

NEWS & VIEWS



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Reaching Out During the Holiday Season

COVID-19 did not stop the Housing Authority and its program partners from reaching out to residents during the holiday season.



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

Executive Director Commentary

By Michael R. Fraley, Executive Director

As we move from 2020 to 2021 it is important that we reflect on the challenges and accomplishments of the past year and set goals for the coming year. The past year has been dominated by the onset of the coronavirus and the effect it has had on Housing Authority staff, residents, Housing Choice Voucher Program participants and applicants for housing.

The coronavirus forced the Housing Authority to change the way we do business and learn to live in a new and dangerous world. Zoom meetings, virtual inspections and drop boxes became the new normal way to do business.

Thanks to the amazing staff at the Housing Authority and the resilience of our residents and applicants, we are serving as many families at the beginning of 2021 as we were serving at the beginning of 2020. This would not have been possible without the support of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who provided additional funds through the CARES program.

Looking forward to 2021, HACE hopes to be a continuing partner in providing COVID-19 testing, offering vaccines to residents, and supporting residents in returning to a more normal day-to-day life. It is our hope to begin to provide our vast array of social services to residents on a more personal and in-person basis. It is our hope to again plan for what will be our 24th Annual Family Picnic at Waldameer on August 13th and make it a "Back to School Celebration."

HACE goals in 2021 include continuing to research the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program, completing a physical needs assessment of all HACE properties, bidding out up to \$4,000,000 in Capital Fund construction projects to update and improve our public housing properties, continuing to improve the HACE website and make it more resident friendly and maintaining 97% occupancy at all HACE properties.

The most important possession for a family seeking economic and family self-sufficiency is a safe, quality, affordable place to live. HACE provides this for over 3,100 individuals and families in its public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. It continues to be our goal to be a partner with our residents as they transition from HACE to their own home. Over forty (40) residents purchased their first home last year, many thanks to the assistance of our Family Self-Sufficiency program. In addition, HACE provided internship opportunities to 19 youth attending college and scholarship assistance to 43 elementary and college-age students in partnership with the Ellen Curry Foundation.

Let's make 2021 a year of hope and accomplishment both individually and for our community. For this to happen everyone must wear their masks, stay home if you are feeling sick, utilize testing sites and get your vaccine when they are available.

Please visit our upgraded website at www.hace.org to see what is new at HACE. Be safe and have a great 2021!

2021 Goals and Objectives

Every year the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners establishes goals to be carried out by HACE staff. The six goals give a broad outline of what HACE and its staff should accomplish as an agency. Under each goal is a list of objectives that need to be accomplished to meet the overall goal. For a list of the 2021 Goals and Objectives, visit the HACE website at www.hace.org or contact the HACE administrative offices at 452-2425 and a copy will be sent to you.

2021 HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ERIE GOALS

- 1 *Continue ongoing human resources program that maintains process for board and staff recruitment and succession.*
- 2 *Improve livability of public housing.*
- 3 *Provide housing assistance to more families/individuals.*
- 4 *Operate all programs efficiently within budgetary limits; and improve staff productivity and effectiveness.*
- 5 *Enhance self-sufficiency of public housing/Housing Choice Voucher Program tenants and promote greater sense of community and pride among residents.*
- 6 *Improve neighborhoods surrounding public housing communities.*



2021 Agency Plan

On January 6, 2021, the HACE Board of Commissioners approved the 2021 Agency Plan for submission to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on January 15, 2021. This is the end of a yearly process to develop an agency plan that sets Capital Fund Projects in HACE neighborhoods, revises and updates HACE policies and identifies any significant amendments to HACE operations.

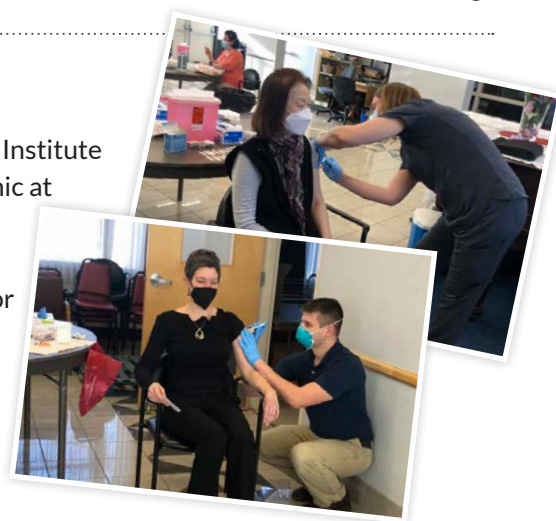
The process began with a resident meeting on September 22nd, followed by four Resident Advisory Board meetings and concluded with a Public Hearing on December 29th. All meetings were held virtually utilizing a Zoom Conference meeting format. During these meetings and during a 45-day comment period, residents and the general public had the opportunity to learn about HACE projects and goals and to offer input and ideas to improve conditions in their neighborhoods.

The submitted 2021 Agency Plan is available for review at HACE offices and on the HACE website at www.hace.org.

COVID-19 Vaccine Day

The Housing Authority of the City of Erie in partnership with the LECOM Institute for Successful Aging sponsored its first on-site COVID-19 vaccination clinic at Schmid Towers on Wednesday, February 17th. Pharmacists from LECOM administered the shots. Sign-ups were coordinated by HACE Resident Initiatives Coordinator Cherie Kinem and HomePlus Program Coordinator John Pete. 107 vaccines were administered to Schmid Tower residents and HACE staff.

Vaccines will be administered to HACE residents at Friendship Apartments on February 24th and Ostrow Apartments on March 3rd. Pictured is the first Schmid Towers resident to receive her vaccine and Schmid Towers Manager Elizabeth Twohig receiving her vaccine. Special thanks to LECOM Director of Pharmacy Jaime Babiak for her assistance in organizing the event.



Holiday Activities

COVID-19 did not stop the Housing Authority and its program partners from reaching out to residents during the holiday season.

- The season started with a turkey giveaway at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments that was sponsored by Widget Financial and Onex Inc. Over 100 turkeys were passed out by staff from Widget and Onex along with members of the COPPS Program and staff from MCRC, the YMCA and the Housing Authority.
- The Housing Authority sponsored hot meals on Thanksgiving and Christmas for over 500 residents from Schmid Towers, Friendship Apartments and Ostrow Apartments. The meals were prepared by Michael Hooks from Michael Making Life Better and delivered by HACE Resident Initiatives Coordinator Cherie Kinem along with HACE staff, the GECAC HomePlus Program and members of the COPPS program.
- Every year the YMCA Kids Club sponsors Christmas parties for over 100 children living in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, Erie Heights and Pineview. Because of COVID-19 it was not possible to have large indoor parties, so staff from the YMCA Kids Club, COPPS officers and HACE staff visited over 100 children at their homes to help Santa Claus deliver gifts and spread holiday cheer. ONEX Inc. sponsored gifts for twenty (20) of the children.
- The HACE Annual Door Decorating Contest was held at Schmid, Friendship and Ostrow Apartments. Over 70 residents participated with the winners in each building awarded Visa gift cards.
- Staff from the John F. Kennedy Center delivered gifts to 51 Harbor Homes families. The Quality of Life Learning Center sponsored gift baskets for ten (10) families.



We at the Housing Authority would like to thank our staff, our program partners and the staff from Widget and ONEX Inc. for their overwhelming generosity during these challenging times. You proved that nothing gets in the way of a giving heart.

Family Self-Sufficiency Angel Tree Program

Despite COVID-19, the HACE Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Angel Tree event was still able to bring some holiday cheer to 19 youths whose families participate in the FSS program. This is the third year that the event was held. The event was organized by FSS Caseworker Sabrina Ferguson and included 14 staff members who were able to choose their “Angels.” The “Angels” had the age, gender, and top three special gifts each youth wanted for Christmas. Staff then purchased and wrapped the gifts to be handed out during December. HACE staff member, Jill Beach and FSS Caseworker Sabrina Ferguson were Santa’s little helpers and delivered the gifts to all the households using contactless delivery. In addition to the presents, bags of candy were donated by Eddie Ocasio, Employment Specialist and Coordinator/Team Manager at the Multi-Cultural Resource Family Support Center located in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments. Thank you to Sabrina, Jill and the HACE staff for making these children’s day a little more special!





Ellen Curry Foundation Scholarships

The Ellen Curry Foundation is taking applications for the Ellen Curry and Louis J. Tullio Scholarship Programs. Both programs are open to Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program residents.

Ellen Curry Scholarships

The Ellen Curry Scholarship is open to any resident seeking to attend parochial school (Luther Memorial is also included) and scheduled to enter Kindergarten through 3rd grade in September 2021. The scholarships are need based and do not exceed \$2,000. Scholarships are renewed yearly through 8th grade if the recipients remain in the Public Housing or Housing Choice Voucher Programs.

Louis J. Tullio Scholarships

The Louis J. Tullio Scholarship is open to any resident 18 to 24 years of age entering or continuing in college full time in September 2021. Six \$1,250 scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors, undergraduate and graduate students. One of the six Tullio scholarship winners will be selected as the John E. Horan Memorial Scholarship recipient earning a \$5,000 award.

For more information visit the Housing Authority website at www.hace.org or call 452-2425 and ask for Cherie Kinem.



New Staff and Retirements

Long time managers Kimberly Preston (Lake City Family Development) and Anna Kirk (Friendship Apartments), along with Executive Secretary Lynn Little, retired in early 2021. Their commitment and dedication to the residents they served, and the Housing Authority was exceptional. All three will be greatly missed for both their professionalism and the caring environment they created.



Masume Przybylski



Beverly Thorne



Jennifer Sheldon

Masume Przybylski who worked as a clerk at Lake City since 2016 was promoted in January of 2021 to begin her duties as manager of Lake City.

Beverly Thorne began her HACE career in 2002 as a clerk at Harbor Homes. She was promoted to manager of Friendship Apartments in February 2021.

In November 2020, the Housing Authority created the position of Associate Director of Compliance. HACE was pleased to hire Jennifer Sheldon. Jennifer has 20 years of experience in the supportive housing field, most recently working at Housing and Neighborhood Development (HANDS).

For more information on all three, visit the HACE website at www.hace.org.

2021 HACE Calendar of Success

The Housing Authority released its 2021 Calendar in December. The Calendar highlights success stories of past HACE residents who now work and live throughout the United States. Each month highlights an individual and a story on their path to success. The calendar includes a high school principal, a Lt. Commander in the Navy, an architect, college social workers, COVID-19 health department workers and education advocates. Anyone wishing to see the calendar can do so by visiting the HACE website at www.hace.org or by calling 452-2425 to have a calendar mailed to you.

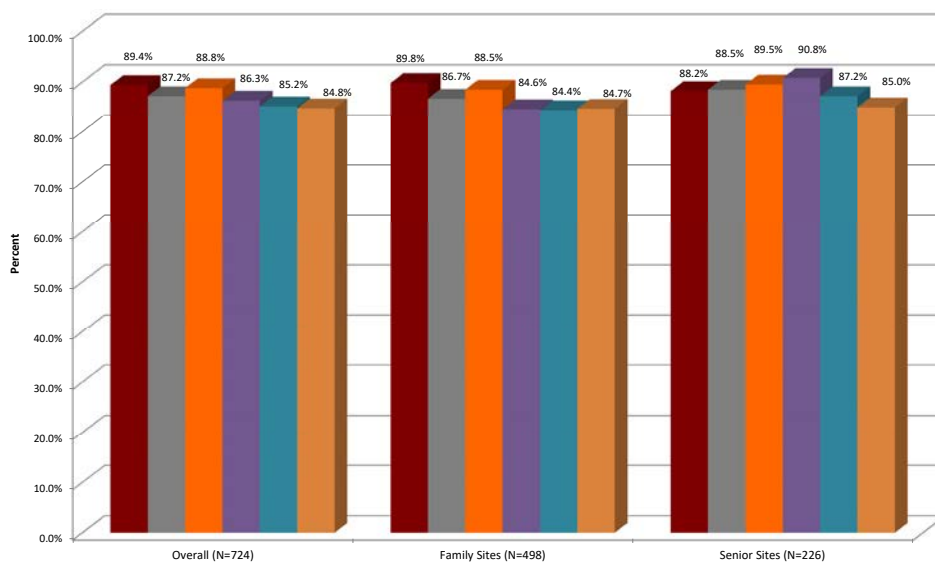


Resident Survey

The Housing Authority in partnership with the Keystone Research Center (KSRC), completed its biennial Safety and Services Survey of Housing Authority resident heads of households who have lived in public housing for more than six months. The survey, which has been administered for over twenty years, measures how safe residents feel in their neighborhood/apartment, how they feel about their interactions with their management office and maintenance department and whether they would recommend their housing to friends and family. Copies of the surveys are available online at www.hace.org.

HACE staff will use the survey conclusions to develop processes and procedures to better serve HACE residents. The 2020 survey shows that HACE residents feel safe where they live, are happy with their interactions with HACE and would recommend their housing to friends and family. The results are measured Authority-wide and by individual development, allowing HACE staff to use the survey to improve the services we offer to our residents.

The three graphs below reflect the survey results in three key areas.



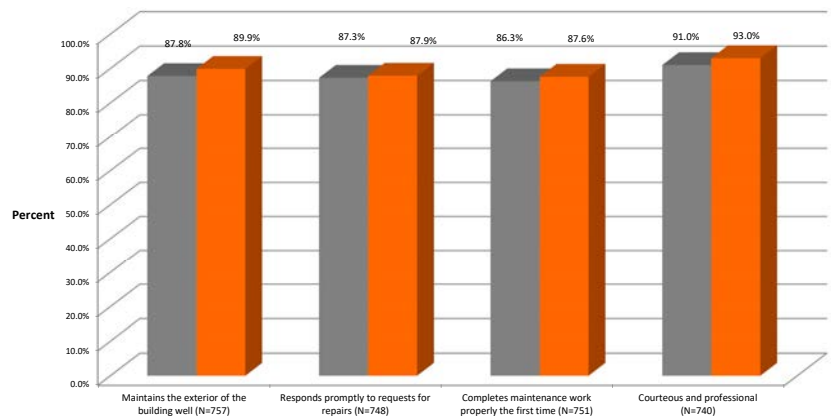
Residents' Recommendation to Friends & Family

2013 2014 2015 2016 2018 2020

Bi-Annual Comparison Satisfaction with Maintenance

Performance Criteria
Percent of "always" or "most of the time" responses

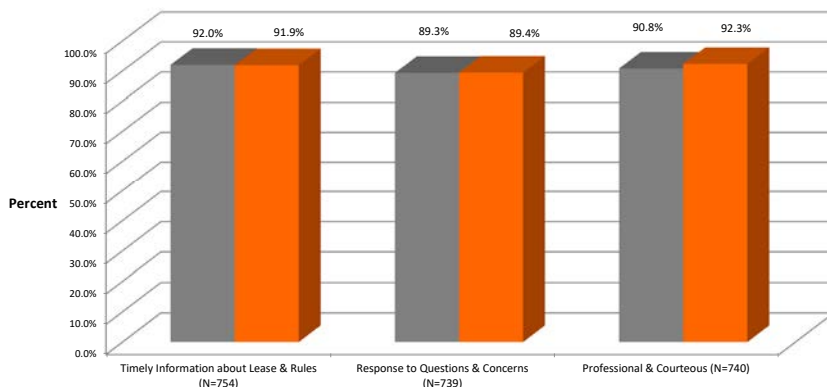
2018 2020



Bi-Annual Comparison Satisfaction with Manager's Office

Performance Criteria
Percent of "always" or "most of the time" responses

2018 2020



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

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HACE Website

The Housing Authority launched its new website at www.hace.org on January 29th. The website was created by Engel O'Neill and is designed to provide both applicants and residents with user-friendly information. Our hope is that the HACE website will be used for Housing Choice Voucher Program and Public Housing applications, provide residents and voucher holders with the ability to update information like income and family composition, to provide current news on HACE programs and activities, provide access to HACE employment opportunities and to give individuals utilizing HACE programs the ability to contact HACE staff.

