

## expanding hope

*The Housing Authority of the City of Erie partners with Community Shelter Services for a second Tiny Home, offering vital housing and empowerment for homeless families and individuals with disabilities.*

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# Executive Director Commentary

By Michael R. Fraley, Executive Director



2023 was an exciting year for the Housing Authority of the City of Erie. We housed 234 new individuals and families, an increase of 32 over 2022. I am proud to say that thanks to the hard work of our maintenance staff and local contractors these residences are comparable to the best rental units in the private sector.

HACE focused on improving our properties in 2023. Major projects included replacing all the roofs in the Pineview Housing Development, installing entry doors in all of Harbor Homes and Harbor Homes Annex, installing windows at Bird Drive, Better Housing and part of the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, painting the exterior of Agnes Priscaro and Eastbrook Apartments, installing metal roofs at over 40 scattered sites, completely renovating over 60 bathrooms in Harbor Homes, floor replacement in vacant and occupied units throughout public housing with high-grade laminate flooring, heating and air conditioning replacement at Friendship and Curry/Schell Apartments along with façade and balcony work at Schmid Towers.

Additionally, HACE will have completed over \$1,000,000 of extraordinary maintenance projects. This includes a tree maintenance and removal program.

The HACE Better Housing Development is in the 3rd year of a five-year plan to bring the units up to modern day standards. Projects have included replacing all entry doors and windows, upgrading the electric delivery system from 60 to 100 amps, installing new furnaces and air conditioning, hard wiring smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and renovating units up to modern day standards. 2024 will see outside façade work.

HACE continues to provide multiple support social services including on-site community policing, youth recreation program, licensed childcare services, creative arts programming, adult education and family self-sufficiency programs, domestic violence counseling, health education and on-site dental services. HACE and its social service partners provide on-site services valued at several million dollars to residents of public housing and voucher holders in the HACE Housing Choice Voucher Program.

At HACE our staff and program partners live by the motto of It's About People. In 2023 the HACE Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) awarded Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher FSS graduates \$92,043 in funds from their family escrow accounts. Two of these graduates used the FSS funds towards the purchase of their first home.

The Ellen Curry Foundation in partnership with HACE awarded nine new and twenty-nine total private elementary school Ellen Curry scholarships and 8 Louis J. Tullio Scholarships along with its 2nd John E. Horan Scholarship, totaling \$68,950.

As we move into 2024 HACE will continue to modernize its properties, provide much-needed social services, assist residents as they move towards Family Self-Sufficiency and work to improve the neighborhoods around HACE neighborhoods. I want to thank the HACE Board of Directors and staff for their commitment, guidance, and hard work in living our motto of "It's About People". I encourage everyone to visit the HACE website at [www.hace.org](http://www.hace.org) to follow all the exciting things that will come to fruition in 2024.



## Tiny Homes – Community Shelter Services

The Housing Authority of the City of Erie Board of Commissioners approved funding of \$20,000 for a second Tiny Home in partnership with Community Shelter Services. Tiny Homes allow homeless families to be reunited and provide much needed opportunities for homeless individuals with disabilities to have their own place to live and thrive. Five tiny homes have been built to date with 12 planned to complete the Kiwanis Village.

“Residing in the Housing Authority of the City of Erie’s Tiny Home, Chris faces the challenge of being hearing impaired. Recognizing his unique needs, the tiny home has been specially equipped to accommodate and support his disability, aiming to enhance his focus on finding permanent housing.”

**Diane Lazette**  
Executive Director, Community Shelter Services



## Better Housing Continues to See Improvements

Improvements continue at Better Housing with additional improvements planned for 2024! Since purchasing the property in January of 2019, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) has applied for and received three PHARE (Pennsylvania Housing Affordability & Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund) grants totaling \$750,000 from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to assist with renovations. To date the Housing Authority has replaced all the windows and exterior doors, upgraded the electric panel boxes from 60 to 100 AMP service, replaced the furnaces and are in the process of installing central air conditioning in 40 of the 50 apartments. In 2024 HACE will begin plans to undertake exterior renovations that will include replacing the front and rear entry stoops and replacing the stucco with cement board siding. To date, between grant funds and HACE funds totaling nearly \$2,000,000 have been invested to bring the Better Housing properties up to modern day standards.



## Erie Free Taxes

HACE in partnership with the Multi-Cultural Resource Center (MCRC) will offer free Volunteer Income Tax Preparation (VITA) services for Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8 participants at the MCRC John E. Horan Garden Apartments site located at 730 Tacoma Road. Tax preparation services will be available from January 29th through April 15th. For more information or to schedule an appointment call 814-454-1266.



# A Holiday Season to Remember!

Every holiday season HACE and its partners offer events and activities designed to make the season a little more enjoyable and festive. In 2023 as in past years the kick-off event was a Turkey giveaway sponsored by Widget Financial with distribution assisted by members of the C.O.P.P.S. Program, staff from MCRC and HACE maintenance employees. Over 100 Turkeys with all food items necessary for a great Thanksgiving Dinner were provided.

HACE and HomePlus staff sponsored holiday dinners and parties at all four high-rise building sites. A door decorating contest was held at all four high-rise buildings, culminating with some incredibly artistic and interactive doors. The top three winning doors received gift cards.

Food distribution programs including Produce Express, and the Food Rescue Program were held in several HACE neighborhoods and Schmid Towers and Friendship Apartments. Thanks to a partnership with the Second Harvest Food Bank and the Food Rescue Program these much-needed food programs are held monthly throughout the year. Special thanks to the C.O.P.P.S. Officers, HomePlus staff, and HACE staff led by Cherie Kinem for their assistance in distributing the food products.

Special recognition to Sabrina Ferguson who organized a Secret Santa gift program for 20 children of participants in the HACE Family Self-Sufficiency Program. The Secret Santa gifts as they have been for the past four years were provided by HACE staff members.

A special treat was Tammie Johnson from SafeNet taking her girl scout troop to homes throughout the city to sing Christmas carols. The Holiday season ended with Cherie Kinem and her partners from the YMCA Kids Club, the C.O.P.P.S. Program, HomePlus and HACE distributing gifts and books from Santa door to door throughout the John E. Horan Garden Apartments.

It's all about  
**people**







John E. Horan  
'Garden Apartments'  
Community  
Center

DAYCARE

More Potassium  
than a Banana



## 2024 Goals and Objectives

At the beginning of each year the HACE Board of Commissioners and staff develop goals and objectives for the coming year. In 2024 six (6) goals along with corresponding objectives were approved by the HACE Board of Commissioners. Everything the HACE staff works to accomplish in 2024 is guided by these six goals.

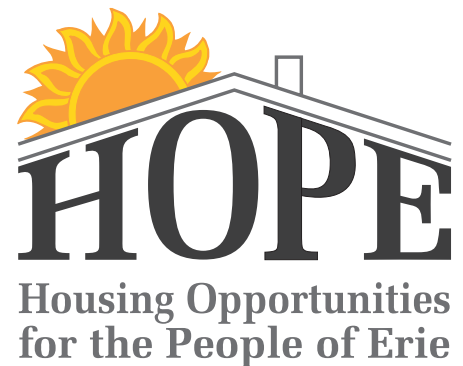
1. Implement On-going Human Resources Program that develops a plan for Board and Staff Succession.
2. Improve Livability of Public Housing.
3. Provide Housing Assistance for more Families and Individuals.
4. Operate all Programs Efficiently within Budgetary Limits; and Improve Staff Productivity and Effectiveness.
5. Enhance Self-Sufficiency of Public Housing/Section 8 Residents and Promote a Greater Sense of Community and Pride Among Residents.
6. Improve Neighborhoods Surrounding Public Housing.

The 2024 Goals and Objectives are on the HACE website at [www.hace.org](http://www.hace.org).

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## HACE Submits 2024 Agency Plan

Each year, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) submits a PHA Plan to the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The PHA Plan is a guide to the Housing Authority's policies, programs, operations, and goals for meeting the housing needs of low-income families in the Erie community. The Housing Authority of the City of Erie began the planning process for the 2024 Agency Plan on September 1, 2023, when all residents were notified of the agency plan schedule in their monthly rent statements. One resident meeting open to all residents was conducted at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments on October 4th and three Resident Advisory Board (RAB) meetings were held on October 11th, 18th and 24th at the Housing Authority's Administrative Offices to obtain feedback on policy changes as well as capital needs projects.



Policy revisions submitted with the 2024 Agency Plan include:

- Low-Income Public Housing Admissions & Occupancy Policy (ACOP) was updated to reflect changes required by the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA).
- A chapter was added to the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Administrative Plan to provide the housing authority the opportunity to project base Housing Choice Vouchers to specific units. Project Basing Vouchers is done through a competitive process and designed to accomplish two major objectives for the housing authority:
  1. To increase the supply of assisted rental housing for eligible individual families; and
  2. To improve the efficiency and utilization of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

After a 45-day comment period ending on December 12, 2023, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie presented the 2024 Agency Plan to the HACE Board on December 21, 2023, for approval. The Board voted unanimously to approve the plan which was then submitted to the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) on January 12, 2024.



## Ellen Curry Foundation, John E. Horan Memorial Scholarship

Ellen Curry Foundation members Michael R. Fraley, Cherie Kinem and Onjanette Jackson presented Chrinesse Mpunga with the 2023 John E. Horan Memorial Scholarship. Ms. Mpunga a past recipient of the Louis J. Tullio and John E. Horan Memorial Scholarship is a 1st. year law student at George Washington University Law School.

## C.O.P.P.S. Officers

HACE has had a partnership for over twenty-five years with the City of Erie Bureau of Police to provide Community Policing Programs (C.O.P.P.S.) in HACE communities. This partnership has dramatically reduced crime in HACE communities and given residents a feeling of security and mutual respect with the police officers assigned to the Quebec Unit. Sgt. Tom Covatto supervises the Quebec Unit and has been with the unit for 22 years. Officers Tom Borrelli and Mike Roofner have been on the unit for 16 years and 11 years respectively.

The recent additions to the Quebec unit are Officer Joe Martin and Officer Bob Meehan who have been with the unit for 2 years and Officer Shawn Wagner who has been on the unit for 8 months. Officer Martin and Meehan have been City of Erie Police Officers for 8 years while Officer Wagner has been with the department for 11 years.

In addition to patrolling all Housing Authority neighborhoods the members of the Quebec unit participate in community events/activities throughout the year. These include monthly food distributions, activities in the high-rise buildings, youth recreational programs including the Learn to Fish and Golf Programs. The officers also partner with HACE and SafeNet to protect victims of domestic violence through utilization of the Lethality Program.



*Officers Robert Meehan and Joseph Martin*

## Security Guards at Friendship Apartments & Schmid Towers

Beginning February 12th HACE will partner with Gittings Security Services to provide a security guard from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. Sunday through Saturday at Schmid Towers and Friendship Apartments. The security guards will be responsible for monitoring activities in the building, identifying any persons in the building without permission, patrolling the building throughout the evening, monitoring building systems and being on-site for any emergencies that may occur. The security guards will also submit daily patrol and incident reports to HACE staff.



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"It's About People!"

Visit us at [hace.org](http://hace.org)

# Community Service Partnerships

For the past 25 years HACE has been involved in several community partnerships to assist organizations in trying to improve Erie's underserved communities and populations. HACE spends over \$2,000,000 annually to partner with area social service agencies to bring their services on-site.



Harbor Homes Early Connections  
Childcare Program



John E. Horan Garden Apartments  
Dafmark Creative Arts Program

These include the City of Erie Bureau of Police (Community Policing), YMCA of Greater Erie (Youth Recreation), Community Health Net (Dental Services), Early Connections (Licensed Childcare), E.F. Smith Quality of Life Learning Center (Adult Education and Family Support Services), John F. Kennedy Center (Youth and Senior Support Services), SafeNet (Domestic Violence Casework Services), Gannon University Nursing (Health Education) and MCRC (Adult Education and Family Support Services).