

The RHA

IN FOCUS



Newsletter 2023
FEBRUARY

ODESSA WALKER GRADUATES FROM EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM!

RHA's Human Services Director, Odessa Walker, attended her graduation ceremony for completing Executive Leadership Program (EDEP). This program represents a major professional development opportunity for housing authority executives throughout the country. It takes a comprehensive look at those critical functions which serve to define the executive's position and provides a structured environment in which mid-career professionals can hone their management skills and enhance their knowledge. An overview of Executive Housing Management Issues is followed by nine special topic seminars. "This conference and certificate mean more than just completing a class. The certificate I earned this week is about the future of RHA and our residents, making sure that we have the correct information and best educational resources to better improve the lives of the Rockford Community," said Odessa Walker.



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THE RHA LEADERSHIP TEAM ATTENDS THE 2023 PHADA COMMISSIONERS CONFERENCE.



The RHA Leadership Team, CEO, and Board of Commissioners attended the 2023 Public Housing Authorities Directors Association Commissioners Conference on January 8th to January 11th. At the conference topics from how to run a successful board meeting to a closer look at RAD issues were discussed. "Some sessions included the latest on HUD's new physical inspections protocol (NSPIRE), new green energy funding some housing authorities may be able to secure, the Biden Administration's guidance on criminal records and tenant screening, and new Fair Market Rents that will hopefully help housing authorities lease up more Housing Choice Voucher units." States PHADA. For commissioners, there were sessions on hiring new executive directors, insurance, succession planning, and telework policies. In addition, other topics included repositioning strategies, and how board members can prepare their agencies for uncertainties in today's environment.

"Conferences like these are an amazing asset to Housing Authorities all over the country. Educating yourself and staying current with industry standards and gain new insight is the backbone of each housing authorities' mission and vision." Laura Snyder, RHA CEO.

About PHADA

The Association provides its members with important information, professional development, and advocacy to help them administer adequate, safe housing for those in need across America. PHADA also works closely with members of Congress in efforts to develop sensible and effective public housing statutes and obtain adequate funding for low-income housing programs, in addition to advocating before the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on a variety of regulations governing public housing nationwide. PHADA's Commissioners' Conference provides the opportunity for over 600 housing authority executive directors, commissioners and staff to meet face to face with their peers to discuss current critical industry issues. The conference includes three days of engaging education sessions and ample networking opportunities.

For over 40 years, PHADA has been recognized the industry leader for its analysis and its advocacy. We represent our members' voice, uniquely and forcefully, advocating before Congress and HUD to make significant impacts on both the national and local levels.



Ethnic Equality Month 2023

Ethnic Equality Month is celebrated in February every year. It is a period to recognize the similarities all people have, yet acknowledge, appreciate and respect the differences in all of us. So, no matter what race you are, or what ethnicity you belong to, everyone is equal and deserves equal rights and equal opportunities. It brings to light the unfortunate biases that still exist in our society, how far we've come in achieving equality, and what each one of us can do to contribute to something the world should be striving to achieve; social equality and justice.

Ethnic diversity means people have been socialized through different customs, beliefs, traditions, languages, and experiences so it shapes the way they feel and behave. Leveraging these diverse perspectives makes the World a more dynamic place. At RHA, we employ a wide range of diversity, including different age, gender, and race. The RHA staff comes from all different backgrounds; 43.4% white, 36.8% black, 10.5% two or more races, 2.6% Hispanic, and 1.3% other. Our diversity and individual perspectives among the RHA staff, adds to the support that we service to our residents and clients.

Ethnic Equality Month is important for many different reasons;

1. It shows how similar we are

No matter what race or ethnicity you belong to, Ethnic Equality Month shows that we all have the same genetic material. There are differences but they are to be appreciated.

2. It helps to educate the younger generation

Without months like these, the younger generation might not fully get to grasp how important these topics are. Observing months like these helps to keep everyone educated.

3. It helps people learn

We learn new things just about every day, by learning about other races or ethnicities helps not only your perspective on others grow, but also helps you learn more about yourself and your unique ethnicity.

WORKING HAND IN HAND WITH OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Considering the national, state, and local government's role in many aspects that influence our community, it is not surprising that there are many different views and voices. To better our community, the necessity of working together with community partners who directly represent the needs of residents and constituents is very important. When we strategically partner with community groups, we all achieve a higher degree of success.

Speaking with one community voice allows us to share our experiences with the Rockford Community, who hear different unfounded views and subjective opinions. Together, we can dispel many myths and confusion.

I have encouraged my leadership team to be engaged in our associations of community partnerships. The power of working with advocacy organizations has been proven. Only through active involvement with our relationships and effective partnerships will we be able to leverage the collective voice of the resource community for our residents and successfully advocate for our priorities and the priorities of the residents and families we serve. In 2023 we will continue to work diligently, hand in glove with government officials and the community at large, to fulfill the new Move to Work designation of the Rockford Housing Authority by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD.)

The Move to Work (MTW) designation will provide the opportunity for additional partners who will work conjointly to help us increase access to care, boost opportunities for resident employment, and improve the quality of resident services. The MTW Operational Plan is a multi-year undertaking, which is monumental, that had input from a wide variety of stakeholders. This MTW designation also gives us access to more potent advocacy tools to leverage the collective voice of the RHA resident.

HUD's MTW unique policies and provisions of fiscal flexibility will help our low-income households move to opportunity-rich neighborhoods. The policy and programs adopted through MTW include changes to the tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and policies that increase the affordable housing supply in community opportunity neighborhoods through the project-based voucher (PBV) program.

The RHA teams are highly motivated to continue the work of realizing our collective strategic vision by embodying our core values, including teamwork, decency and fairness, collaborative decision-making, and valuing diversity in the service to the mission of RHA.

An aspect of the job that I have as CEO is appreciating working with teams of professionals who are dedicated to serving our residents. No leader accomplishes anything alone, and so many people are involved in the genuinely transformative achievements that directly affect our community.

The reality is that as affordable home providers of front-line resident care, RHA has the unique ability to play a crucial role in the overall health and well-being of many citizens in Rockford.

Black History Month 2023

Black History Month is celebrated each year throughout the month of February. The month is a time to celebrate achievements made by African Americans and a time to recognize their integral role in U.S. history. The journey of Black History Month began in 1915, half a century after the abolition of slavery in the United States. That September, the Harvard-trained historian Carter G. Woodson and the prominent minister Jesse E. Moorland founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), an organization dedicated to researching and promoting achievements by Black Americans and other peoples of African descent.

Known today as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the group sponsored a national Negro History week in 1926, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize local celebrations, establish history clubs and host performances and lectures.

Since 1976, every American president has designated February as Black History Month and endorsed a specific theme.

The Black History Month 2023 theme, “Black Resistance,” explores how “African Americans have resisted historic and ongoing oppression, in all forms, especially the racial terrorism of lynching, racial pogroms and police killings,” since the nation’s earliest days.

At RHA we serve a wide range of residents with different races, ages, and backgrounds. The percentage of Black residents we serve is 54% with 22% being male and female children, and 3% being elderly residents.

HOW TO OBSERVE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

1. Support a Black Owned Business

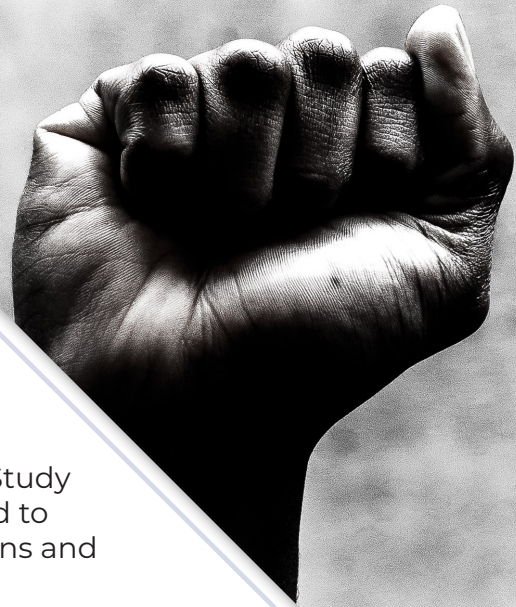
There are thousands of talented black businessowners in the world, go out and support them! Supporting a business doesn’t mean only buying products or services from them, it could be as simple as sharing a post on your story or to your Facebook feed, or even something as small as liking a couple posts on social media!

2. Visit a museum

History comes alive in a nation’s museums, and many of these institutions have events, conferences, and celebrations surrounding Black History Month and some of these events may land on free admission days! Get out there and see first-hand the American nation’s collective historical treasures. Follow this link to see Black History Museum Exhibits here: <https://www.enjoyillinois.com/travel-illinois/african-american-exhibits-and-events-illinois/>

3. Read, read, and read some more

Libraries and bookstores — not to mention online repositories and booksellers — are positively overflowing with amazing works of Black literature, history, and biography. Find a book about a piece of Black history that you were previously unaware of and get educated.



THE THIRD ANNUAL WOMEN OF INFLUENCE EVENT 2023

From service industry startups to manufacturing companies, women entrepreneurs have been ruling the business world in the last few years.

While starting and owning a business is no small achievement, in recent years, women have taken on creating their businesses, and today, 42% of all U.S. businesses are owned by women. Of that, 21% were owned by Black women, and Latina women held 18%. The growing diversity of women-owned firms is one of the most remarkable trends of the past decade. Businesses owned by women of color employ over 2.2 million people. Moreover, the number of women-owned firms in the U.S. continues to climb. It is also estimated that 1,817 new women-owned businesses open daily.



ROCKFORD HOUSING AUTHORITY
RESIDENT OPPORTUNITIES
SECTION 3

In Celebration of Women's History Month

WOMEN OF INFLUENCE

MARCH 15TH, 2023
10:30 AM - 1:30 PM
Northwest Community Center
1325 N Johnston Ave, Rockford, IL 61101

Lunch Provided By Woman-Owned Business

Join us to hear from Women-Owned Small Businesses in our community to learn their rules of success!
On-site Community Resources

Here is your chance to learn and grow your opportunities. On March 15th, 2023, you are cordially invited to come to meet women entrepreneurs of locally owned businesses in our community and listen to their journey of starting a business. The event will begin promptly at 10:30 am at the Northwest Community Center. You will find the RHA presenters impressive and stimulating. These women have created jobs, injected revenue into the local economy, and boosted the financial stability of families and the Rockford Community as whole.

Learn what it takes to start with an idea and grow it into a stable business. If you have an inkling to follow your entrepreneurial dreams but are unsure what it takes to become a business owner, this event may be right for you. We hope to see you there.

Youth Leadership Month

February is Youth Leadership Month! The aim of the day is simple — to get young people to take up leadership roles and contribute to the community in their own ways. Many non-profit organizations, like RHA, play their part in connecting, transforming, and inspiring students to recognize their strengths, explore career opportunities, and become leaders. Students are taught to assume leadership roles in their schools, communities, and the workforce. This is a great way to build the next generation of citizens who are also committed to bringing the best to their communities.

The Rockford Housing Authority celebrates Youth Leadership Month just about every month by providing classes in job readiness and career mentoring with the Lifeforce Development Institute! The 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. Over 12 weeks, students learn such things as positive attitude, adaptability, personal ethics, self-esteem, taking direction and accepting feedback. They also learn how to overcome obstacles, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, punctuality and attendance. Through the Lifeforce Development Institute, we have seen that the knowledge gained helps individuals secure the right job and, eventually, a full-time position that was not attainable prior to the Lifeforce Development Institute's initiative.

Why LDI and Youth Leadership Month are Important

Foundational skills are the personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. While foundational skills can be difficult to measure, they are no less valuable than hard skills. In fact, many employers look at these skills when they consider hiring you or when they consider someone for a promotion. LinkedIn has determined the foundational skills companies need most using a combination of their own data and survey results. The LinkedIn data gathered from over 500+ million members identified the skills that companies were working the hardest to fill. By putting these billions of data points to good use, LinkedIn has created a "roadmap" for job seekers and workplace advancement. Leadership, Communication, Collaboration, and Time Management are the four most desired foundational skills that companies need today.

Celebrations and programs like LDI and Youth Leadership Month, helps instill confidence in students, offer equal opportunities, and creates a generation of future leaders. When we take responsibility to teach every student how to improve their skills and become confident adults, we create equal opportunities for everyone.

Next LDI class start on April 11th. You can learn more about the Lifeforce Development Institute and register for the next session here: <https://launchmyfuture.com/ldi/>





Rockford Housing Authority
223 S Winnebago Street
Rockford, IL 61102



Did You Know?

Did you know that the Rockford Housing Authority has a community of residents in the heart of downtown Rockford designed for the Elderly and Seniors? The North Main Manor Community is an ideal living option for seniors looking for an inexpensive, minimal-maintenance lifestyle. Located on the North Main Street thoroughfare, the Rockford Mass Transit passes directly in front of the location, where riders can transfer to the downtown hub.

Anyone of the hundred eighty-seven apartments provides excellent views and comfortable living; for seniors looking for a low-maintenance, lower-cost lifestyle, these apartments may be the ideal community.

Heat, water, and gas are provided, and the units are designed for fifty-five years plus. The building includes:

- Cable service.
- On-site laundry facilities.
- Private off-street resident parking.
- A video intercom entry system.

Suppose you are looking for housing options for yourself, an aging parent, a relative, or a friend. In that case, this community may be just right for you. To learn more, please visit the Rockford Housing Authority's website at

<https://www.rockfordha.org/housing/>

