



"It's About People!"

NEWS & VIEWS



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Housing Authority of the City of Erie

WINTER 2019



Executive Director Commentary

By Michael R. Fraley, Executive Director

2019 has been a very productive year for The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) in meeting our goals of providing safe, quality and affordable housing to as many City of Erie residents as possible. In January 2019 HACE completed the purchase of the Better Housing Erie development, adding 52 new units for low-income families to the over 2,100 properties currently being owned and operated by HACE. Between Public Housing and Section 8, HACE provided housing assistance to 3,189 families, an increase of 94 families being served from 2018.

In 2019 HACE paid all three taxing bodies Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) payments totaling \$382,162, the largest amount since payments began in 1941.

HACE continues to offer social services throughout our neighborhoods to assist our residents on their path to economic self-sufficiency. In 2019, 145 families were enrolled in the HACE Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) with 114 establishing escrow savings accounts that they can access upon reaching their established goals and graduating from the FSS program. Nineteen participants graduated from the FSS program in 2019, with seven purchasing their first home. In total 53 HACE residents moved out of public housing in 2019 to purchase a home.

HACE awarded \$4,393,497 in construction contracts to update and modernize its properties in 2019. Work projects included installation of windows and security screens, updating electric panel boxes, rerouting of domestic water lines, roof replacement, parking lot paving and exterior painting.

HACE began the application process for the Housing and Urban Development Rental Assistance Program (RAD).

Year-end statistics show that HACE neighborhoods continue to remain among the safest in the City of Erie. These safe neighborhoods are thanks to our longtime partnership with the City of Erie Police Department to provide on-site community policing services in all HACE neighborhoods. Mayor Schember recognized our joint efforts as an example of how community policing should be provided throughout the City of Erie.

2020 will be an exciting year for HACE. The HACE staff and Board of Commissioners will develop the 2020 – 2024 Strategic Plan outlining future goals and objectives for the organization. The History of Public Housing booklet will be completed and distributed to the community. Construction contracts totaling over \$2,000,000 in Capital Fund items to modernize and improve public housing neighborhoods have been put out for bid.

HACE will conduct its bi-annual Resident Safety and Services Survey that gives residents the opportunity to express their feelings on how safe their neighborhoods are and how the HACE staff does in providing safe, quality and affordable housing.

In 2020 the United States government will be conducting the 2020 Census. HACE will work with the Census officials and local agencies to make sure that everyone is counted. It is important that low-income families' voices are heard and their numbers are counted to insure that much-needed housing assistance is continued.

The City of Erie is experiencing a renaissance that HACE wants to be a partner in making happen. HACE will continue to work with local government and business leaders to ensure that our residents benefit and are included in the positive changes that are happening. We are proud of our safe neighborhoods where individuals and families have quality and affordable housing and are provided services and opportunities that assist them on their path to family and economic self-sufficiency. Our motto has always been and will always be, "It's About People."

2020 Agency Plan

The Housing Authority Board of Commissioners approved the 2020 Agency Plan for submission at its December 16th board meeting. The Agency Plan is part of a yearly process required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The process began in September with resident meetings including four meetings of the HACE Resident Advisory Board. The Resident Advisory Board is comprised of residents from every HACE neighborhood and apartment building. These meetings are used to hear residents' concerns about needs in their neighborhoods and to review policy changes, new programs and capital projects HACE is proposing in 2020.

Items included in the 2020 Agency Plan submission were revisions to the HACE Pet and Reasonable Accommodation Policies. The HACE plan to begin the application process for the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program was also included in the Agency Plan.

A 45-day comment period followed the resident meetings giving community members and program partners an opportunity to comment on the Plan. Upon the completion of the 45-day comment period a public hearing was held. The process is completed upon HACE Board review and approval. The 2020 Agency Plan

was submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on January 13th. Final approval is expected in early spring.

Once the 2020 Agency Plan is approved HACE is permitted to begin obligating and expending monies from the 2020 Capital Fund to continue capital repairs and modernization work at HACE properties.

Capital Fund work items totaling nearly \$2,000,000 were completed in 2019 including the replacement of over 900 windows and security screens, painting of scattered site homes, electrical upgrades, roof replacements, rerouting of domestic water lines and chimney repairs. Capital Fund work items totaling over \$2,000,000 are scheduled in 2020 including renovations at the Quality of Life Learning Center, roof replacements at Bird Drive and the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, installation of metal roofs at several scattered sites, balcony repairs and hallway floor replacement at Friendship Apartments, stoop replacements and parking lot resurfacing. These completed projects and the planned future projects are part of the Housing Authority 5-year plan to maintain all of its properties up to modern day standards.

Copies of the 2020 Agency Plan are available for review on the HACE website, www.hace.org or by visiting any HACE office.

John E. Horan Garden Apartments YMCA Kids Club Future Stars Live Youth Theater Production

The YMCA Future Stars presented their Annual Live Theatre Production "No Christmas For Me" on Thursday, December 12th at the Gannon Schuster Theatre. Director Angela Howell and her 20 plus young performers and stage crew performed several live skits and musical numbers before a packed house. They were assisted by students from Gannon University. Following the show, YMCA of Greater Erie CEO Gerry Van DeMerwe presented the cast with their



"Future Stars" commemorative T-shirts. Special recognition goes to Show Director Angela Howell for her never-ending commitment to these youth and her desire to give them a live theater experience that will benefit them greatly as they journey on their path of success.

Happy Holidays!



Holiday Door Decorating Contest

The Housing Authority held its Annual Holiday Door Decorating Contest at its four high-rise apartment buildings. Gift cards were awarded to the top three winners in each building. Over 100 residents participated in the contest.

First Place Winners:



Ostrow Apartments
Shirley Shoop



Friendship Apartments
Kathleen Jones



Schmid Towers
Maria Morales



Curry/Schell Apartments
Kathrine Crolli

HACE HOME BUYER EDUCATION COURSE

The HACE Home Buyer Education Course, which started in January, is intended to help participants become financially self-sufficient and own their own homes. Many people are ready to take the next step but are intimidated by the homebuying process. The program is designed to alleviate some of those fears and show people how they can achieve their goals.

Invitations for the program were sent out to residents of the John E. Horan Garden Apartments as well as participants in both the Section 8 and Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency programs. The turnout was fantastic -- 24 participants attended the first class.

The Home Buyer Education Course lasts eight weeks, and each class covers a different topic. Week one began with participants creating vision boards encompassing what they would like their dream homes to look like. Other courses focus on credit, budgeting and mortgage terminology. Participants can attend classes at their choosing or attend all eight.

Deng Rag, who immigrated from Sudan, is very thankful for the Erie Housing Authority and the Home Buyer Education Course. "Without the Housing Authority, I could not have gotten to where I am today," said Rag. "I came here to start my education at Mercyhurst University in Intelligence Analysis. Without the Housing Authority, none of this could have happened. They provided me with a place to live. When I was working, and in school, the Housing Authority was able to adjust rent so I had peace of mind to focus on my education. I appreciate these guys, they're awesome, and I hope everyone out there takes advantage of this opportunity!"

Participants understand the importance of the information. "It means a lot," said Ashley Pulliam. "I have three kids, so I have to do right and be right for them," Ashley said her main goal is to get a home of her own with a backyard and a puppy for her kids.

Chatiqua Keyes-Carr spoke on what it means to be financially self-sufficient. "To me, it means that



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- Deng Rag

my children don't have to worry about anything, and we have our own home," Chatiqua said. One of the most important things she learned from the course was setting goals and went on to share her own. "To make sure I continue to progress and to make sure my children learn from it and follow the same path."

For more information on the Housing Authority Public Housing and Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency program contact FSS caseworkers Sabrina Tolbert or Deng Rag at (814) 456-2028.

Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE)

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Since 2008 HACE has partnered with the Multicultural Community Resource Center and the Quality of Life Learning Center to offer Public Housing and Section 8 participants the opportunity to participate in a Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS). Since its inception over 250 participants have taken advantage of caseworker services, debt reduction and budgeting classes, job training and home ownership programs. Participants who obtain employment while participating in the FSS Programs have their rent increases put into an escrow that they can use upon graduating from the FSS Program. Many of those graduating use the monies in their escrow account towards a down payment for their new home. For more information on the FSS Program contact Sabrina Tolbert or Deng Rag at 456-2028.

New Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency Homeowners

KaraAnn Pierce

“ Being in the Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) while working helped me. I learned the responsibility required to own a home and was able to use a portion of my FSS Escrow Savings Account as a down payment to purchase the house I had rented for 11 years. It feels pretty cool just knowing that I am a homeowner. I would absolutely recommend the FSS Program to people in the Section 8 program who want to learn the requirements for purchasing their first home. ”

Lisa Hurst

“ The FSS Program was very beneficial in my ability to purchase a car and my home. Both caseworkers were very helpful, especially Sabrina who talked to me like a best friend and helped me every way she could. She helped me enroll in credit counseling classes at the St. Martin Center, where I learned how important my credit score was in purchasing my car and house. She taught me the importance of patience and being prepared. It was nice to have someone who would listen to me and make me laugh when the process was stressful. I would definitely recommend the FSS Programs to others, in fact I already have. ”

Matenin Camara and Fanta Konneh

“ Mrs. Camara's daughter, Fanta Konneh stated that the HACE FSS program was very accommodating with her mother, working with her to save money in her FSS escrow account for a down payment on their new home and assisting her in understanding the complicated home ownership process. She stated that the FSS Program was very beneficial to her mother and that she is very happy to have her own home. ”

Multicultural Community Resource Center

Since 2011 the Multicultural Resource Center Family Support Center has been providing services to public housing residents in the John Horan Garden Apartments that promote client self-sufficiency and improved economic, physical and/or social well-being. Services offered at MCRC help eliminate barriers to employment. Services focus on developing and strengthening life-skills that can transfer to employment, family literacy, positive mental and physical wellness and tolerance of cultural diversity resulting in an overall better quality of life that promotes economic and family self-sufficiency. Services include GED and English as a Second Language classes, family support groups, referrals to other needed social service agencies, case management services and use of a computer lab. In addition, MCRC offers programs that promote job preparation, related education and training and job placement. For more information contact Courtney Tirak or Eddie Ocasio at 454-1266.



**Housing Authority of the City of Erie
Board of Commissioners**

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2020 Calendar Highlights the Future

The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) 2020 Calendar highlights examples of the “Best and Brightest” of our young residents. Each month showcases either a graduate or current college student who was or is a resident with HACE.

You will enjoy learning about their diverse backgrounds and their very lofty goals. These youth are reflective of what hard work, determination and setting goals early can accomplish. We have Biology, Political Science, Pre-Law, Psychology, Sociology, Nursing, Criminal Justice and Pre-med majors. Graduates are working in finance, communications and software compliance.

No one description or landscape can paint the picture of the youth we celebrate in our calendar. It is our hope to show you that HACE is more than just buildings, it is a community where self-sufficiency is fostered every day of the year.

