



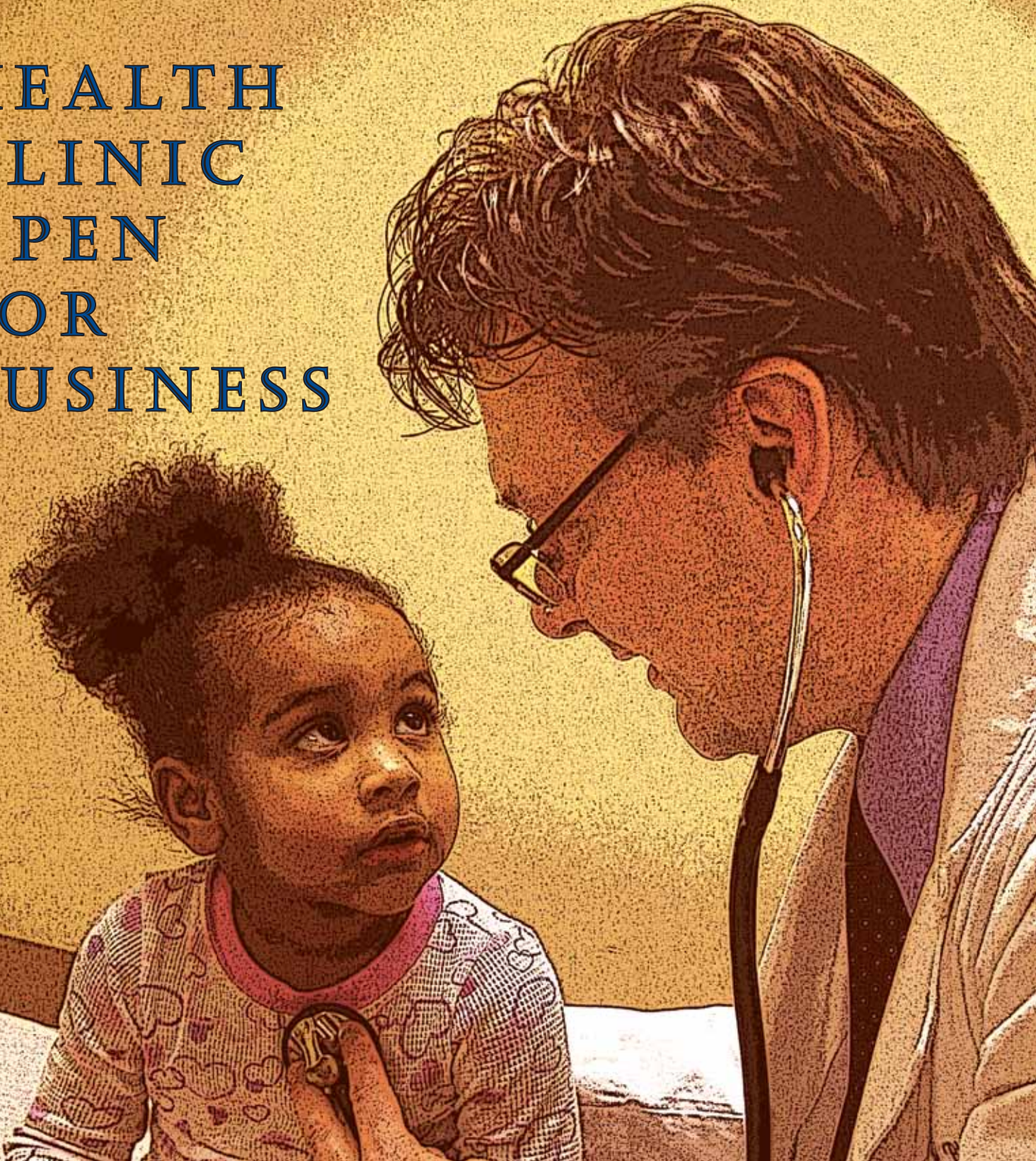
Winter 2009-10
Volume 26, Number 1

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ERIE

serving the community with excellence

News & Views

HEALTH
CLINIC
OPEN
FOR
BUSINESS



MHEDS-HACE Health Clinic Opens at Harbor Homes

For Stacie Chapman, a young mother of three, the new health clinic at Harbor Homes is a “blessing.”

“I live right around the corner from the clinic. Daycare for my kids is in the same building. And I don’t have to call off work to take my children to see the doctor – the clinic has evening hours.”

The MHEDS medical center staff at Harbor Homes began seeing patients on January 4. Less than three weeks later, Chapman had her children checked out at the center’s clinic by nurse practitioner Joseph Phillips.

Her three young ones, Alexander, seven, Damaria, five, and Niveana, two, fidgeted inside the waiting room as they waited to be examined by Phillips – and when he came in breezily, wearing his scary white coat, they pretty much stopped breathing.

The first medical diagnostician to work at the clinic, Phillips can perform checkups, administer inoculations, prescribe medications, and make physician referrals. The children and their mom waited for him to do one or all of the above. When Phillips entered the exam room, Niveana, shown on this issue’s cover, stared at the doorway as if a portal to another dimension had just opened.

The family health care program at 1841 East 18th Street, Harbor Homes, is provided by HACE in partnership with the Multi-Cultural Health Evaluation Delivery System (MHEDS). The facility offers family health services to the 3,000-plus residents within walking distance of Harbor Homes, Harbor Homes Annex, the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, Eastbrook, and Scattered Sites.

“We’re very excited about it,” said Agnes R. Priscaro, the driving force behind the new clinic. It was Priscaro who applied for, and obtained, a three-year grant to staff it from the Pennsylvania Department of Health. She is the executive director of MHEDS as well as the Erie Housing Authority Board Chair.

Minority and low-income communities in Erie County and surrounding areas have long depended on MHEDS for much-needed primary health care and support services. Indeed, MHEDS celebrates its 38th anniversary this year.

This organization deals with those who are isolated from health care by their low incomes or geographic areas, and also those of other nationalities and cultural backgrounds who don’t speak English and need translators. It serves 39 ethnic groups, ranging from Somalians to Sudanese, Turkish, Bosnians, Russians, Ukrainians, Iraqis, Armenians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Kurds and Asians – all immigrants or refugees to the U.S. and Erie. It provides interpreters/caseworkers to guide people through the health care system, providing person-to-person health education, translation, interpretation, and referrals to other medical and social service agencies. The interpreters/caseworkers serve as “critical bridges,” Priscaro said, between under-served populations and the health care system.

“I feel it’s a wonderful opportunity for people to get health care in their neighborhoods,” Priscaro said. “It reminds me of years ago when you had a doctor in your neighborhood you could walk to. Physicians back then lived among the people and knew them well. Now, with so many of our residents without cars or transportation and with gas prices the way they are for those who do have cars, and with limited incomes, people are reluctant to travel for health care. Our new facility enables our residents to walk to the doctor’s office.”



Shown here, from left, are the MHEDS workers at the Marsha Ann Hall Learning Center, 1841 East 18th Street: Lesya Bugera, L.P.N., from Ukraine; Keyla Bevier, caseworker, Puerto Rico; Maritza Juarez, C.N.A., caseworker, Puerto Rico; Jasmina Zucic, C.N.A., caseworker, Bosnia; Agnes R. Priscaro; and Janna Cosic, L.P.N., Bosnia.

Thanks to the full range of services the health center offers, from pre-natal care, nutrition, exams, and hospital referrals, “We’re able to take care of our residents’ health needs, stressing preventive care,” Priscaro said.

“Proper preventive health care will reduce the need for emergency room visits, which are uncomfortable for the patient and costly to the community,” she said.

“I just feel it’s a wonderful opportunity for MHEDS and the Housing Authority and the people both agencies serve,” Priscaro said.

“Our caseworkers and interpreters understand their own people and live among them, socialize with them, and even worship with them,” she said. “Their children go to school with them. Therefore, they have trusting relationships with their clients and are the perfect bridge between agencies and people.”

The medical practitioners and physicians at the center are available Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Fridays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The center features a waiting area, two exam rooms, bathrooms and a large parking area. It is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Niveana didn’t utter a whisper during the whole exam – she just sat there quietly as the stethoscope moved very slowly over her chest.

“Perfectly healthy!” Phillips finally said, smiling at her mother. He announced the same for the other children. Their mother smiled as he finished and then left the room.

“I love you,” Niveana said, as Phillips went out the door.

HACE Counts on You to Be Counted

Executive Director's Message



John E. Horan

The first United States Census, as called for in the Constitution, took place in 1790 to determine the number of seats each state would have in the House of Representatives. Today, 220 years later, the Census is still used for that purpose.

I have been encouraging people since 1970 to complete their census forms. Every year, the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion to states and cities, based, in part, on census information. The number of residents in Erie, as determined by the

census, will help to decide the allocation of federal funds for community service programs, such as school lunches, senior citizens centers, and new construction of roads and hospitals.

The census questionnaire for 2010 will be short and sweet for most residents – just 10 questions, and it should only take 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked your address, the name, gender, age and race of everyone living in your household.

By law, the U.S. Census Bureau cannot share an individual's responses with anyone, including other federal agencies or any law enforcement entity. Even if you are not yet a U.S. citizen you need to be in the tally. It will mean more funds for Erie and our neighborhoods.

The Housing Authority has agreed to provide Census Help Sites at Schmid Towers, Friendship Apartments and the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, where census workers will be available in March and April to help residents with their census questionnaires. This will also include translation services, if needed.

April 1, 2010, is Census Day throughout the United States. You count, so make sure you are counted.

From Residents and Friends

GARDEN APARTMENTS CALLED VERY NICE, VERY QUIET

I lived in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments for 14 years. I'm leaving to buy a house. I enjoyed living there because it was a very nice area, and it was very quiet. While I was a tenant, the employees and staff of the Erie Housing Authority treated me very well.

Luis Maldonado

John E. Horan Garden Apartments.

SCATTERED SITES HOME ALSO CALLED VERY QUIET

I lived in the 2100 block of Geist Road for 18 years before purchasing a new home. I never had a problem at my Housing Authority home. The area was quiet. The staff at the Erie Heights office was really nice. If I had a plumbing problem or any problem at all, it was

taken care of immediately. I was treated very well. We will miss living there.

Ivelisse Ortiz

Scattered Sites

ALL QUIET -- AGAIN

After three-and-a-half years, I am moving from Schmid Towers. I have to go to Puerto Rico for a family emergency and have no returning date. Let me just say I enjoyed living at Schmid Towers because 1) It was a quiet place; 2) It was nice and neat; 3) It was close to everything; 4) It had good security; 5) It had nice people; 6) It had secure parking. I was treated great, and with so much respect and everyone was very friendly.

Jesus Rodriguez

Schmid Towers

WE WERE TREATED WITH RESPECT

We lived at Pineview for 13 years. Finally, we decided we wanted a bigger place and our own space, like a front and back yard. We enjoyed living at Pineview. Most of my children spent their childhood growing up at Pineview and the employees helped us when something broke. We were treated with respect and whenever we needed anything the staff was there for us. They helped us through a lot. Also, my children went to a good school in the area. Another reason we liked the location is that we were close to the Millcreek Mall.

Firdos Hameed

Pineview Apartments

Spending the Holidays at

HACE

1 In what has become an annual event, children from the YMCA Kids Club who are members of the Kiwanis Youth Choir sang Christmas carols for members of the Housing Authority staff. The Choir has been directed since 1992 by Authority Board Chair Agnes Priscaro. The children sing at area senior centers, including two of the Authority's buildings for seniors – Schmid Towers and Friendship Apartments.

2 The GECAC HomePLUS Program sponsored a series of four holiday variety shows, one each at the seniors' buildings – Schmid, Curry/Schell, Ostrow, and Friendship.

3 The Inter-Agency Team's holiday meeting was held again this year at the Crime Victim Center, 125 West 18th Street. The team is comprised of the social service agencies which provide direct services to HACE residents. Included in the group is the YMCA, the Gannon Nursing Center, GECAC and the HomePLUS Program, SafeNet, and the I.U. 5 Intermediate Unit, as well as many others. The team meets monthly to discuss ongoing services that are available to HACE residents.

4 The Housing Authority staff at the Central Office, 606 Holland Street, gathered with Kiwanis Youth Choir members and Agnes Priscaro around the Christmas tree.

5 More than 100 children received Christmas Gifts from Santa Claus and his helpers at the YMCA Kids Club Annual Christmas Party. The party was held at the Downtown YMCA.

6 Dancing at the HomePLUS shows at the seniors' buildings were, from left, Lisa Kasbee, Lynn Yusz, Rose Knepper, and Anna Kirk. Each of this year's four shows featured 13 dance numbers and 13 costume changes.



it's
about
people



HACE HAPPENINGS

HACE Cites Accomplishments

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2009, the Erie Housing Authority was providing housing assistance to 2,922 families. A total of 380 new families, elderly, and persons with disabilities received housing assistance in 2009. Our housing inventory is in better condition than ever. Credit must again go to the employees who carried out the day-to-day tasks resulting in these impressive accomplishments.

These statistics are provided in the Authority's Annual Report for 2009, approved by the HACE Board in January. Other highlights for 2009 include:

INCREASED OCCUPANCY: The Authority averaged 91 percent occupancy each month during 2009, up from 90 percent in 2008. The Tenant Selection Office processed 1,275 applications and housed 163 new tenants in 2008. Another 217 new families received assistance through the HACE Section 8 Program.

RESIDENT SAFETY PERCEPTION: A 2009 Penn State Behrend safety survey showed our residents feel safe in public housing. Specifically, 71 percent said they felt safe walking alone at night in their neighborhood; 83 percent said that they felt safe alone at night in their home; 88 percent said they feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood during the day.

CRIME RATE: The total number of criminal incidents remains low – 360 – as it has been for the last eight years. The crime rate in public housing has decreased about 70 percent since 1993, due to good response time and proactive policing by Authority C.O.P.P.S. officers.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM: As of December 31, 2009, there were 61 families in the Section 8 Self-Sufficiency Program, compared to 55 families in 2008.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS: In 2009, all of our playgrounds were made handicap-accessible. The Authority also awarded contracts to make two apartments in the Dombrowski Apartment complex accessible to persons with disabilities. This work should be completed early this year. Also in 2009, the Authority continued to provide funding for two Section 8 Project developments that serve special needs populations – Columbus Square Apartments and the *Lodge on Sass*.

CONTINUED HOMEPLUS PROGRAM: The HomePLUS program provides case management and supportive services to many residents of both Schmid Towers and Friendship Apartments. Direct services (i.e., home support, personal care, and chores) have been provided since August 1, 1998. At present, 388 residents are receiving direct services. GECAC, service provider for HACE, estimates that 232 residents have been maintained in their homes because services are adequately meeting their needs. Additionally, 36 residents (9 at Schmid and 27 at Friendship) are nursing home eligible, but have been given a waiver from the Commonwealth to receive nursing home services in their public housing apartments.

HACE Submits 2010 Plan

The 2010 Agency Plan unanimously approved last December by the Board of the Erie Housing Authority has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The Plan for 2010, submitted to HUD on January 13, details how \$3,666,789 in capital grant funds will be spent in Erie.

HUD approval is expected by April 1.

The Plan is a document submitted annually to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by each housing authority in the country, which details how authorities will spend federal funds for construction, renovation, programs, equipment, and services.

According to the 2010 Agency Plan, the greatest portion of this year's \$3.6 million capital fund budget – \$2,529,948 – will go toward improving and maintaining dwelling structures. These improvements include such things as a new playground at East 18th and June streets; replacing water lines inside apartments; replacing gas meters and electrical panel boxes; replacing vinyl siding with cedar; and replacing furnaces at scattered site dwellings.

Of the \$3.6 million, \$1,314,448 will be allocated to energy conservation measures alone, such as the new energy-efficient furnaces.

Other planned expenditures include \$287,647 for the Authority's Community-Oriented Police and Probation Services (C.O.P.P.S.); \$380,427 for HomePLUS social services at Schmid Towers and Friendship Apartments; and \$55,284 for congregate evening meals at Schmid Towers, Friendship Apartments, and Ostrow Apartments.

The Agency Plan also contains information on the proposed use of capital funds over the next five years.

The 2010 Plan was drafted in October, with assistance from residents from each Housing Authority neighborhood. A formal public hearing on the plan was held December 16. The Authority considered all comments before taking final action approving the plan on December 28.

HACE Does Its Share with P.I.L.O.T.

In 2009, HACE contributed \$64,452 to the City of Erie as Payment in Lieu Taxes (P.I.L.O.T.). In 2009, HACE also paid the City \$467,931 for services and functions ranging from \$400,000 for the C.O.P.P.S. police patrols in public housing to \$62,931 for systematic code enforcement around public housing neighborhoods, to \$5,000 for Celebrate Erie and the Farmers Market. HACE also contributed P.I.L.O.T. payments of \$25,339 to the Erie County, along with the 2009 Authority-funded county services costing \$111,202, including adult and juvenile probation officers, and the county library. HACE contributed \$80,692.96 to the Erie School District as well as \$803,693 for education-related services for children and adults, including English-As-A-Second-Language, GED, basic education, and after-school and summer programs.

HACE HAPPENINGS

Update: All Stimulus Funds Committed to Projects

HACE has now obligated all of the funds – \$4.6 million – it had received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The Authority awarded contracts at the November Board meeting for work that included replacement of the balance of the Authority’s older furnaces with high-efficiency furnaces at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments – work that had begun last fall. Also awarded were contracts for renovations to the Authority’s service buildings at 2110 and 2120 East 10th Street at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments.

In addition, a contract was awarded for electrical improvements in 65 apartments at Pineview. All contracts are expected to be completed this summer. Already completed is work that began last fall to replace the antiquated electrical distribution system at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments. Still ongoing is the replacement of 200 apartment entry doors at the Authority’s Eastbrook and Agnes Priscaro developments, and the installation of high-efficiency furnaces at Harbor Homes and Harbor Homes Annex.



A backhoe is shown digging the trench for the new underground power lines at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments. The new lines replace the 70-year-old overhead lines that were often knocked out of service by high winds and ice storms.

The Erie Housing Authority has published its 2010 calendar, “Recession Proof Recipes (Each for under \$10).”

The calendar has been mailed to residents and friends of the Erie Housing Authority. Copies are also available to the public, for as long as they last, at the Authority’s Central Office, 606 Holland Street.

In the 2010 calendar, HACE features recession-proof dinner recipes that can be prepared for a family of four, each for under \$10. The recipes all came from our public housing residents.

The Authority has featured the *Services* (2003) offered to assist our residents on their journey toward economic self-sufficiency; the *Heroes of Public Housing* (2004), former residents who have gone on to make significant contributions to society; the *Gardens of Public Housing* (2005); *Art in Public Housing* (2006); *The Children of Public Housing* (2007); *Photography* (2008) produced by children who reside in public housing; and, the *History of Public Housing* (2009). All our calendars are available for viewing on our web site: www.hace.org.



HACE Fills Two Positions

ANNA KIRK has been appointed the new manager of Friendship Apartments, East 11th and French streets. The building, which houses seniors and persons with disabilities, has 200 one-bedroom apartments including 10 fully-accessible units. Anna worked as an accountant in the controller’s office for 14 years. She has an accounting degree from Mercyhurst College and a degree in education from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Her new position became effective February 1, 2010.



LYNETTE BURKHART, is the new GECAC Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator, effective January 14th. Lynette will be assisting families in the program to achieve Self-Sufficiency. (See Story, Page 8). There are now 60 people in the program with six residents having graduated. It is her job to increase the number of participants to 70 in 2010. Lynette has been an intern in the HACE controller’s office for a year as an accounting assistant. She has a degree in business from Gannon University.





PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Erie, PA
PERMIT #492

Agnes R. Priscaro, *Chair*
C. Ted Dombrowski, *Vice Chair*
Bishop Dwane Brock, *Treasurer*
Trelane C. Sherrod, *Commissioner*
Donald C. Meyers, *Commissioner*
John E. Horan, *Executive Director
and Secretary*
Donald E. Wright, Jr. Esq., *Legal Counsel*

[Check us out at www.hace.org](http://www.hace.org)

History, Erie Public Housing

– Go to HOME PAGE

“Right to Know”

– Go to “HOME”

Press Releases

-- Go to “NEWS”

Early Bird Winners

– Go to “NEWS”

‘It’s About People’

Everyday HACE Heroes

Here we recognize unsung heroes among volunteers, staff, and tenants who inspire us all to do more and to do better.

Sam Jethroe’s Daughter Hits a Homer in Housing Program

The “apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” John Horan said, while honoring, at right, Sheila Overton for being the most recent graduate of the Authority’s Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

Overton’s father was Sam “The Jet” Jethroe, Erie’s most famous baseball player and renowned for being one of the first African Americans to integrate major league baseball. He was the American League Rookie of the Year in 1950.

Now a student at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Overton has the ambition and drive of her father, Horan said. She works full-time at Stairways Behavioral Health. A mother of two, she only has two semesters to go to achieve her degree in Social Work.

Thanks to the Section 8 Self-Sufficiency Program, she had enough money to pay last semester’s bills and register for the current semester.

The Self-Sufficiency Program works this way: Participating families agree to work toward becoming self-sufficient. This means reducing and eventually ending their dependence on welfare and Section 8 financial assistance.

When a family or individual enters the program, the Erie Housing Authority establishes an escrow/savings account for them based on the rental subsidy they receive from the Housing Authority. As the participant improves his or her job, education, and income, the Authority reduces the amount of money it pays toward the participant’s rent and instead, puts that money into an interest-bearing savings account for the family. When the family is self-sufficient – no longer receiving welfare, housing, or other subsidies, the money in the escrowed savings account becomes officially theirs.

Overton participated in the FSS program for nine years and is looking forward to eventually purchasing her own home. “The FSS program allowed me to work at Stairways and to



go to school, pay bills, and take care of my children,” Overton said. “I would certainly encourage everyone to participate in this program.”