New Day at MHA
Marcia’s Message

Welcome to the new and improved version of “MHA Today” Newsletter from Memphis Housing Authority (MHA). As we enter the last half of our fiscal year and the first half of the calendar year, we have faced many challenges but also have experienced a number of successes along the way. We lost former MHA family and Board members due to their passing during these last two quarters who will forever hold a place in our hearts and in the fabric of this agency. We had a reduction in force that impacted many of our MHA staff, friends and co-workers and those of us left to carry on the mission of the agency. These were difficult times, difficult decisions and difficult conversations that continue to define who we are as an agency, why we serve and the vision to be responsible, responsive and not just a housing authority, but rather an authority on housing!

I’m excited about the direction in which we are headed, and this continues to be a time of growth and opportunity for MHA. On behalf of myself and Chief Operating Officer, Dexter Washington, we appreciate your continued commitment to the agency and your contributions to its improvement. We want to see this as a mutually rewarding relationship and believe the future offers those possibilities for all of us. Our reputation is our most valuable asset and it is important that we all come to appreciate the significance of giving it our all for the people we serve. If we live that philosophy, things can only get better for MHA and for Shelby County and the City of Memphis.

The only way towards improvement is to exceed our residents, our supervisors, our Board’s, our external customers, our city officials, our neighbors, our partners, or . . . moving from "striving for excellence and nothing less" to "excellence provided" . . .

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critics and our naysayers’ expectations. I would like to see us move from “striving for excellence and nothing less” to “excellence provided;” that is my goal for each day. To borrow from an old slogan, “It is a new day at MHA”!

One of our major achievements over the last few months has been in realizing our first sale of property owned by the MHA. While it is just a start, other investors, developers and community partners have already approached us about the purchase of property we own that will generate revenue outside of our Federal dollars. Another accomplishment is the increase in partnerships we are now engaged in, in our community. Partners like Shelby County Housing, the Shelby County Office of Re-entry, United Housing, Big River Developers and others are engaged in dialogue about new projects, programs or growth that will include us. We continue to work on the development of new office space for our agency and placing new program emphasis on Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) and youth services. We are on the cusp of a big announcement with the City concerning a youth/young people initiative that will be a great partnership and will reap great benefits for young people ages 16-24. We are moving forward in the development of our new affiliate, Memphis Housing Strategies, that will provide all types of housing property management, development and training services. It’s Board recently had its inaugural meeting.

MHA is committed to doing more in our community in the housing field and to delivering excellence. I hope you are excited to be part of the journey and enjoy reading about some of the great things happening at MHA. We value your feedback so please let us know what you think. Thanks for being part of the MHA Community.

South City Update

The first phase of the new housing at South City is almost 70% complete with the first units available by August 2019. There will be 46 market rate units, 13 affordable tax credit units and 55 Project-Based Voucher units. For those interested in leasing, you can call 855-752-5773 for more information.

The second phase of new housing will be 134 units. It’s anticipated to be completed the first quarter of 2020.

The third phase of housing should also begin construction in the first quarter of 2020 and will be located on the west side of Danny Thomas Blvd.

Several neighborhood projects in South City have also begun. The Good Neighbor Program administered by Downtown Memphis Commission provides façade improvement grants to neighborhood businesses. The first two grants have been approved and will provide façade improvements for the NAACP building and the new Memphis Magnetic Recording Studio, both on Vance Avenue.

Improvements to L.E. Brown Park have also begun and should be completed by August 2019. And, The Works CDC is administering a grant program for neighborhood homeowners to provide for exterior improvements. Work has begun on the first homes approved for this program.

Urban Strategies, Inc. continues to work with former Foote Homes’ residents to help them meet financial, education and health-related goals on the road to becoming self-sufficient. Case managers are working with those residents interested in returning to the new South City development to insure they are ready and able to. There are currently 13 high school seniors who are former Foote residents. All will graduate high school this year.
Foote Homes Resident Honored as One of Memphis Business Journal’s Girls Who Mean Business

Unveyunce Fitch, senior at Booker T. Washington High School, was chosen as one of Memphis Business Journal’s Girls Who Mean Business honorees. Ms. Fitch is a Foote Homes resident and is the 2019 valedictorian for her graduating class. She is a member of BTW’s volleyball and baseball teams, a member of ROTC, and participates in Rise Foundation’s Goal Card program. After high school, Ms. Fitch plans to attend Tennessee State or the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga to study veterinary Medicine.

Memphis Housing Authority awarded Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD awarded $30 million to public housing authorities nationwide and made 3,000 vouchers available for families who are unable to secure affordable housing for their children or dependents. Of that award, the Memphis Housing Authority was awarded approximately $490,137 to provide 72 vouchers to youth at risk of homelessness and families whose lack of adequate housing is the primary reason their children are in foster care.

Like the Housing Choice Vouchers, FUP vouchers enable eligible youth and families to rent decent, safe and sanitary housing that is affordable in the private market. Generally, families pay no more than 40 percent of their adjusted monthly income toward their rent share. MHA pays the remaining rent amount to the landlord on the family's behalf.

MHA’s Chief Executive Officer, Marcia E. Lewis said, “We are excited to receive this grant award. With this funding, MHA is able to provide housing assistance to families involved with the child welfare system. The vouchers will allow families to be reunified or kept together.”

MHA, in partnership with the TN Department of Children's Services, Shelby County Region and the Community Alliance for the Homeless are committed to administering FUP to keep child welfare involved families safely together, to prevent and reduce homelessness and to provide safe, stable housing for families and youth.
Welcome New Board Commissioners

Kathy Moore Cowan recently assumed the position of Vice President, Community Development Manager for Regions Bank where she is responsible for establishing and maintaining active partnerships with key local and regional community development organizations and bank staff that result in Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) lending, investments, and services.

Previously, Ms. Cowan served ten years as Senior Community Development Specialist with the Memphis Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis where she was responsible for promoting community and economic development and fair and equal access to credit by providing technical assistance and training on successful initiatives and programs, convening key stakeholders to identify community development needs, and facilitating partnerships among financial institutions, community-based organizations, and others across the Branch’s three-state zone to support local community objectives.

Michael Boyd was confirmed as Memphis Housing Authority’s newest Commissioner March 2019. Mr. Boyd will contribute a wealth of experience and knowledge while ensuring the voices of Memphis Housing Authority Residents are represented. He is a current resident of Barry Towers and a former resident of the Cleborne Homes; his childhood community. After graduating from Tech High School in 1984, Commissioner Boyd became an over the road truck driver and later worked as a manager for Champion’s now known as Rent-A- Center. He is now a Ministry Shepard for The Qodesh ("The Holy Hill"), a subsidiary of Lighthouse Chapel International, and is studying to become a pastor.

As the current Resident Advisory Board President for Barry Towers, Mr. Boyd is very passionate about supporting the residents of Memphis Housing Authority and ensuring residents have a great place to live. Mr. Boyd stated that “being selected to serve as a commissioner for the Memphis Housing Authority’s Board is a great honor for a resident and a blessing.” He also stated that he is “very excited to be a partner in the day to day operations of MHA” in an effort to dispel myths and forge greater understanding and communication between residents and the Memphis Housing Authority.

Kathy Moore Cowan was appointed to MHA’s Board of Commissioners by City of Memphis Mayor, Jim Strickland, March 2019.

Immediately before coming to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, she served eight years as President/CEO of The Works, Inc., a faith-based, nonprofit, neighborhood-based community development corporation in Memphis, Tennessee focused on housing and community economic development. During her tenure at The Works, the organization invested over $10 million dollars in the redevelopment of the South Memphis community.

A native of Little Rock, Arkansas, Ms. Cowan holds a BA degree from Rhodes College (Memphis, TN) where she graduated with Distinction and Honors in Political Science and Anthropology/Sociology and a Master’s of Science in Planning from the University of Tennessee (Knoxville, TN). She is also a graduate of Leadership Memphis (Class of 2009) and WestStar (Class of 2010). She currently serves on the board of directors of the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, Mustard Seed, Inc. (Vice Chairman), The Works, Inc. (Chairman), and the Blight Authority of Memphis (Treasurer).

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The Annual and Five-Year Plan is both a planning and implementation tool that United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires each Public Housing Agency to submit. The Annual Plan describes what the Memphis Housing Authority plans to build, acquire or dispose of during a fiscal year. Any changes that are mandated by HUD must appear in the annual plan. It also details any changes in policies that effect a person being able to gain admission to public housing or to continue to occupy a unit as reflected in the Lease Agreement and the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy.

The Five-Year Plan is tied to major projects MHA plans to accomplish using its capital funds or other sources for renovations, new construction or rehabilitation of units. This is the long range planning and implementation strategies used to achieve the vision, mission and goals of MHA.

This year’s planning process had two public meetings and a public hearing held March 15, 2019. In previous years, twenty meetings were held on sites containing public housing units (both public housing and privately managed sites). Using the feedback from this year’s process, future planning will include additional public meetings but not the previous number of twenty.

A copy of the Annual and Five-Year Plan resides in Memphis Housing Authority’s (MHA) Human Resources Department at 700 Adams, on MHA’s website, and on the 4th Floor of the Benjamin Hooks Library at 3030 Poplar. Questions regarding MHA’s Annual and Five-Year Plan may be addressed to Vernua Hanrahan at vhanrahan@memphisha.org.
When Forestine Carroll accepted her current position of risk manager with the Memphis Housing Authority (MHA), MHA had a long history of frequent and severe loss numbers. Her “can-do” attitude was perfect for this position and she worked to bring employee training to an all-time high. She accomplished this by utilizing Public Entity Partners' training staff, videos and on-site surveys, and by always looking for additional resources wherever she could find them.

Under Ms. Carroll’s guidance, MHA implemented a functioning safety committee that meets on a regular basis. From her work, MHA is not adverse in any lines of coverage with Public Entity Partners, and the frequency of its losses is slim to none. She accomplished much of this while under severe budget cuts, which took hard work, perseverance, and a commitment to protecting the safety of her coworkers and the public resources entrusted to the Memphis Housing Authority.

In addition, Ms. Carroll has devoted a significant amount of energy to promoting public risk management in Tennessee. She has accomplished this by serving in leadership roles at the Tennessee Public Risk Management Association (TnPRIMA) and serving on the national PRIMA board.

Congratulations Ms. Carroll on your incredible accomplishment!

- Article is from Public Entity Partners August 2018 Newsletter

Memphis Housing Authority Partners with the Memphis Fire Department to Educate Residents on Fire Safety

The Memphis Fire Department is a partner with the Memphis Housing Authority (MHA) to assist us with our ongoing risk management strategies. Fire Prevention Specialist, Kimberly Strong, and her partner, fire fighter, Jeffrey Robinson, have been visiting each one of MHA’s developments to educate residents on fire prevention and to promote safety.
Keisha Walker is a servant leader that has worked to stand in the gap between where communities and families are and where they aspire to be for over twenty years. She is a native Memphian and holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Professional Studies and a Master’s in Public and Non-Profit Administration from the University of Memphis. She spent the formative years of her career from 1993 to 2011 as the former executive director of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) where she advocated for children impacted by abuse and neglect whose cases were being litigated in Juvenile Court. In September 2011, she was appointed by former Shelby County Mayor, Mark H. Luttrell, to serve as the Administrator for the Shelby County Office of Early Childhood and Youth and co-chair of the Early Success Coalition. The office later transitioned to become the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach for Shelby County Government’s Division of Community Services. Her leadership and volunteer service includes being an alumnus of the Leadership Memphis Fast Track Class of 2010, a Girl Scout Troop Leader for ten years, youth ministry, and serving as a member of a number of boards and coalitions with a focus on health, juvenile justice, education advocacy, and neighborhood planning.

Welcome New Staff

Kawanna Poe has been working the field of social services for several years. She received a BA in Social Work from The University of Memphis. After receiving her degree, she served as a contractor to provide Families First social services. A few years later, Kawanna accepted a position as the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator for Urban Strategies and Memphis Housing Authority, where she provides wrap-around services for residents striving to achieve employment, education, financial literacy, and homeownership. These services are not limited to her area of expertise for working with families.

She has also worked with women on their journey toward sobriety and financial literacy at Salvation Army’s Renewal Place.

Kawanna is motivated to continue working on behalf of her clients’ well-being and to help them achieve their American Dream of making the world a better place. In addition to this goal, Kawanna is working to earn a dual Master’s degree in Social Work and Business Administration, where she can realize her dream of becoming a licensed social worker and advocate. When Kawanna is not in school or working as an FSS Coordinator, she volunteers her time at Restore Corps to bring awareness to stop human trafficking.
Housing Professionals Online Training thru HTVN

HTVN is a training resource MHA has subscribed with to offer free web-based training to our employees. Webinars available focus on housing related topics ranging from finance to maintenance and more. We have just renewed the subscription for another year and hope all take this opportunity to enhance any current knowledge you may have, as well as learn new skills. HTVN also offers a selection of paid certification courses hosted by Nan McKay.

Each employee should have an account already set up with HTVN. You should be able to login at www.htvn.org and browse the catalog to find a topic of interest. If you are having trouble with accessing the account or registering for courses, please contact either Tomecia Brown or Leon Shead.

Popular courses:
- Microsoft Office Basics
- Generational Diversity in the Workplace
- Personal Management - Informative Short
- Responding to Resident Complaints

Popular certifications:
- Housing Choice Voucher Specialist Certification
- HQS Certification
- Public Housing Management Certification
- Fair Housing and Reasonable Accommodation Certification

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”
― Dr. Seuss

Happy Birthday
MHA Employees

Linda Ballard        Michael Murphy      February 22nd  February 27th
Shawna Bell         Jerome Paige       March 12th       January 21st
Forestine Carroll   Joe Patterson      January 27th   March 16th
Kelitia Crowder     Lureatha Phillips  March 8th       February 6th
Brenda Green        Carl Shaw          January 8th     January 8th
Carolyn Greene      Rodney Springfield  January 22nd   January 3rd
Anthony Harbin, Sr  David Walker       January 27th   March 9th
Nicki Hyder         Erika Watson       January 30th    March 8th
Belinda Maggette   

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