anniversary of the 19th Amendment.

In the early 19th century, American women, who generally couldn't inherit property and made half of a man's wages in any available jobs, began organizing to demand political rights and representation. In the U.S., the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was first introduced in 1878, but it failed to gain traction. To win the right to vote, women circulated countless petitions, gave speeches, published newspapers, and travelled the country to win support. They were frequently ridiculed, harassed and sometimes attacked by mobs and police; some were thrown in jail, and then treated brutally when they protested. Still they persevered.

It wasn't until women living during World War I, made their contributions painfully obvious that women's suffrage finally gained enough support. Women aren't done fighting for equal rights. Today, the wage gap between men and women still impacts women's economic power, and gender-based discrimination is still common in the workplace.

Women's Equality Day is all about uplifting and empowering women, and marveling at how far women have progressed, defying all odds and oppression. RHA knows the value of having women on our team. Laura Snyder, RHA CEO is the first woman to hold this title since the inception of the housing authority. RHA is also proud to have leadership with Odessa Walker, COO, Jana Janes, Finance Director, eight woman managers and also, our Board Members; Jessica Wilson, Vice Chairman, Anisha Grimmer, Commissioner, and NeAngela Dixon, Commissioner.

This Women's Equality Day, learn more about the history of Women's equality, acknowledge the women role models in your life, and learn more about what inequality's they went through and how they overcame it. RHA wishes you an insightful and empowering Women's Equality Day.

**WOMEN'S EQUALITY  
DAY 2023**  
Accelerating  
Equality & Empowerment



## Celebrate Labor Day!

Labor Day is celebrated on September 5th this year and pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of the American worker. The labor movement created Labor Day in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894. It has been celebrated on the first Monday in September since. It symbolizes the end of summer for many Americans and is celebrated with parties and a day off of work.

Labor Day is an annual celebration of workers and their achievements. In the late 1800s, at the top of the Industrial Revolution in the US, the average person living in America worked a 12-hour day for seven days. Children as young as 5 or 6 also worked in mills, factories, and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult wages. Labor unions grew more popular and vocal in the 18th century and began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor working conditions and wages.





The idea of the “Workingmen’s holiday” celebrated on the first Monday in September caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. However, Congress legalized the holiday 12 years later when strikes and boycotts became more prominent than ever.

The first Labor Day celebration was held on Tuesday, September 5th, 1882, in New York City. Labor Day celebrations have a theme of parades, picnics, barbecues, fireworks, and/or a nice relaxing day off work. “The nation pays tribute on Labor Day to the creator of so much of the nation’s strength, freedom, and leadership – the American worker.” – U.S Department of Labor.

The Rockford Housing Authority would like to take the time to thank all of the RHA staff for keeping a positive attitude in all endeavors, for helping residents and the community be the best they can be, and for continuing to keep RHA running smoothly. Thank you for all your contributions to our organization and the community. Enjoy your well-deserved day off.

Happy Labor Day everyone, you all deserve it!

## Back to School 2023

*Did you know that Rockford Housing Authority provides homes to 2,486 children? Children comprise almost fifty percent of the residents we serve! It's almost time to get back in class for the 2023 semester of school! Here is a list of important dates for RPS 205 and Rock Valley College:*

### RPS 205

#### REGISTRATION DATES:

August 16: 7:00 AM-3:00 PM

August 17: 10:00-AM-6:00 PM



#### PHYSICALS:

*Students need a health exam/physical within one year of starting kindergarten, sixth grade and ninth grade -- or when entering an Illinois school system for the first time. All other high school students need a sport physical if they plan to participate in sports. Sports physicals are good for 13 months and do not replace the required ninth grade physical. Completed physical paperwork can be included in registration packets.*

#### Fist Day of School:

August 31st 2023

Visit the RPS 205 website for more important dates and student information here:  
<https://www.rps205.com/>



### Rock Valley College

#### Fall Registration:

Registration Opens: August 2nd 2023, 1:00 PM – 11:59 PM

Last Day to register: August 18, 2023

#### Registration & Financial Aid Night:

Wednesday, August 2, 2023. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

- Academic Advisors will be available to help you get registered for classes. Financial Aid staff will be present to help answer questions and give you personalized, confidential assistance.

Follow this link to apply now and see other important dates and student information:

<https://www.rockvalleycollege.edu/Admission/apply.cfm>

Rock  
Valley  
College





# EMBRACING COMMUNITY PRIDE

## Rockford Housing Authority's Belief in the Importance of Rockford Day and Supporting 815 Day



Community celebrations play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging, pride, and unity among residents. In Rockford, an annual event known as Rockford Day holds immense significance. The Rockford Housing Authority recognizes the importance of this celebration and actively supports the initiative to highlight the unique aspects of the city and promote community engagement. In this blog post, we will delve into why the RHA believes in the significance of Rockford

Day and supporting the 815 community. "Rockford Day is an incredible opportunity for our community to come together and celebrate what makes Rockford truly special. It's a time to showcase our vibrant culture, rich history, and the remarkable achievements of our residents. The Rockford Housing Authority is proud to actively support Rockford Day as we believe it fosters a sense of unity, pride, and community engagement among our residents." - Laura Snyder, RHA CEO.

### Fostering Community Solidarity

RHA understands that a thriving community is built on a foundation of unity and solidarity. Rockford Day offers an exceptional opportunity for residents to come together, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances, and celebrate what makes Rockford special. By actively participating in Rockford Day, RHA promotes a sense of community pride, strengthens bonds between neighbors, and encourages collaboration among residents.

### Showcasing Local Strengths

Rockford is a city brimming with rich history, cultural diversity, and a vibrant arts scene. Rockford Day serves as a platform to showcase these local strengths, highlighting the city's people, places, and accomplishments. We believe that celebrating Rockford's unique qualities contributes to a positive perception of our city, both internally among its residents and externally for potential visitors, investors, and businesses.

### Amplifying the Unique Qualities of Rockford

Rockford is more than just a city; it's a tapestry of diverse cultures, rich history, and unique attractions. Rockford Day allows our community to shine a spotlight on these special qualities. By highlighting the people, places, and achievements that make Rockford exceptional, RHA reinforces a positive image of the city, both within the community and to the outside world. Rockford Day serves as a reminder that Rockford is a vibrant and dynamic city worth celebrating.

Rockford Housing Authority envisions a future where Rockford residents, regardless of their background or circumstances, can thrive in a supportive



and vibrant community. Rockford Day aligns perfectly with this vision by creating an atmosphere of celebration, unity, and pride.

### **Economic Development and Support for Local Businesses**

Rockford Day presents an excellent opportunity to support local businesses and organizations. RHA recognizes the significance of economic development and the positive impact it has on the community. By encouraging local businesses, agencies, and nonprofits to offer Rockford Day-themed specials, discounts, and events, which helps stimulate the local economy, promote entrepreneurship, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents.

RHA recognizes that a thriving local economy is essential for community well-being. By doing so, it contributes to the economic growth of the city, creates employment opportunities, and fosters an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish.

### **Empowering Residents in our Community**

“Rockford Day serves as a powerful reminder that our community is defined not only by its challenges but also by its resilience, creativity, and strong community spirit. By actively participating in Rockford Day, we empower our residents to be ambassadors for our city, amplifying the positive aspects and fostering a deeper sense of belonging. At RHA, we see Rockford Day as an opportunity to strengthen community bonds and inspire positive change,” states Laura Snyder, RHA CEO. RHA firmly believes in empowering residents and providing them with opportunities to actively participate in shaping their community. Rockford Day encourages residents to take pride in their city and actively engage in various events and activities. By wearing Rockford-

specific apparel, sharing photos on social media, and using the designated hashtags, residents become ambassadors for Rockford, amplifying the community’s strengths and fostering a positive image.

### **Strengthening Community-Service Connections**

Community engagement and service are integral to the RHA’s mission. Rockford Day offers a unique platform to strengthen connections between the housing authority staff, residents, and other local community organizations. By actively participating in Rockford Day events and collaborating with various stakeholders, RHA can further its commitment to community service and support initiatives that enhance the overall well-being of Rockford residents.

### **RHA’s Mission of Building Strong Communities and Empowering Residents**

Reflecting Ms. Snyder concludes, “Supporting Rockford Day aligns with the RHA’s mission of building strong communities and empowering RHA residents. It’s not just about celebrating a single day; it’s about recognizing the importance of community pride, economic development, and collaboration year-round. Through our involvement in Rockford Day, we aim to enhance the quality of life for our residents, support local businesses, and foster a sense of unity that strengthens the fabric of our community.”





# About Rockford, 815 Day, and Ways to Participate in the Fun



Rockford Day is just around the corner, and the excitement in the Forest City is palpable. The city officials recently unveiled the details for this year's celebration, promising a day filled with festivities and community pride. Mark your calendars for Tuesday, August 15, 2023, because that's when Rockford Day will be in full swing. Why is Rockford Day held on August 15th? It's a nod to the 815-area code, which has become synonymous with Rockford. It's a day when the entire community comes together, including those with the 779-area code. On Rockford Day, area codes become mere numbers, and the collective spirit of the Forest City shines brightly.

The celebration will kick off in style, with Mayor Tom McNamara leading the way. At 8:15 a.m., he will grace the Miracle Mile with a proclamation reading, setting the tone for a day filled with joy and camaraderie. From there, the city will come alive with numerous events, ensuring there's something for everyone to enjoy.

One highlight of Rockford Day will be the lunchtime event on First Street between State and Market streets. Picture this: live music resonating through the air, enticing food trucks offering delicious culinary delights, and a vibrant atmosphere brimming with excitement. It's the perfect opportunity to mingle with fellow community members.

But the fun doesn't stop there! Families will find their slice of enjoyment near Davis Park, where a delightful family fun event awaits. Face painting, lively music, and giveaways will create an atmosphere of laughter and delight. The little ones will be captivated, and adults will rediscover the joy of childlike wonder.

For nature enthusiasts, the Nicholas Conservatory is the place to be. Immerse yourself in special games and activities tailored to celebrate the beauty of Rockford's natural surroundings. Learn about local flora and fauna, participate in interactive exhibits, and experience the serenity that nature offers.

And let's not forget about the Sounds of Summer concert at Sinnissippi Park. It's the perfect way to conclude a day filled with delight. As the sun begins to set, gather with friends and neighbors on the park's lush green lawn, and enjoy the music. From private enterprises to public institutions, everyone has a role to play in making Rockford Day a resounding success.

So, Rockford residents, it's time to dig deep into your wardrobes and pull out your Rockford-specific apparel. Let your pride be visible, and let the world know that you're a part of this incredible community. Capture the essence of the day in photos and share them on social media, using the hashtags #RockfordDay2023 or #815Day2023. By doing so, you become a storyteller, sharing the vibrancy and uniqueness of Rockford with the world.



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"Rockford Day embodies the true spirit of our community, where residents come together to showcase the essence of Rockford and celebrate what makes us truly special. It's a day to embrace our unique strengths, foster unity, and highlight the collective achievements of our residents. As CEO of the Rockford Housing Authority, I am proud to

support Rockford Day, as it reinforces the sense of community pride, economic development, and collaboration that is essential for our city's growth and prosperity." - Laura Snyder, CEO of Rockford Housing Authority.

*"It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing."*

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS InFocus**

**CRUSADER COMMUNITY Health**

Each year, almost 60,000 individuals receive top-quality medical, dental and behavioral health services. Many of these individuals might otherwise have little or no access to any healthcare.

Crusader Community Health serves the Rock River Valley area with quality primary health care for all people in need.

## RHA's Collaborative Approach: Ensuring Accessible Healthcare for All Residents in Partnership with Crusader Community Health

The Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) is deeply committed to serving its residents by ensuring accessible healthcare for all individuals, including those with mobility impairments. "Our collaboration with Crusader Community Health is a testament to our dedication to creating an inclusive healthcare environment. By removing barriers and improving accessibility, we strive to ensure that every resident, regardless of their abilities, can access the healthcare they need and deserve," reflects, Laura Snyder, CEO. By joining forces with Crusader Community Health, a primary healthcare provider serving the Rock River Valley area, RHA is working tirelessly to eliminate barriers and improve healthcare access for its residents.

### Partnership for Accessible Healthcare

Recognizing the challenges faced by residents with mobility impairments, RHA has formed a strategic partnership with Crusader Community Health. Together, we strive to enhance healthcare services and bridge the gap that often exists for individuals with disabilities.

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"Improving healthcare access for residents with disabilities is at the core of RHA's mission. Our collaboration with Crusader Community Health allows us to create a healthcare system that is inclusive, patient-centered, and responsive to the unique needs of our community. Together, we strive to make a positive impact on the health and well-being of our residents," states Odessa Walker, COO. This collaboration focuses on creating an inclusive and accessible healthcare environment, catering to the unique needs of RHA's residents.

### Improving Accessibility

RHA and Crusader Community Health are dedicated to improving accessibility within healthcare facilities. Through joint efforts, they undertake physical modifications to ensure medical clinics and offices are fully accessible to individuals with mobility impairments. This includes installing ramps, elevators, and making adjustments to entrances, exam rooms, and other areas. By removing architectural barriers, residents can navigate healthcare facilities with ease and dignity.

### Promoting Comprehensive Primary Care

With Crusader Community Health's expertise in primary healthcare services, RHA can provide comprehensive care to its residents. Laura Snyder, "This partnership enables residents to access a wide range of primary healthcare services, including preventive care, chronic disease management, and specialized treatments. By addressing the diverse healthcare needs of its residents, RHA and Crusader Community Health are committed to improving overall health outcomes and quality of life."

Empowering Residents through Education



Odessa remarks, "As COO of RHA, I am proud to witness the positive outcomes of our partnership with Crusader Community Health. By combining our resources and expertise, we are able to provide a comprehensive range of healthcare services to our residents. This collaboration enables us to foster a healthier community, where every individual can thrive and access the care, they need to lead fulfilling lives." RHA recognizes the importance of empowering residents with the knowledge and resources necessary to make informed healthcare decisions. In collaboration with Crusader Community Health, RHA provides education and informational materials to residents with disabilities. Workshops and training sessions are organized to enhance health literacy, promote preventive care, and equip residents with the tools they need to actively engage in their own healthcare journey. "The partnership between RHA and Crusader Community Health embodies our mission of eliminating disparities in healthcare. Through education, resources, and a patient-centered approach, we empower our residents to take control of their health while promoting a community that values equity, compassion, and dignity in healthcare," observes Ms. Snyder.

### A Holistic and Patient-Centered Approach

Both RHA and Crusader Community Health adopt a holistic and patient-centered approach to healthcare. They prioritize affordability, accessibility, and high-quality care while ensuring that residents are treated with dignity, compassion, and cultural sensitivity. Ms. Odessa



explains, "Our partnership with Crusader Community Health reflects RHA's commitment to providing comprehensive and accessible holistic healthcare services to our residents." By working hand in hand, RHA and Crusader Community Health create an environment where residents' voices are heard, and their unique needs are met.

### **Collaboration through Partnership**

Through its collaboration with Crusader Community Health, the Rockford Housing Authority is making significant strides in ensuring accessible healthcare for all residents, particularly those with mobility impairments. To conclude, Laura states. "At RHA, we are proud to partner with Crusader Community Health in our shared commitment to ensuring accessible healthcare for all our residents. This partnership allows us to bridge the gap and provide quality medical services to individuals with mobility impairments, empowering them to lead healthier lives." This joint effort demonstrates RHA's unwavering commitment to serving its residents and championing equitable healthcare access for all.



### **Crusader Community Health Community Profile**

The Crusader Community Health organization serves the Rock River Valley area by providing primary healthcare services to all individuals in need. Their mission is to reach out with compassion and address the needs of underserved populations while striving to eliminate disparities in healthcare. Their commitment lies in creating a collaborative healthcare system that is patient-centered, affordable, accessible, and of high quality with dignity, compassion, and cultural sensitivity.

Crusader Community Health is accredited by the Joint Commission, which ensures that they meet rigorous standards of care and safety. They offer comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare services. They specialize in managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, hypertension, chronic lung disease, obesity, asthma, and HIV. All physicians at Crusader are American trained and board-certified or board-eligible in their respective primary care specialties. This ensures that patients receive high-quality professional care in a compassionate and patient-focused environment.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center, Crusader plays a crucial role in providing healthcare services to individuals who may otherwise have limited or no access to care. They serve nearly 60,000 individuals annually, including community residents from diverse backgrounds and walks of life.

Crusader Community Health operates under the Health Center Program and is granted under 42 U.S.C. 254b. They are also deemed Public Health Service employees under 42 U.S.C. 233(g)-(n), further demonstrating their commitment to serving the community and providing essential healthcare services. To learn more about Crusader Community Health:

<https://www.crusaderhealth.org/>





## One of RHA's Ten Core Values: 'Understanding'

Having worked and been in the public housing industry for over twenty-plus years, we are often described as “Housers.” Our business is the housing business. Having a home is something many of us take for granted; however, for the over 2,000 children we serve annually, having a home means so much more than having a roof over their heads. According to our kids, having a home is love, trust, safety, freedom, and a place to dream. It is no different for our seniors or our elderly. While some may interpret this as idealism or even optimism, it is one of the many goals that drive me. My acumen, or street savvy if you will, stems from the ability to learn to make quick (practical) decisions for the sake of resolving a crisis or navigating challenges which are driven by the need to create strategies, practices, and tools proven to be effective in resident-centered approaches to affordable housing.

I have often observed that optimism is contagious, but I have also learned that so is negativity. Therefore, the leadership role I take is a positive frame of mind to show and demonstrate to my Leadership Team that it is necessary to work problems in a time-critical and actual emergency environment with a constructive and positive framework.

I do not take my curator responsibilities lightly. All of the duties of care, loyalty, good faith, and confidentiality when serving the best interests of our residents, are always inherent in my decision-making. As the ‘guardian’, of our residents I and all my staff are tasked with ensuring that all matters related to the welfare of the residents are dealt with responsibly and in their best interests. This care can include such things as deciding where the residents will live, arranging for health care through one of our community partners, and providing workforce development.

Although, on the surface, one may think curator responsibilities are strictly financial, I am of the firm principle that it is also very people-centric. I have often observed that the duty of loyalty starts and pertains to always acting in the best interest of the ‘beneficiary,’ who are our residents, at all times, putting their well-being first and foremost. To exemplify and represent this supposition, the agency has reached a point where it will be investing not only to support the growth of affordable housing redevelopment but has developed a “clear path” for the change we’re going to achieve over the next five years and beyond with our scattered site initiative. These scattered sites include the acquisition, restoration, and refurbishing of homes that benefit our low- or moderate-income residents and at the same time, help eliminate specific conditions of blight or decay located in neighborhoods in areas of our community.



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And yes, understanding is a cornerstone among the ten core values of the Rockford Housing Authority, and it resonates deeply within me as the CEO. My years of experience have solidified my understanding of the profound significance a home holds for our residents. It drives our decision-making, leadership approach, and unwavering commitment to improving lives. Through our understanding, we craft strategies, foster positive mindsets, and deliver resident-centered solutions that address the unique needs and aspirations of those we serve.

Through our commitment to understanding, we foster a culture of empathy and compassion within the Rockford Housing Authority. We recognize that each resident comes with their own set of circumstances, challenges, and dreams. By truly understanding their individual needs, we can tailor our services and programs to provide the support they require to thrive. Our Jobs Plus Initiative and the Lifeforce Development Institute are prime examples of this kind of thinking and outcome.

Our understanding extends beyond the important immediate needs of our residents. We actively seek to comprehend the broader social, economic, and environmental factors that impact their lives. This holistic approach allows us to address systemic barriers and create sustainable solutions that empower our residents to break free from the cycle of poverty and achieve long-term stability.

Furthermore, our understanding drives us to build strong partnerships with community organizations, local businesses, and government agencies. By collaborating and sharing our knowledge and expertise, we can collectively work towards creating a community where everyone has access to safe, affordable housing and the necessary resources to succeed.

As the CEO, I am dedicated to cultivating a culture of continuous learning and growth within our organization. By encouraging open dialogue, embracing diverse perspectives, and fostering an environment of curiosity, we continually expand our understanding of the evolving needs of our residents and the ever-changing landscape of the public housing industry.

In conclusion, understanding is not just a value we uphold; it is the foundation upon which we build a better future for our residents. With understanding as our guiding principle, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing more than just housing—we aim to create communities that nurture love, trust, safety, and opportunity for all. Together, with our staff and community stakeholders, we will continue to pave the way for positive change and make a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve.

Regards,

Laura





Rockford Housing Authority  
223 S Winnebago Street  
Rockford, IL 61102

## Did you know?



**ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY**  
**FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 - 2028**

RHA has published The Five-Year Plan of the Rockford Housing Authority on our website!

The Plan, “Moving Forward Together,” consists of Seventeen Goals, seventeen strategic and foundational objectives, and Twenty-one initiatives, all aimed at creating a positive impact for residents and the community. Focusing on redefining resident success and prioritizes redevelopment, workforce education, partnerships, and external engagement in affordable housing.

The RHA aims to be efficient and effective in achieving these objectives. The agency recognizes that its people, including residents, staff, partners, parents, families, friends, and community members, are the driving force behind its success and pursuit of excellence.

Visit our website and learn more about the Five Year Plan here:  
<https://rockfordha.org/rha-5-year-strategic-plan/>

