

The RHA

IN FOCUS

Newsletter 2023

OCTOBER



**Celebrating Diversity and Entrepreneurship
A Vibrant Reflection on**

Hispanic Heritage Month 2023



Embracing the Spirit of Unity and Culture: A Month of Celebration
As the autumn leaves paint our landscapes with warm hues and the brisk breeze ushers in the fall season, we at the Rockford Housing Authority find ourselves reflecting on the incredible journey we've taken together. "National Hispanic Heritage Month is a time to celebrate the beautiful tapestry of cultures that make our community

strong. It's about embracing diversity and recognizing the contributions that have shaped our collective identity," states, Laura Snyder, CEO.

Continues to page 2

**American Indian
Heritage Month**

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 8

- 1-4 Hispanic Heritage Month
- 5 FREE COVID Test
- 6-8 American Indian Heritage Month
- 8-9 Trunk or Treat & Lunch & Learn
- 10-11 Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- 12-13 Economic Education Month
- 14-15 Bully Prevention Month
- 15-19 Remarkable five-year Journey
- 19 LDI Graduation

**Laura Snyder's
Remarkable Five-year
Journey at RHA**
Laura Snyder, CEO, Page 15



NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH 2023

SEPTEMBER 15TH - OCTOBER 15TH

A Journey Through Diversity: Hispanic Heritage Month Recap

From September 15 to October 15, we've had the distinct pleasure of celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month alongside the nation. This annual commemoration is a time to honor the histories, cultures, and myriad contributions of our American citizens whose roots trace back to Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. It's a celebration that echoes the very heartbeats of our diverse community.

As October sweeps in, we take a moment to reflect on the inspiring journey we embarked on during National Hispanic Heritage Month. This celebration was an opportunity to honor the rich tapestry of cultures, the strength of unity, and the power of entrepreneurship within our community.

Spotlight on Entrepreneurship: Honoring Small Businesses

These remarkable individuals that we will highlight, Evangelina Jimenez, Sara Perez, Marline Lazy Proa, Elizabeth Hernandez Arellano (Liz), and Viviana Ruby Quintero, represent the heartbeat of our community during Hispanic Heritage Month. Their stories are a testament to the diversity, resilience, and boundless contributions of our Hispanic community. Cheers to them and the countless others who enrich the fabric of our Rockford community!

One of the highlights of this year's celebration was our emphasis on supporting local small businesses. We firmly believe that small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our community. By providing a platform for these businesses to shine, we celebrated not only their entrepreneurial spirit but also their unique contributions to our city.

Meet Evangelina Jimenez: A Beacon of Art and Empowerment

Evangelina Jimenez, a proud Rockford native, has been an integral part of our ArtScene from a young age. Her passion for the arts seamlessly transformed into entrepreneurial strides. She hosts the annual event 'Female Energy,' a jubilant celebration of women and creatives that has illuminated our community for seven consecutive years.

But her vision goes beyond art. Welcome to "Indigo Beauty Boutique" at 111 North Alpine Road, Evangelina's dream brought to life. More than just a salon, it's a haven of beauty, empowerment, and community. Here, you can indulge in salon services and dazzling nail artistry.

Sara Perez: Radiating Confidence, Inside and Out

Born and raised in the heart of 815, Sara Perez embodies the spirit of our community. As a licensed esthetician, she's committed to making everyone feel confident and radiant in their own skin. From rejuvenating facials and flawless lash extensions to smooth waxing, Sara specializes in bringing out the best in you.

Marline Lazy Proa: A Multifaceted Star Shining Bright

In the spirit of Hispanic Heritage Month, let's celebrate one of our dazzling stars, Marline Lazy Proa. A proud Mexican American, Marline serves in the Navy Reserves, defending our freedom with honor and dedication. On the home front, she's a skilled MIG welder, contributing to the creation of trucks for industry giants like U-haul, Penske, Coca Cola, and Amazon.

And there's music in the air! Collaborating with GNG R3D ON3, Marline isn't just making melodies; she's making moves! Her song "Tranquilo" will grace a bar scene in the upcoming Rockford-produced movie, "Love and Hate Part B."

Elizabeth Hernandez Arellano: A Custodian of Heritage and Community

Meet Elizabeth Hernandez Arellano, known as Liz, a proud Mexican native who has brought the vibrant traditions of her Hispanic heritage to Rockford, since 1996.

A passionate custodian of Hispanic culture, Liz co-founded a folkloric dance group in 2008 with her siblings. The group, comprised of around 60 members from diverse backgrounds and ranging from ages 4 to 60, is a canvas of unity and cultural celebration. Through dance, Liz imparts not only the grace of the art form but also valuable life skills, fostering an environment where culture and tradition are celebrated, and every student is encouraged to take pride in their heritage.

Her service to the community extends further: from youth group member at her parish to choir coordinator, from volunteering at La Voz Latina to organizing events and assisting with clerical work at church, Liz has been an active, invaluable presence in her community.

Viviana Ruby Quintero: A Nail Artist Extraordinaire.

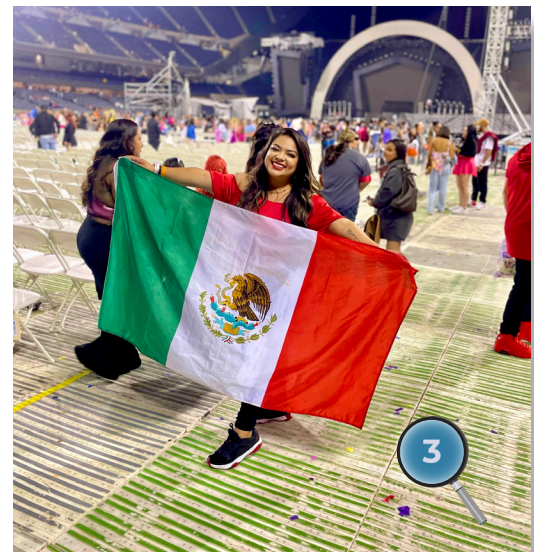
Born and bred in Rockford, Viviana discovered her love for nail art at the tender age of 12, turning a delightful hobby into a professional calling by the age of 15. Since then, she has not only become a licensed nail technician in the 815 but also cultivated a blossoming clientele who adore her work.

Reflecting on the individuals highlighted Laura states, "As we commemorate this month, we're not just celebrating the past; we're building bridges to the future. By supporting local small businesses, we're fostering an environment where entrepreneurship thrives, and dreams take flight."

From Seed to Blossom: The Evolution of National Hispanic Heritage Month

Our journey began with the understanding that history is a living entity, ever-evolving and reflecting the dynamic tapestry of our society. In 1968, during the tenure of President Lyndon Johnson, the concept of recognizing Hispanic heritage was born as Hispanic Heritage Week. In 1988, President Ronald Reagan expanded Hispanic Heritage Week into a full month of celebration, spanning from September 15 to October 15. On August 17, 1988, the journey culminated with the signing of Public Law 100-402, officially designating National Hispanic Heritage Month as a time of national observance.

Continues to page 4



A Celebration of Unity: Fostering Community Engagement

Our celebration was more than just a series of events; it was an opportunity for our community to come together, learn, and grow. We embraced the diversity that enriches our lives through various events, from art exhibitions to culinary showcases. It was a time when residents, neighbors, and friends forged connections, celebrated our shared heritage, and built bridges toward a brighter future.

Looking Forward: United in Diversity

As we bid adieu to another inspiring National Hispanic Heritage Month 2023, let's remember that our celebration of diversity is a year-round commitment. We have taken significant steps, but our journey continues. Let's keep building a community where every story, culture, and contribution is embraced, celebrated, and cherished.



Laura concluding "Our Rockford community is a canvas of stories, and National Hispanic Heritage Month allows us to paint with the vibrant colors of culture and unity. Let's come together, learn from each other, and strengthen the bonds that make us who we are." Thank you for being an essential part of our Rockford family. Together, we create a more inclusive, vibrant, and united community.



Free COVID-19 Tests to Be Mailed By US Government: How To Order In IL



The Biden administration announced Wednesday Sept. 20, it will provide hundreds of millions of dollars to help produce new, at-home COVID-19 tests, and restart a website that will allow residents in Illinois to once again order up to four free tests per household.

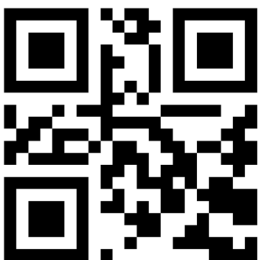
The tests are coming back amid a nearly 8-percent rise in hospitalizations during the week of Sept. 9, the most recent data available on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website. Deaths were up 2.3 percent as well across the country. In Illinois, hospitalizations were up 7.3 percent (643 total), and deaths remained unchanged from the previous week, according to CDC data.

How to order

Orders can be placed at COVIDTests.gov starting Monday, September 25, 2023 the Department of Health and Human Services said. The tests will be delivered for free by the U.S. Postal Service.



To Order your Free
COVID Test:



To Follow RHA's
COVID News:



Embracing American Indian Heritage Month 2023

Learning, Reflecting, and Standing in Solidarity with Laura Snyder, CEO

Rockford Housing Authority honors American Indian Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the deep-rooted cultures, traditions, and histories of Indigenous peoples. For Laura Snyder, the CEO of RHA, it's a time to not just mark the calendar but to make a meaningful commitment to honor and respect the Indigenous communities that have shaped the very fabric of America.



At RHA, the journey begins with the essence of learning. American Indian Heritage Month serves as an invitation to explore the diverse and intricate tapestry of Native American cultures. Laura Snyder, the insightful CEO, is quick to emphasize that this is more than just an academic exercise. "Learning about Indigenous cultures is an act of cultural appreciation," she asserts. "Supporting Indigenous causes is a powerful way to make a positive impact. It's about advocating for their rights, education, healthcare, and economic opportunities."

Delving further, the month encourages a profound exploration of history, from the pre-colonial times to the present day. It's important to reflect on the injustices and hardships faced by Indigenous communities throughout history, including forced relocations, loss of land, and cultural suppression. Acknowledge the lasting impact of these injustices on Indigenous communities and the ongoing struggles for justice. Laura Snyder asserts, "By studying the history and contributions of Indigenous peoples, we uncover the invaluable impact they've had on our nation's identity.

Their achievements deserve recognition and respect." At RHA, this means acknowledging the historical realities of Indigenous communities. "Reflecting on historical injustices is a somber but necessary step," Laura Snyder reflects. "We must acknowledge the hardships faced by Indigenous communities and understand how these injustices continue to impact their lives."

"The Indigenous perspective on environmental conservation is a source of inspiration," says Laura Snyder. "It reminds us of the importance of sustainable practices and the need to protect our natural resources." "The cultural resilience of Indigenous peoples is a testament to their strength and determination," Laura Snyder states. "It's a story of overcoming adversity and preserving heritage."

However, the narrative doesn't end with learning and reflecting. The spirit of the month compels us to stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities. This means actively supporting their causes, promoting respect and inclusion, amplifying their voices, and participating in relevant events. "Supporting Indigenous causes is a powerful way to make a positive impact," Laura Snyder emphasizes.

Continues to page 7

“Respect, inclusion, and equitable treatment are fundamental to standing in solidarity,” Laura Snyder concludes.

“Let’s challenge stereotypes and biases and ensure Indigenous individuals are treated with the dignity they deserve.”

“Celebrating Tribal Sovereignty and Identity.” The 2023 theme The Rockford Housing Authority, under the leadership of CEO Laura Snyder, finds itself not only celebrating but also learning, reflecting, and standing in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. This is more than just a month; it’s a lifelong commitment to understanding and preserving the rich heritage of those who have always been an integral part of the American story.



Adjacent to the RHA’s North Main Manors Senior Apartments lies a hidden gem of historical and cultural importance - Beattie Park. It is home to groups of mounds that were painstakingly crafted by Native American tribes in times long past. These mounds held multifaceted roles within Indigenous communities, functioning as gathering places, sites of peace, and, significantly, as burial grounds. Beattie Park’s Native American mounds are not merely geological formations; they are living testaments to the rich tapestry of Indigenous history in the Rockford region. They stand as places of reverence, gathering, and celebration, embodying the deep connections Indigenous people maintain with their ancestral lands. Through the diligent work of organizations like the IDNR, these sites are

safeguarded, ensuring that their stories will continue to be told for years to come. Learn more about the significance of Beattie Park’s Native American mounds and the role of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in preserving them: <https://dnrhistoric.illinois.gov/>



Additional Insight and Resources

Congress chose the month of November because this is generally the end of the traditional harvest season and a time of thanksgiving and celebration for Native Americans.

RHA believes this is also a time to showcase the rich culture of the native people of this land as well as honor the Native American and Indigenous People who have suffered injustices.

The number of Indigenous people in the United States of America is estimated at between 3.1 and 8.7 million, of which around 20% live in American Indian areas or Alaska Native villages.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

HUD Office of Native American Programs National Tribal Housing Summit In partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Native American Programs (ONAP),

the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) is hosting the HUD ONAP National Tribal Housing Summit on Oct. 31 - Nov. 2, 2023, in St. Paul, Minnesota.



This three-day learning and networking opportunity includes 60 breakout sessions, tradeshow, and community activities. Daily plenary sessions feature remarks from local and tribal leaders and talks by partners in housing and community development.

November is National American Indian Heritage Month

The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans. Learn More at: <https://www.nativeamericanheritagemonth.gov/>



Rockford Housing Authority Trunk or Treat!

RHA's Trunk or Treat event will be held at the RHA Central Office, on October 31st, 4 – 6 pm for the children of our residents. Not only will our staff be there to facilitate activities to make the event memorable and terrific for our residents, they will also participate in the trunk or treat fun! This event is 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.



Move to Work Landlord Lunch and Learn

If you are interested in becoming a Landlord, visit:
<https://rockfordha.org/housing/landlord-information/>
or reach out to Justin, 815-489-8713 or jfrancis@rockfordha.org

Sign up today!
Scan The QR Code To
Register!



MOVE TO WORK Landlord Incentive Program

Wednesday October 18, 2023

Landlord Lunch and Learn
Rockford Housing Authority
223 S. Winnebago St. Rockford IL 61102

Landlords:
2:00 PM - 3:00 PM



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.

Existing Landlords Incentives:

- RHA will offer a \$500 Payment to existing landlords who lease a unit to a housing choice voucher participant.
- The incentive does not apply to those who transfer new units owned by the same landlord.

Limited Damage Claims:

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

Restrictions Apply



Justin Francis
RHA Landlord Liaison

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Every October since 1985, we observe Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death for women worldwide and is classified as the most common cancer for women. Breast cancer accounts for about 30% of all new cancer cases in women each year in the United States and one in every eight women is affected by cancer. Breast cancer may touch your life whether you realize it or not, it can affect your grandma, mom, sister, aunt, or even a friend, and it is vital that you and everyone you know understands the warning signs of breast cancer. View this link to see the warning signs: <https://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/early-detection-of-breast-cancer/>

“Rockford Housing Authority Team Joins the Fight Against Breast Cancer” In a remarkable display of unity and support, the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) team, led by their steadfast CEO, Laura Snyder, came together on a crisp October morning to participate in the “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk” on October 7, 2023.

With smiles on their faces and determination in their hearts, they embarked on a journey to support a vital cause that has touched the lives of countless individuals.

Under the inspiring leadership of Laura Snyder, the RHA team joined forces with their colleagues and friends, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to the fight against breast cancer. Alongside Laura, a strong and dedicated lineup of RHA executives and staff marched proudly, including:

- Odessa Walker, Chief Operating Officer (COO)
- Jana Janes, Finance Director
- Angel Mackey, Executive Assistant
- Felice Woitnek, Policy Manager
- Ros Gulley, Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Manager
- Efrian Mayorga, Accountant
- Stephanie Summers, Compliance Manager
- Leanna Clark, Accounting Manager
- Sgt. Presley, RHA Officer



As they walked side by side, it was clear that their enthusiasm and determination to make a difference extended far beyond the confines of the workplace. The RHA team embodied the spirit of community, embracing the opportunity to walk, celebrate life, and stand in solidarity with those who have faced the challenges of breast cancer.

Breast cancer has touched the lives of countless individuals, and the RHA team recognized the importance of coming together to support research, raise awareness, and provide hope for those affected by this disease. Their participation in the “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk” was a testament to their unwavering commitment to making a positive impact in their community.



With each step they took and each smile they shared, the Rockford Housing Authority team sent a powerful message - one of unity, compassion, and dedication. Together, they walked the path toward a brighter, healthier future, and they vowed to continue their fight against breast cancer with the same determination and spirit that makes them an exceptional team within the Rockford Housing Authority.



We extend our heartfelt appreciation to CEO Laura Snyder, the RHA team, and all those who participated in this inspiring event. Your dedication and support make a difference, and your commitment to the fight against breast cancer is a beacon of hope for us all. Thank you for walking, celebrating life, and showing that, together, we can conquer even the most challenging of battles.

Scan The QR Code To
Learn More!



Economic Education Month



The month of October Economic Education Month is observed. Economic Education Month was started in 2021, to help promote the importance of teaching economics in K-12 schools. According to the Council for Economic Education, 40% of Americans have less than \$300 in savings. Well, economics are all around us today. The education of economics started to help students have a better understanding of the basic principles in order to make educated decisions.

Many students lack the basic financial skills needed to thrive in life. This month teachers have the opportunity to teach their students how to prepare for their future economic roles as workers, entrepreneurs, borrowers, investors, consumers, and savers. Knowing economic education is the key to living a productive life. This is important of all ages K-12 because it helps teach them about the business decisions of everyday life. The decisions we all make when we are spending, saving, or investing while we are faced with different resources.

You can observe and support National Economic Education Month by:

- Having a conversation about how you and your family can make decision for your homes.
- Teachers can invite the community and business leaders to share with their students' tips on how to be economically smart.
- Business and government leaders can offer help in promoting quality economic education in schools.
- Teachers and parents can visit www.econedmonth.org to learn about economic Education.

For more information about Economic Education visit:

<https://www.councilforeconed.org/> or www.econedmonth.org



RHA's Mission for Financial Freedom and Education for our Residents

RHA's main goal is that each of our residents have a quality home and a quality life. Within that comes self-sufficiency and financial freedom, that is why RHA has implemented various programs for our residents and the Rockford Community to learn those life skills and eventually move out of the public housing community.

OCTOBER IS

Economic Education Month

A few of our programs include:



• **The Family Self-Sufficiency Program:** FSS is a voluntary program established by HUD to promote economic self-sufficiency among RHA participating families.

• **The Lifeforce Development Institute:** LDI's Job/Career Readiness Skills-based training to both RHA Clients and Community Members.



• **Section 3:** Section 3 ensures that the economic opportunities generated by HUD financial assistance are directed to low & very low-income persons.

• **The Jobs Plus Program:** The Jobs Plus Program is a free program aimed to help you gain higher wages and increase your income without increasing your rent.



• **The Housing Choice Voucher Program:** The HCV homeownership program allows families that are assisted under the HCV program to use their voucher to buy a home and receive monthly assistance in meeting homeownership expenses.

• **Bridges Out of Poverty:** Bridges Out of Poverty is a national antipoverty organization that helps people move toward upward mobility.



Bully Prevention Month

Bringing awareness for children that have been or are being bullied, is why Bully Prevention Month was established. The month of October, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center hosts events and activities to raise awareness on the local and national level. According to the National Prevention Center, 'one in every five children, either yours or your child's friends, report being bullied in school'. 49.8% of tweens (nine to twelve years old) said they experienced bullying at school and 14.5% of tweens shared they experienced bullying online. ([Patchin & Hinduja, 2020](#))

Prevention Month is a grassroots effort to stop bullying and it starts with you. During this month, you can learn how to recognize that your child may be getting bullied.

**You're
Not Alone**

We're Here for You

**TOGETHER
AGAINST BULLYING**

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center | PACER.org/Bullying

Bringing awareness to bullying is the highlight of the month. The PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center designates the third Wednesday of October, this year lands on October 19th as Unity Day! You can demonstrate and also express your support for your child, by wearing orange on Unity Day. By wearing orange, you show your child that you are supportive of acceptance, kindness, love, and inclusion.

As an adult who parents, you play a vital role in your child's life. While 'bullying is not a nice thing' and has lifelong consequences, it can also lead children to bouts of depression, truancy, and suicide. As a parent, you must be diligent and vigilant on all levels of your children's social behavior.

1. Help, assist, teach and empower your children about bullying and its damage and impact on another person. You want to teach them that the behavior is unacceptable. At the same time, you also want to ensure that your children get help and support immediately if your child is the recipient of bullying behavior, whether in person or in or on cyber/social platforms.

2. As a parent, you already know the vast importance of keeping the lines of communication open. For example, a continuous daily and weekly dialogue engages your children and demonstrates your feelings and caring about what they think and how they feel. Starting, it may feel somewhat awkward and, in their face, to ask outright, "What did you do in school today?". You will be surprised at the results!

LEND A
HAND



TAKE A
STAND

NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH

3. Encourage kids to do what they love. Giving your child something that they love to do will help boost their confidence and empower them to make the right future choices in their life. Finding opportunities that engage your children will also encourage and assist them in making new friends. As a potential outcome, it may keep your child protected from bullying behavior.

4. Last but not least, be a model of how to treat others. We show our children that these rules are not just for them but for us as well. As a parent, your behavior is what your children will emulate in their daily and future adult life. You are demonstrating and modeling the proper behavior by teaching by example to treat others with love, caring, and kindness. As parents, we too can fail even with our best efforts; however, this does not go unnoticed. It also teaches your children how to apologize and repair after a mistake or moment of disconnect.

KEY TAKEAWAY

By utilizing the four action items described above, you have the potential to create an atmosphere of kindness. Well-liked children display more positive, less bullying behaviors when they become teenagers and grow into adults. As a result, happier kids are more likely to show higher academic achievement.

To learn more about Bullying Prevention Month, please visit stopbullying.gov.



Laura Snyder's Remarkable Five-Year Journey at Rockford Housing Authority



In the world of affordable housing, where change is often slow and challenges are abundant, Laura Snyder stands as a beacon of transformation and progress. As the CEO of the Rockford Housing Authority for the past five years, her tenure has been marked by a string of notable accomplishments that have significantly improved the lives of residents and the community as a whole.

Financial Achievements

One of the cornerstones of Laura Snyder's leadership has been her remarkable ability to secure funding for critical programs and initiatives. Under her guidance, the Rockford Housing Authority secured a Jobs Plus award of a staggering \$2.3 million, creating two internal employment positions and six resident positions, thus stimulating economic growth within the community.

Furthermore, Laura successfully obtained annual awards of \$219,000 for three years and \$144,000 for two years for the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, providing vital resources to empower families towards self-sufficiency.

The commitment to residents' well-being is evident in the \$731,000 award for the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) program, emphasizing self-reliance and development. Laura's dedication to safety is also evident in the \$240,000 award for Radon remediation, ensuring the health of residents.

However, perhaps the most outstanding financial achievement during her tenure was securing a massive \$5 million award for Lead-Based Paint remediation, addressing a significant health hazard. Additionally, a \$5 million award for addressing Housing related Hazards underscores her unwavering commitment to improving living conditions for the community.

Laura Snyder's leadership also facilitated homeownership through the Low-Income Public Housing (LIPH) program, enabling residents to achieve the dream of owning their homes. Not content with these accomplishments, she created a Section III compliance and education program that not only ensured compliance but also generated revenue, garnering accolades as an award-winning program.

Securing utility company funding totaling \$1,036,782.00 for upgrades in Blackhawk and Scattered Sites demonstrates her ability to bring resources to

where they are needed most. Perhaps one of the most critical financial achievements was achieving full compliance with HUD reporting requirements, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Laura's financial acumen also shone through in building reserves to more than double the previous balance, providing a safety net for future endeavors. Her commitment to financial integrity is further underscored by maintaining clean financial audits for the past five years, a testament to her dedication to sound fiscal management.

Multiple \$5,000 grants from Associated Bank for Resident Programming, a \$15,000 grant from BMO for Resident Home Ownership, and a \$5,000 grant from the Community Foundation are just a few of the ways Laura Snyder has tirelessly sought financial support to uplift the community.



Redevelopment

Laura Snyder's visionary leadership extended to redevelopment efforts as well. She successfully recaptured Scattered Sites, ensuring greater control over housing resources. Securing a section 18 award for Brewington Oaks and presenting the board with five redevelopment strategies resulted in the creation of two employment positions and breathed new life into the community.

The section 18 award for Fairgrounds paved the way for its redevelopment, further expanding affordable housing options for the residents.

Her commitment to increasing affordable housing units in the community was evident in the development plan for Bridge Rockford, a testament to her unwavering dedication to community betterment.

Operations

Effective operations are the backbone of any organization, and under Laura Snyder's leadership, the Rockford Housing Authority has excelled. She created and implemented a robust COVID-19 response, including a dedicated website page and an employee salary protection plan, safeguarding the well-being of both staff and residents.

Her ability to manage the agency effectively during a government shutdown demonstrated her adaptability and resilience in the face of challenges.

Attaining Moving to Work (MTW) status was a significant milestone, leading to the creation of three internal employment positions and offering residents increased opportunities for self-improvement. Relocation can be a challenging endeavor, but Laura achieved successful relocations for both Brewington Oaks and Fairgrounds residents, ensuring their comfort and safety throughout the process.

Laura prioritized ongoing training for all staff levels, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement. Advanced training for key staff members enhanced the overall competence of the organization.

The introduction of an automated payroll platform promoted efficiency and a self-service portal for employees, streamlining administrative processes.

Human Services

Laura's commitment to the well-being of residents extended beyond housing. She established over 52 partnerships with community agencies to provide wrap-around services, ensuring that residents had access to the support they needed.

Leading the agency to become certified instructors for Bridges out of Poverty and certified LIHEAP case workers to assist the City of Rockford and residents added valuable revenue sources while addressing critical community needs. Establishing an Empowerment Center at Blackhawk and COCC created hubs of support and empowerment within the community.

Her dedication to fostering homeownership through the Low-Income Public Housing (LIPH) program provided families with a pathway to secure housing stability. Two award-winning programs, the Youth & Police officer program and Resident Relations, showcased her innovative approach to community-building and positive engagement.

The creation of the Women of Influence annual event celebrated the achievements and contributions of women in the community, inspiring future leaders. Laura's commitment to digital empowerment was evident in the continuation of the ConnectHome program, securing additional grants to provide devices to participants. Additionally, the launch of the Life Force Development Institute, including the creation of the "Launch My Future" website, opened up new opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Leadership and Board Participation

Active leadership extends beyond the organization, and Laura Snyder was deeply engaged in the community. Serving on three PHADA boards, she stayed updated on regulatory changes, ensured compliance, and guided affordable housing direction. Implementing an automated payroll and human resources platform for increased efficiency was a testament to her forward-thinking leadership.

Currently serving on five local boards and workgroups, including Community Action, Violence Reduction, Peace and Non-Violence, and the Early Learning Council, demonstrated her



commitment to addressing broader community issues.

Developing department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) provided clear guidance and expectations for all staff, ensuring a streamlined and accountable organization.

Laura's foresight in creating succession plans for key staff members ensured continuity and stability within the organization.

The creation of an employee recognition program, "Directors Spotlight," and an all-staff City-Wide Scavenger Hunt / Amazing Race fostered a positive and motivated work environment.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

Laura's leadership extended to advocacy and community engagement. She fostered positive relationships with elected officials through independent meetings with council members to gain support for redevelopment projects, including Brewington, Fairgrounds relocation, and Bridge redevelopment plans, showing her dedication to bringing positive change to the community. Her rebranding strategy successfully removed the negative connotation of Public Housing, promoting the successes of the agency, staff, and residents, ultimately changing public perception and enhancing the community's image.

Laura Snyder's remarkable achievements during her tenure as CEO of the Rockford Housing Authority have transformed the lives of residents and the community as a whole. Her unwavering commitment to financial stability, redevelopment, effective operations, human services, leadership, and community engagement has left an indelible mark on Rockford, Illinois. As she continues to lead, the future holds even more promise for the residents and the community she has tirelessly served.



LDI Graduation

We would like to welcome you to join us in celebrating our 2023 LDI Graduation on October 26, 2023, at the Nordlof Center at 1:00 PM. The Rockford Housing Authority is so proud of our graduates! Come out and celebrate these amazing individuals! Learn more about LDI and register for the next semester here:

<https://launchmyfuture.com/ldi/>



To Learn more:
Scan the QR code Below



Sign up today!
Scan The QR Code To
Register!





Rockford Housing Authority
223 S Winnebago Street
Rockford, IL 61102

Did you know?

RHA is excited to announce the Ready to Rent, Certified Renters course that began on September 11th will be completing the program soon!

Ready to Rent is a 4 week tenant readiness course designed to help renters learn their rights and responsibilities in addition to helping those with rental barriers access housing. This innovative educational program is created with the assistance of landlords, housing providers, and curriculum specialists to give participants direction on the entire rental process and focuses on success for both landlords and tenants. In the class participants work closely with housing specialists and peers to:

- Overcome Barriers to Rental Housing
- Tenant responsibilities
- Repair credit
- Create a workable budget
- Prioritize housing needs
- Develop a housing search plan
- Understand the application and rental process
- Maintain appropriate housekeeping
- Communicate effectively with landlords



20

Earn a Ready to-Rent Certificate of Completion which makes participants a “Certified Renter”