

NEWS & VIEWS



INSIDE

Mayor Schember's Neighborhood Visits
2022 Agency Plan
Summer Activities
New C.O.P.P.S. Program Members
Ellen Curry Foundation
Annual Garden Contest
PHFA Better Housing
Foster Youth to Independence Program
Second Harvest Food Bank Produce Express
What Home Means to Me Contest Winner



**HACE, Mayor Schember and
Our Community Partners
Celebrate the Opportunity
to Meet HACE Residents**



*Be Safe!
Be Kind!
Practice Social Distancing!
Wear a Mask!
GET A COVID VACCINE!*

Executive Director Commentary

By Michael R. Fraley, Executive Director

The spring and summer of 2021 has been very busy for the Housing Authority and our staff. We, like everyone else, are still facing the challenges of COVID-19 and working hard to deliver our much needed, affordable housing services to the residents of the City of Erie. So far this year we have maintained public housing occupancy at or near 98%, opened a new Section 8 waiting list, received a grant from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to provide upgrades to our Better Housing community, expanded our resident programs to pre-COVID-19 days, provided both COVID-19 testing services and vaccine sites to our residents and staff, graduated residents from our Family Self-Sufficiency Program and so much more!

I would like to thank the Housing Authority staff and Board of Directors for their ongoing efforts in reaching out to HACE residents to let them know we are still here to provide quality affordable housing and programs that assist their families in moving towards economic and family self-sufficiency. I would also like to thank Mayor Schember for bringing representatives of several City of Erie services to our communities throughout the summer to meet our residents.

Thanks to our community partners, HACE was able to provide on-site COVID-19 vaccinations to over 500 residents and staff. Plans are being made to provide on-site flu and booster vaccines this fall.

In 2021, HACE awarded over \$4,000,000 in construction contracts to repair and continue to bring HACE properties up to modern day standards. These projects include replacing all the entry doors at Harbor Homes and Harbor Homes Annex, replacing interior hallway flooring at Friendship Apartments, installing metal roofs at 20 scattered sites, new playgrounds at Eastbrook and Bird Drive, new boilers at Schmid Towers, installation of cement board siding on several buildings at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, replacement of the emergency generator at Curry/Schell, roof replacements at Pineview and Harbor Homes, replacement of water pipes at Lake City, renovating bathrooms in multiple sites and installing windows and security screens throughout public housing. Along with these major projects, residents will see several smaller projects being completed this fall and throughout 2022.

Thanks to two grants from the Pennsylvania Housing and Finance Association, the Housing Authority was awarded a contract to replace all entry doors, windows and security screens this fall at the Better Housing properties. In the spring of 2022, we will bid out upgrading the electrical system and installing new furnaces and air conditioning. This continues the Housing Authority's goal of bringing the Better Housing properties up to modern day standards. In 2022, the Housing Authority will reach out to residents to rename the property.

As we move into the second half of 2021, I encourage everyone to get vaccinated. Getting vaccinated will allow us to end the COVID-19 pandemic and move on with our lives.

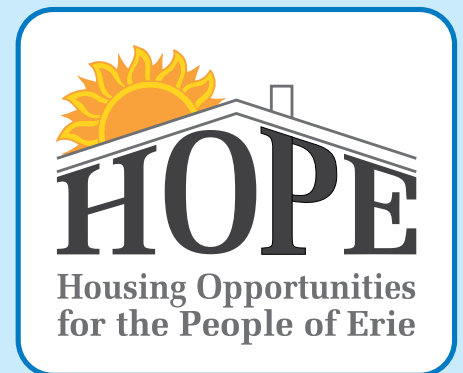
Neighborhood Visits

Mayor Schember brought representatives from the Police Athletic League, the City of Erie Police and Fire Departments to several HACE neighborhoods for meet-and-greets with HACE residents that included a much appreciated, old fashioned ice cream truck. They were joined by HACE staff program partners and members of the Housing Authority's C.O.P.P.S. Quebec Unit. Youth in the neighborhood were treated to a cool shower thanks to the Fire Department demonstrating how a fire truck works.



2022 Agency Plan

The Housing Authority (HACE) will begin the process of developing its 2022 Agency Plan with a Resident Meeting at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments Learning Center, 730 Tacoma Road, on September 22nd at 6:30 p.m. Public Housing residents are invited to attend the meeting to hear what HACE accomplished in 2020/2021 and hear what is planned for 2022 in the areas of capital improvements and resident programming. Attendees will also receive an update on the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (RAD).



Following the resident meeting, HACE will sponsor three Resident Advisory Board (RAB) meetings beginning Wednesday, September 29th at the Schmid Towers Community Room located at 153 East 6th. Any public housing resident wishing to be a member of the RAB should contact HACE Resident Initiatives Coordinator Cherie Kinem at 452-2425. Once these meetings are completed, a draft copy will become available for a 45-day comment period where any citizen of the City of Erie can send comments concerning the 2022 Agency Plan to the HACE administrative offices, located at 606 Holland Street.

Upon completion of the 45-day comment period on December 13th, the HACE Board of Directors will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, December 15th at 6:30 p.m. at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments Learning Center to hear final comments on the 2022 Agency Plan. The HACE Board will meet on December 20th at 1:15 p.m. at the HACE Section 8 Conference Room located at 606 Holland Street to give final approval of the 2022 Agency Plan. When approved, the 2022 Agency Plan must be electronically submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for final approval on or before January 14, 2022.



Summer Activities





Ellen Curry Foundation

The Ellen Curry Foundation held its Annual Scholarship Award Ceremony at the Erie Art Museum on July 26th. Thirty-nine youths were awarded Ellen Curry Scholarships, five college-bound students were awarded Louis J. Tullio Scholarships, and Chrinesse Mpunga was awarded the first John E. Horan Memorial Scholarship. Attendees were treated to a live theater production from HACE youth and Dafmark Dance Studio, a scavenger hunt of the Erie Art Museum, a display of HACE youth art works, and light refreshments.

Pictured from left to right are Michael R. Fraley, Chrinesse Mpunga, Michou Ntambwe and Jessica Horan-Kunco representing the Ellen Curry Foundation.

Chrinesse is entering her senior year at Gannon University, majoring in Law Studies. She just completed an internship with Erie Insurance and will be working part time with them during her senior year of college. Chrinesse credits her mother, Michou Ntambwe, with much of her success.



Pictured above, from left to right:

Juvenile Probation Officer William Fromyer, Officer Robert Meehan, Officer Joe Martin, Officer Tom Borrelli, Adult Probation Keith Burns, Officer Mike Roofner, Officer Marc Bellotti and Sgt. Tom Covatto.

Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) Community Oriented Police and Probation Services Program (C.O.P.P.S.)

Pictured are members of the HACE C.O.P.P.S. program. The C.O.P.P.S. Program is an over 20-year partnership with the City of Erie and Erie County Government to bring community-focused police and probation services to HACE residents.

This partnership has resulted in a dramatic decrease in crime in HACE neighborhoods and provided a real sense that the members of the C.O.P.P.S. Program have a positive influence on HACE residents' lives.

Annual Garden Contest

HACE staff chose the winners of our Annual Garden Contest. Over 50 residents had beautiful gardens that were considered in this year's contest. Winners were chosen from both Flower and Vegetable Garden categories. Each winner will receive a \$50 Visa gift card. In the Flower Garden Contest three winners were chosen. They were Erie Heights Resident Carol Agnello, John E. Horan Garden Apartments Resident Faiza Al Aboudi and Harbor Homes Resident Yevgeniya Zvyagintseva. Winners in the Vegetable Garden category were John E. Horan Garden Apartments residents Sha and Gangi Garung and Pineview residents Akeela Alsaedi and Haber Al Sabari.



Better Housing

During the past two years, HACE has received two grants from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to upgrade the Better Housing community purchased by HACE in January 2019. Contracts have been awarded from the first \$250,000 grant to install new entry doors, security screens and windows.

The second \$300,000 PHFA grant, received last spring, will be combined with HACE funds to upgrade the electrical system and install new furnaces and air conditioners. Bids will be sought for this second phase in the spring of 2022. These improvements and the ongoing day-to-day maintenance and management improvements are all part of a 10-year plan to bring the Better Housing properties up to modern day standards.

In 2022 residents will be asked to consider several new name choices for the properties. A formal announcement and dedication of the new name will be at a Meet Your Neighbor Day in June 2022.



HACE Awarded 24 Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers

In 2020, the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD), announced the availability of \$10 million to fund Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers on a non-competitive basis to housing authorities that partnered with public child welfare agencies. Following this announcement, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) began meeting with representatives from the Erie County Office of Children & Youth Services (ECOCY) to discuss the potential need for the FYI Vouchers within the City of Erie.

ECOCY identified 24 eligible youth aging out of the foster care system that expressed an interest in obtaining Section 8 Rental Assistance within the City of Erie. According to ECOCY, housing options are often a challenge for this age group due to availability. The unaddressed but possibly preventable housing needs, are the youth that are residing in homes of others, incarcerated or have unknown whereabouts.

An application for 24 Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers was submitted to HUD in April. HACE was notified in June that our request was determined eligible and funding is now available to eligible youth.

Referrals for the program must come directly from ECOCY and then the housing authority determines their eligibility for the FYI Voucher. Youth must be between the ages of 18-24, have left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, and be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Youth issued an FYI Voucher will receive support services through Bethesda Lutheran Services or Family Services of Northwest PA. The FYI Vouchers have a 36-month time limit. At the end of 36 months, participants will be transitioned to the mainstream Housing Choice Voucher Program if they still require assistance.

Second Harvest Food Bank Produce Express

Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) staff and members of the HACE C.O.P.P.S. Program and Inter-Agency Team partnered all summer with the Second Harvest Food Bank through its Produce Express program to provide monthly food packages to residents living in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, Eastbrook, Schmid Towers, Friendship Apartments and Ostrow Apartments. The food packages include frozen meats, dry goods, bakery items and fresh produce. Residents can pick the food up at the drop-off site and in many cases have food boxes delivered to their home by HACE partners. HACE and Second Harvest hope to expand the Produce Express program to additional HACE neighborhoods this fall.



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

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James E. Martin – Commissioner

Michael R. Fraley – Executive Director and Secretary

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What Home Means to Me **Calendar Contest Winner**

The Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies chose 9-year old John E. Horan Garden Apartments resident Zanyiah Kirkland as its First Place Winner and its representative in the Middle Atlantic Regional Council of National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials What Home Means To Me Regional Calendar Contest.

If Zanyiah wins at the regional level, her art work will be sent to the national poster contest with winners appearing in 2022 NAHRO What Home Means To Me Calendar.

