

times

Rochester Housing Authority

New year. New beginnings.

With the help of our staff and Board of Commissioners, The Rochester Housing Authority accomplished many things in 2017. We launched new programming for Resident Services, improved on many internal processes and policies, developed new and meaningful community partnerships and completed several exciting construction projects.

As we move into 2018, our team is looking forward to even greater things to help families across Monroe County find quality, affordable housing and ultimately achieve self-sufficiency. Many of those plans are outlined within the pages of this newsletter, which is now available to read and listen to online at www.rochesterhousing.org.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the RHA Times and wish all of you a happy, healthy New Year filled with many blessings.



Cheers from
the Shared
Leadership Team

Pictured left to right: Director of Operations Mr. Paul Foti, Executive Director Mr. John Hill, Deputy Executive Director Mr. Shawn Burr, Diversity, Inclusion & Compliance Officer Mrs. Cynthia Herriott and Executive Personnel Administrator Mrs. Rashondra Martin, ESQ.

Hurricane evacuee relief.

More than two dozen local agencies, including the Rochester Housing Authority have been working together to help families who relocated to Rochester from Puerto Rico due to the impact of Hurricane Erma and Maria. The **Ibero-American Action League (IBERO)** has hosted several events for the more than 500 families in need. Rochester Housing has actively supported this initiative by providing guidance and information at their pop-up resource center at 938 Clifford Avenue. We'd like to give a special thank you to the RHA partner landlords that heeded our call for help and offered 30 days free housing.

More than 20 landlord partners attended our Housing Fair at IBERO on December 16, in which survivors of the hurricanes were able to view vacant units, receive applications and get help from RHA specialists in filling out forms.



In total, we've distributed nearly 100 HCV (Section 8) vouchers to those affected by the recent storms.

Know someone affected by the hurricane in need of housing? [Contact us by clicking here.](#)

[Watch this video](#) to learn more about RHA's work with IBERO.





Celebrating a career at RHA

Public Housing Director **Sandy Whitney**, who has served at the Rochester Housing Authority for 27 years, is retiring at the end of January 2018. Her dedication and commitment to the residents showed every day in her work. We are grateful for her time here and wish her luck in her future endeavors.

◀ **Pictured at left:** Executive Director Mr. John Hill presents flowers to retiring Public Housing Director Sandy Whitney at the December Board Meeting.

Resident spotlight

This Newsletter's Resident Spotlight shines on **Pete Magnone**, a resident at Danforth Towers who has lived with us since 2013. Mr. Magnone is a caring neighbor who goes out of his way to assist everyone in his building.

"Pete's kindness has no bounds," said retiring Public Housing Director Sandy Whitney. Even in foul, wintry weather, Pete will walk over to the other high-rise to pick up packages so his neighbors don't have to go out into the cold."

Pete is a true, shining example of being "neighborly" and one who continuously demonstrates his compassion for others. When given the opportunity to move to Section 8 Pete declined stating "I love where I live."

On behalf of the entire Public Housing staff and RHA, we're proud and honored to have residents like Pete.





Find success with FSS

Our Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) promotes and assists individuals and families in their goals of achieving greater self-sufficiency and independence. The FSS team helps families develop a plan and works closely with them, for up to five years, to achieve their goals – from increasing credit score to owning a home and even earning a degree.

Recent success story: Keyonna Keeton, successfully completed the FSS program this past year. The program provided Ms. Keeton with an account coordinator, whom she worked closely with to achieve self-sufficiency.

“During the program, I learned the importance of credit,” said Ms. Keeton. “My account coordinator helped with the process of cleaning up my credit report and gave me tips on how to maintain a good credit score. The resources and tools I learned to use through the FSS program helped me go back to school and earn my LPN license and become a homeowner.”

Ms. Keeton also shared that the program helped her gain financial independence, so she could live without government assistance. “I’ve made substantial positive changes in my life and it’s because of the help I received from the FSS program.”

Interested in starting your journey? [Click here to complete the Family Self-Sufficiency Interest Form.](#)

Upcoming resident and participant events

Keep up-to-date with all our resident and participant events by [visiting our Facebook Page](#). Some upcoming activities in the first quarter include:

NACA Orientation (date to be announced)

RHA Homeownership Orientation on January 17

College Fair on March 15.



The prosperity initiative

RHA exists to provide quality affordable housing and services for the community, but the community needs more than housing. There is a deep need to teach those we serve how to move from poverty to prosperity.

Rochester has one of the highest childhood poverty rates in the country at 52%, the highest poverty rate for female-headed families at 58%, and the highest poverty rate for those with less than a high school diploma at 44%.

To alleviate this issue, the RHA team, in partnership with the Board of Commissioners, developed The Prosperity Initiative. This initiative focuses on three key areas: **student education, financial literacy, and homeownership**, with the goal of assisting families in ending the cycle of poverty and putting them on a path towards generational success and self-sufficiency.

Some of the activities within this initiative include: The newly developed RHA Parent Action Group, partnering with [CCCS](#) to offer a **free monthly Smart Checking class** at Resident Services, and our new partnership with [NACA](#) that helps **break the barriers of the conventional mortgage process**.

Rochester poverty is one of the highest in the United States

Rochester poverty rate

52%

Female head of family poverty

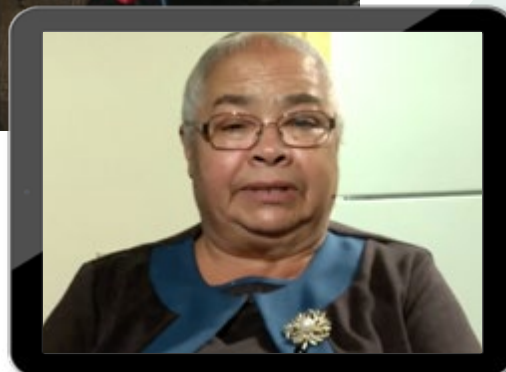
58%

Less than a high school diploma

44%



A special thank you to retiring Public Housing Director **Sandy Whitney** and Resident **Wilma Santos** who voiced the videos, as well as all the associates and residents who took part in its creation.



Leasing video

To assist new residents with the move-in process in our public housing units, we've developed a short video that explains the most important aspects of the lease agreement. This visual interpretation of the tenant lease agreement with Rochester Housing Authority was made possible by Resident Board Commissioners Hershel Patterson and Willie Otis, who listened to resident's concerns regarding their confusion around the lease requirements and brought a solution of making an informational video to the Board for consideration.

The new video has been created in both English and Spanish and will be presented to all new tenants before they sign their lease agreement with RHA.

HCV participants Let your voice be heard

As RHA strives to be the leader in developing and cultivating dynamic, economically sustainable, and desirable communities where everyone can thrive, we take the concerns of our residents and HCV participants very seriously.

Elected resident board commissioners sit on the RHA Board with full voting rights. They are responsible for helping to develop solutions for housing concerns presented by RHA residents and HCV (Section 8) participants.

For them to successfully represent you, we ask that you share your thoughts and concerns with them during either one of the scheduled monthly input sessions or by emailing them.



Wille Otis
Resident Board Commissioner
Wotis@rochesterhousing.org



Hershel Patterson
Resident Board Commissioner
Hpatterson@rochesterhousing.org

Changes to Shelter Plus Care

Permanent Supportive Housing (formerly known as Shelter Plus Care) is a grant funded program that provides rental subsidy for the homeless and disabled population. Here at Rochester Housing Authority, our Permanent Supportive Housing program is working collaboratively with our local Continuum of Care (CoC) and Coordinated Care Services Inc. (CCSI) to provide efficient and timely housing for qualified applicants. Our initial step to improve our processes was to conduct our first Permanent Supportive Housing Boot Camp on Thursday, November

30, 2017. This event was a tremendous success with more than 30 attendees onsite to review obstacles, barriers and processes. We had more than a dozen sponsoring agencies at the event including CoC, CCSI and HUD. All attendees walked away with action items to follow up and a commitment to continue to meet and work together to improve the process.

[Click here for more information on CoC at RHA](#)



Recent site improvements



At Rochester Housing Authority, we're continuously working to improve the quality of life for our residents. We have completed several construction projects this past December, including exterior renovations at Tremont Street and windows at Kennedy Tower.

Tremont Street exterior improvements

The six-unit row house property located at 292-296 Tremont Street received upgrades to address the parking lot and sidewalk issues. This project included demolition of the existing parking lot, driveway, walkways, entrance stairs and stoops to make way for installation of new concrete walkways, trash tote pads, composite stairs, decks, and a vinyl rail system for each unit. In addition, RHA installed a new driveway and parking lot with handicap accommodations.



Kennedy tower windows

This past December, the aging windows at this site were fully replaced. The project was an investment of nearly \$700,000 and replaced the windows in the 80 units at the site, as well as those in the first-floor office, maintenance and community areas.





Projects on the horizon

R Café

Recently, Resident Commissioners Willie Otis and Hershel Patterson requested that the community room at Danforth Tower East be considered as a modernization project. The current room can fit about 40 people and includes a kitchen area and seating. Earlier this year, at an RHA Board Meeting, the decision was made to update the old-style cafeteria lounge into a café-style community room with more appropriate supportive furniture, fixtures, and amenities to accommodate the nearly 100 elderly and disabled tenants between Towers East and West.

With the Resident Commissioners input and support, plans for the R Café were created and approved. The new community room, an investment by RHA of more than \$150,000, is expected to be open for residents' enjoyment by March 2018.

Shirley Street and Eiffel Place

The RHA properties at Shirley Street and Eiffel Place experienced fires last year. Due to the widespread interior damage, RHA decided to demolish the existing buildings in May and plan to construct new, modern ones. The new properties will be built with the Authority's new mission in mind – changing the face of public housing. Shirley Street will have a first floor (bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, laundry and living space) that is accessible to individuals with disabilities, while Eiffel Place will be a duplex. Both projects are slated to go to the Board of Commissioners for approval to build on January 24, 2018.

