

NEWS & VIEWS

Helping to make
HACE neighborhoods
amongst the **safest**
in the **City of Erie**



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The Community-Oriented Police and Probation Service model breaks down barriers between the police and the public. It provides the opportunity for the police and residents to work hand-in-hand, getting to know one another at community events, building relationships, and making their neighborhood safer in the process. This unit serves as a model for how we would like all policing to evolve in Erie.

”

Joe Schember, Mayor



Be Safe!
Be Kind!
Practice Social Distancing!
Wear a Mask!

Executive Director Commentary

By Michael R. Fraley, Executive Director

In 2020 we have all had to learn how to deal with stress and life changes that have occurred on what seems like a daily basis. We have had to deal with a pandemic, the plague of institutional racism, an economy that has suffered greatly causing all of us to change our lives, change how we do business and confront what kind of world we will have going forward.

During these challenging times, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) has, like other businesses, made changes to continue to fulfill its mission and purpose. The credit for our success this year must go to the HACE staff, our Board of Commissioners, our program partners (social service and business) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), who early in the process made programmatic changes and provided funding to give us the tools to continue serving those in need of safe, quality and affordable housing.

It is important going forward that we work together to find common ground and purpose to understand that our children are watching to see what type of world we will provide for them. Will it be one of love and compassion or one of divisiveness and hate? The choice is ours. The time is now. If we are not willing to look at each other as fellow human beings with value we will fail, and the cost will be living in a world where no one finds true happiness.

Despite these challenges, HACE has continued to conduct the business of providing Public and Section 8 housing to seniors, families and individuals with disabilities. In the first eight months of 2020, we have housed 165 new individuals/families maintaining an occupancy rate of 97.20% in public housing and provided 67 new participants with a Section 8 voucher maintaining a 96% utilization rate in Section 8.

Our residents pay their rent. Despite COVID-19, 87% of our residents currently are up to date with their rent payments. This is a higher percentage than August of 2019.

Currently, 126 (41 Section 8 & 85 public housing) families are participating in the HACE Family Self-Sufficiency program (FSS). They work with an FSS caseworker to address debt, improve their employment/educational skills and work towards becoming economically self-sufficient. In 2020 so far, seven (7) FSS participants have graduated from the FSS program and purchased their first home.

HACE has also joined with several social service partners and thanks to funds provided through the HUD CARES Act, has been able to provide support services to residents and our staff. These services have included providing hot meals to seniors and disabled individuals, disinfecting our high-rise apartment buildings, partnering with the Erie School District to reward public housing students who participated in online learning and sponsoring sites for COVID-19 pop-up testing. Going forward, HACE will be distributing 8,000 reusable masks to all residents and partnering with GECAC HomePlus, Gannon University and Community Health Net to provide on-site flu shots for residents.

It is important to remember that there will come a time soon where we will have moved on from COVID-19 and resume our normal lives with hopefully increased love and respect for our fellow human beings. Until then wear a mask, practice social distancing, wash your hands regularly and be kind to each other, no matter your differences. Lastly and most importantly, on November 3rd exercise your most important right, the right to cast a ballot and VOTE for the candidates of your choice.

Community Oriented Police and Probation Services (C.O.P.P.S.) Program

The HACE Board of Commissioners approved a two-year contract to continue its community policing program with the City of Erie. The Community Oriented Police and Probation Services Program (C.O.P.P.S.) is a partnership between the City of Erie Bureau of Police, Erie County Adult Probation and SafeNet, and has been in existence for over twenty years helping to make HACE neighborhoods amongst the safest in the City of Erie.

The COPPS program consists of six City of Erie Police Officers, an Erie County Adult and Juvenile Probation officer and a SafeNet domestic violence counselor.

The COPPS officers patrol all HACE neighborhoods daily from noon to 4:00 a.m. The strength of the program is the participants' willingness to be involved with the HACE community, especially by participating in social service activities offered throughout the year. It is not unusual to see the officers read to an Early Connections Childcare Center

child, teach youth to fish or golf, have a nature experience or on a cold day, build a snowman. The officers have been known to drop in and call bingo at a senior event, teach a senior safety class, assist a resident in distress, ride their bikes as part of their patrols and yes, arrest someone committing a crime in a HACE neighborhood. They have become fabrics of the community and are respected by and respect HACE residents.

The COPPS Program and SafeNet were recently recognized by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) for implementing a Lethality Program which identifies victims of domestic abuse and connects them with a domestic violence counselor 24 hours a day. The COPPS officers have a satellite office in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments.



“Statistically speaking, public housing is the safest real estate in the City of Erie. And that’s attributed to the Quebec Unit.”

Bishop Dwane Brock

“One of the things I like about being an officer is that I have an opportunity to interact with the residents of public housing. We’re able to take the uniform off and be in regular clothes and participate in activities with them, and let them see that we’re ordinary people. We’re fathers. We’re sons. We’re just like everybody else. It gives them an opportunity of seeing us not only as authority figures but as actual members of the community.”

Officer Bellotti

2021 Agency Plan

The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) has begun the process of developing its 2021 Agency Plan as required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Housing Authority staff with assistance from residents, including the HACE Resident Advisory Board comprised of residents from each HACE development, will review significant changes in HACE policies and discuss Capital Fund construction projects that have been completed and are being planned for the next five years.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions the Agency Plan process will begin with a resident Zoom conference call meeting scheduled for September 22nd. Residents can register to participate in the resident meeting by contacting HACE Deputy Director Dusti Dennis at 452-2425. Following the resident meeting there will be three Resident Advisory Board meetings also utilizing a Zoom conference call format. Once these meetings are completed, a draft of the 2021 Agency Plan will be available for public review and comment for 45 days beginning October 29th.

The 2021 Agency Plan process will be completed with a public hearing on December 16th, followed by HACE Board review and consideration at their December 21st board meeting. Final submission to HUD must be completed by January 15, 2021.

Beautifying Our Neighborhoods

Vegetable Garden Winners



1st Place Winner

**Akeela Alsaeedi and
Hayder Al Sabari**

Pineview Housing Apartments

2nd Place Winner

Sha and Gangi Gurung

John E. Horan Garden Apartments



Summer of 2020

The summer of 2020 will go down as one of firsts because of COVID-19. For the first time in over 20 years, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) did not have its Annual Family and Senior picnics, cancelled our many summer youth programs, and our playgrounds were closed. HACE did offer youth activities at the YMCA Kids Clubs, the John F. Kennedy Center and the Quality of Life Learning Center. The partnership with the City of Erie to operate the Rodger Young Pool continued on a smaller scale and lastly, HACE partnered with the Erie School District to recognize over 800 public and Section 8 youth who participated in online learning by sending them a \$25 Visa gift card.



Winners from over 50 entries were chosen for the HACE 2020 Garden and Vegetable contest. The entries were judged by HACE staff with two winners chosen from each group. The winners are awarded a \$50 gift card and all participants receive a certificate and a letter of appreciation for their efforts to make HACE neighborhoods beautiful.

Flower Garden Winners

1st Place Winner

**Alexander and
Lyudmila Hodakovsky**

Agnes Pricaro Apartments



2nd Place Winner

Carlie Lynch

Harbor Homes Apartments



CARE Funding

In response to COVID-19, the Department of Housing and Urban Development provided HACE with \$1,310,557 Coronavirus Response and Relief Efforts (CARE) funds. The monies are targeted to provide Housing Authority's with the financial tools to address the impact of the coronavirus. The grant funds must be spent by December 31, 2021. HACE has used the funds to provide hot meals for seniors/disabled residents, offer incentives for youth to participate in online learning, provide staff support, sanitize senior building elevators on a daily basis, purchase personal protective supplies including hand sanitizer and reusable masks, 8,000 of which are being distributed to public housing residents. The funds have also been used to purchase laptops and upgrade the HACE phone system to better utilize online conference calls and meetings. CARE funds were used to outfit all HACE offices with plexiglass to allow for safe interaction with residents and applicants.



Ellen Curry Foundation

Thanks to the generosity of the Ellen Curry Foundation thirty-three (33) young public housing and Section 8 participants were awarded Ellen Curry Scholarships to partially pay for them to attend private schools in grades K through 8. In addition, six (6) college-bound public housing and Section 8 participants were awarded \$1,250 Louis J. Tullio Scholarships.

The following students were awarded Tullio Scholarships:



Fatimah Al - Dhumeen attending Penn State Behrend and majoring in Biology.



Nar Basnet attending Mercyhurst University and majoring in Business Management.



Shukuru Lusi attending Gannon University and majoring in Public Services & Global Affairs.



Chrinesse Mpunga attending Gannon University and majoring in Legal Studies/Criminal Justice.



Braah Sharbaji attending the University of Pittsburgh.



Hedaya Sharbaji attending Penn State Behrend and majoring in Biochemistry.

The Ellen Curry Foundation was founded utilizing funds provided by former Housing Authority board member Ellen Curry who upon her death left the bulk of her estate to fund scholarships for public housing and Section 8 students to attend private elementary schools and college. Since its inception in 1989, the Ellen Curry Foundation has awarded \$584,609 to one hundred and fifty-eight (158) school-age youth and the Louis J. Tullio Scholarship Program has awarded \$123,875 to one hundred and nineteen college (119) students. In 2020 thirty-three (33) students are receiving Ellen Curry Scholarships and six (6) college bound students are receiving Louis J. Tullio Scholarships.

Every summer the Ellen Curry Foundation sponsors its major fundraiser, the Ellen Curry Scholarship Golf Tournament. This year's golf tournament was played on August 3rd at the Lake Shore Country Club and despite COVID-19 protocols that did not permit the traditional sports banquet, still raised over \$40,753 to provide this year's scholarships. Special thanks go out to all of the Ellen Curry Foundation's loyal donors and participants, especially to our major sponsors Marquette Savings, Konkol Construction LLC, Waste Management, Miller Sewer and Drain LLC, Northwest Bank and William T. Spaeder.

HACE would like to thank the Ellen Curry Foundation Board members, Jessica Horan-Kunco, Edward Drexler, Attorney Tim Sennett, Cynthia Grayson, Cherie Kinem, Linda Lewis and Michael R. Fraley for their commitment to the youth served by the Housing Authority of the City of Erie.



Edward Drexler (left) and Michael R. Fraley

Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation and Enhancement Fund (PHARE)

On August 13th, Governor Tom Wolf announced the awarding of 214 housing and community development initiatives in 67 counties totaling \$45.79 million dollars as part of the PHFA PHARE fund. The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) was awarded \$250,000 in PHARE funding that will be used to install new windows and security screens in the recently acquired 52-unit Better Housing family development located at 16th and Holland.

The PHARE grant is part of the HACE five-year plan to bring the Better Housing properties up to modern-day standards by replacing windows, adding security screens, replacing entry doors, upgrading the electrical system, installing new furnaces and adding air conditioning.

HACE acquired the Better Housing properties from Catholic Charities in 2019 to ensure that the properties remain available as affordable housing that provides safe, quality and affordable homes to low-income families.



2020 Neighborhood Projects

2020 has been a very busy and productive construction year for the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE). Almost every HACE neighborhood has seen or is seeing some type of modernization work. HACE has spent over \$2,000,000 in 2020 on a variety of construction projects despite the constraints of COVID-19.

Project L at various developments includes new roofs on 23 buildings, new metal roofs on 16 scattered site units, replacement of community room and kitchen floors at Ostrow Apartments, sidewalk replacement in multiple locations, replacement of drywall ceilings in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, concrete stoop replacement in 40 units, resurfacing and striping parking lots in Pineview development, replacement of hallway flooring in Friendship Apartments, balcony repairs in 60 units, and electrical upgrades including meter or panel box replacement at 137 units.

Included in Project L was a complete renovation of the Quality of Life Learning Center (QLLC). This included new flooring, new heating and air conditioning, upgrading of the electrical system, renovation of the bathroom and kitchen, new lighting and painting of the walls in the entire facility.

Project M, which was approved by the HACE Board of Commissioners in August, will include balcony repairs in 40 units at Friendship Apartments, replacement of 68 exterior doors and frames in Harbor Homes, repair of 60 back entryways at Harbor Homes Annex, installation of cement siding in six building in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, installation of a new door security system at Ostrow Apartments and exhaust fan replacement at Friendship Apartments.

These projects are all part of ongoing yearly plans to modernize and improve HACE properties to better serve and provide our residents with safe, quality and affordable housing.

2020 Resident Safety and Services Survey

The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) has contracted with the KeyStone Research Corporation (KSRC) to conduct its 2020 Resident Safety and Services Survey. KSRC will send the survey to all heads of households who have lived in public housing for at least six months. The survey is designed to measure how safe residents feel in their neighborhood, how responsive the HACE management and maintenance staffs are in meeting their needs, and if they would recommend HACE to friends and family. New this year, the survey will be offered in six different languages to better assist residents in understanding and responding to the survey. All information in the survey is confidential. Residents who submit a survey have the chance to win one of six \$50 gift cards. One lucky resident will win a grand prize of a \$250 gift card.

Housing Authority of the City of Erie Board of Commissioners

Bishop Dwane Brock – Chair

Patricia E. Mickel – Vice Chair

Ned Smith – Treasurer

Sean Dugan – Commissioner

James E. Martin – Commissioner

Michael R. Fraley – Executive Director and Secretary

Timothy M. Sennett, Esq. – Legal Counsel



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League of Woman Voters Mural

On Tuesday, August 18th, HACE Deputy Director Dusti Dennis and Resident Initiatives Coordinator Cherie Kinem attended the dedication of the League of Women Voters Mural located at 7th and State.

The mural commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote. Executive Director Mike Fraley stated that HACE was pleased to be a part of the very momentous occasion.

Deputy Director Dusti Dennis made the following remarks at the event:

"We appreciate the opportunity to be one of the sponsors of this mural celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Women getting the Right to Vote. We want to thank the League of Women Voters, Erie Downtown Partnership and the local artists for this amazing tribute to those who fought for our rights. Educating our residents in the importance of their vote through partnerships with local organizations such as the League of Women Voters is something the Housing Authority is committed to so that the voices of all are heard on election day."



VOTE SO THAT YOUR VOICE IS HEARD!!!!