

# NEWS & VIEWS

## Family Self-Sufficiency Family Purchases Their Forever Home

*Another committed and hardworking Housing Authority of the City of Erie Family Self-Sufficiency Program participant purchases her forever home for her family.*

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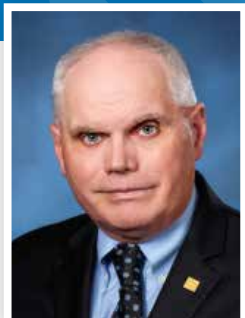
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**Housing Authority of the City of Erie**

SUMMER 2023



## Executive Director Commentary

*By Michael R. Fraley, Executive Director*

As I reflect on the past six months, I have observed just how important the HACE Motto of “It’s About People” is, and how much it is part of the daily operations at HACE.

I have toured multiple apartments and homes that have been made ready for new individuals and families to move into and call home. I have seen the pride our maintenance and management staff take in turning these beautiful properties over to a new HACE family.

I have watched the staff of MCRC work diligently with HACE residents through the Erie Free Tax Program to assist them in obtaining over \$1,000,000 in much needed tax returns.

Every day I see HACE Resident Initiatives Coordinator Cherie Kinem and her Inter-agency Team partner with programs through Second Harvest Food Bank and Erie Food Rescue to provide food to over 500 different residents.

I continue to be impressed with how Sgt. Tom Covatto and his fellow Quebec officers who are part of the HACE and City of Erie Community Oriented Police and Probation Services Program work daily to make our neighborhoods safe and bring a spirit of community partnership to all HACE areas. Whether it is participating in a Youth Learn to Fish, Golf, Reading or Nature Program or assisting in delivering food boxes or Christmas gifts door to door, C.O.P.P.S. officers are always working to make HACE neighborhoods safe and enjoyable places to live.

I want to commend the residents of Ostrow Apartments for working together to plant a beautiful flower garden for all their neighbors to enjoy. For over twenty years Sister Pat Lupo from the Neighborhood Art House has worked with HACE youth to plant gardens and have personal experiences with their natural surroundings. They have again this year planted a beautiful flower and vegetable garden in the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, that will be shared with residents when fully grown.

The summer of 2023 has been very eventful for our senior and disabled residents. John Pete and his GECAC HomePlus staff have assisted HACE in planning multiple on-site summer celebrations, bus trips to area restaurants and events, a cruise on the Victorian Princess, a summer ending Senior Picnic and numerous on-site health education and recreation activities.

These programs and activities are just a small part of the services HACE, and its Inter-Agency Partners, provide to residents throughout the year. Our Mission is to provide Safe, Quality and Affordable Housing but our Motto is “IT’S ABOUT PEOPLE” and as you can see, we take that motto seriously and live it daily!



## Family Self-Sufficiency Family Purchases Their Forever Home

Josanie Delvalle-Maldonado joined the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) in March 2019. When she signed up for the program, she stated that her “dream was to purchase a home so that her son had a place to grow up in with his own room, backyard and could eventually be passed down to him when he was older.” When Josanie began the program, she wasn’t working, but soon found a full-time job at Intra-National Home Care and started earning money towards her home purchase by increasing her income and having her higher monthly rental amount placed in an FSS Escrow savings account that she received upon her graduation from the FSS program.



Over a four-year period as part of her FSS Contract Josanie tackled her goals of increasing her credit score by attending one of the financial literacy workshops offered by Heather Yusko from Movement Mortgage that was held at the John E. Horan Garden Apartments (JEHGA) Learning Center. She then attended two home ownership courses, one online through the PHFA Program and another at the JEHGA Learning Center presented by Heather Yusko and began searching for a home. With housing prices skyrocketing and there being more buyers than houses for sale, Josanie spent approximately a year searching for her dream home and eventually found it in June 2023. After four years of hard work and taking advantage of all the benefits offered through the FSS program Josanie graduated from the Family Self-Sufficiency Program on August 1st.

Congratulations to Josanie and her family for everything they have achieved.

## A Summer of Neighborhood Improvements

Summer has also been a busy time for construction projects to improve HACE Communities. Projects have included installing 19 new roofs at Pineview, installing front and back entry doors in 365



apartments in Harbor Homes and Harbor

Homes Annex, refurbishing outside brick work and balconies at Schmid Towers, installing windows at 10 buildings on Franklin Avenue, exterior painting at Eastbrook and Agnes Priscaro apartments, installing metal roofs on 16 scattered site homes, sealing and striping parking lots in the majority of HACE communities, installing new stoops and handrails throughout Harbor Homes Annex and Pineview and installing new Heating and Air Conditioning units in all 63 Curry/Schell apartments. This is in addition to refurbishing over 175 apartments and homes for new individuals and families to move into our public housing communities.



# A Summer of Activities for **HACE** Residents

2023 was a summer filled with resident and neighborhood activities plus several major construction projects throughout every HACE neighborhood. The Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) takes pride in the multitude of activities we provide for residents of all ages throughout the summer. At its May Board meeting the HACE Board of Commissioners approved over \$250,000 for a wide range of summer activities for youth, adults, seniors, and families.

Neighborhood activities included Meet Your Neighbor Days at Eastbrook, the John E. Horan Garden Apartments, and a National Night Out Event for Erie Heights, Pineview and Curry Schell residents. The summer highlight was the 26th Annual Family Picnic at Waldameer Amusement Park attended by over 1,450 residents. The event included all day use of the park, informational tables staffed by over 20 social service providers and an outdoor cookout provided by members of the C.O.P.P.S. and HomePlus programs plus members of the Housing Authority Board.

HACE also provided financial support to operate the Rodger Young Pool in partnership with the City of Erie Parks and Recreation Program.

There were weekly youth activities throughout the summer including a Mentor/Youth Golf Program, a Learn to Fish Program provided by the Son's of Lake Erie, Bookmobile locations along with a week-long Reading Camp in partnership with the Erie County Library, recreation programs at the John F. Kennedy Center and Quality of Life Learning Center, a week-long nature program in partnership with Sister Pat Lupo from the Neighborhood Art House, sponsorship of a team in the Spoon's Basketball League and summer long creative arts activity's at the on-site Dafmark Art Club.

Senior activities included summer celebrations at Schmid, Curry Schell, and Friendship Apartments, a cruise on the Victorian Princess, bus trips to Presque Isle, local restaurants and the Erie Zoo culminating with a summer ending picnic for all four high-rise buildings for food, fun and games at Nick's Place in Edinboro, Pa.

Food Programs were a big part of the summer experience for HACE residents. On a monthly basis over 500 different residents received fresh fruits, vegetables, and groceries from the Second Harvest Food Bank and ready to eat meals in partnership with the Lake Erie Food Rescue Program. In addition, youth were served lunches and dinners at the John F. Kennedy Center and the John E. Horan Garden Apartments YMCA Kids Club.









# HACE 26th Annual Family Picnic

HACE held its 26th Annual Family Picnic at Waldameer Amusement Park in July. Over 1,450 residents and 100 volunteers participated in a day of fun filled activities, a picnic lunch and informational booths staffed by twenty plus social service agencies. Everyone attending received an all-day ride ticket, a picnic lunch and a t-shirt designed by a young Agnes Priscaro Apartment resident. Special thanks to the YMCA, the John F. Kennedy Center, and the E.F. Smith Quality of Life Learning Center for staffing the food service area. Extra special thanks to members of the Community Oriented Police and Probation Program (C.O.P.P.S.), HACE Board members, HACE Maintenance staff and John Pete from the GECAC HomePlus Program for manning the grill throughout the afternoon.



## Ellen Curry Foundation

The Ellen Curry Foundation provides scholarships for HACE Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8 youth in kindergarten through 8th Grade to attend private schools located in the City of Erie. Additionally, the Foundation offers Louis J. Tullio and John E. Horan Scholarships to college bound students from HACE families.

The Foundation held its annual Ellen Curry Golf Tournament at Lake Shore Country Club on August 7th. The 2023 Golf Tournament raised over \$44,500 after expenses that will be used to provide funding for 32 Ellen Curry and 8 Louis J. Tullio scholarship recipients in 2023/2024. Thank you to all the sponsors and special thanks to our Platinum Sponsors Marquette Savings and Konkol Construction.

Ellen Curry served as a HACE Board member for 29 years. Ellen promoted people programs and was instrumental in the creation of many of the social service programs provided to HACE residents currently including childcare services, senior support programs and youth recreation activities. Upon her death Ellen left a portion of her estate to establish the Ellen Curry Foundation and guarantee that HACE youth have educational opportunities afforded to all children.



## Better Housing Update and PHFA Partnership

HACE continues to make improvements in our Better Housing Communities. Since Better Housing was purchased by HACE in 2019 we have installed front and back entry doors, installed new windows and security screens, upgraded the electrical delivery system, and contracted for year-round landscaping and trash pick-up. A contract was recently awarded for the installation of hard-wired smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

In late 2023 contracts will be awarded for the installation of new furnaces and the installation of air conditioning units.

Most recently HACE was awarded a \$200,000 PHARE Grant from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). These monies along with funds from HACE will be utilized to replace stoops and handrails at all properties and remove stucco siding at six buildings and replace it with cement board siding.



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## Category One Social Service Providers Program Evaluation

The Housing Authority has been providing social service programs to HACE residents for over 30 years. While our own observations and comments from residents indicated that the programs were well received and accomplishing their goals, the HACE Board felt it was important to have an outside consulting firm conduct an overall evaluation of the services provided and did they meet the goals established by HACE.

Category One Consulting was selected by the HACE Board to evaluate the ten social service agencies providing year-round programs to HACE residents. They interviewed HACE staff, the social service providers, reviewed the service contracts of each agency and evaluated the monthly reports submitted by the social service providers.

The Category One report concluded that the agencies are fulfilling the scopes laid out in the Request for Proposals, the staffs provided the contracted services and had strong relationships with residents, felt extremely supported by the Housing Authority and in almost all cases provided services beyond the scope of their proposals. Challenges that were noted included residents needs for additional services have increased, staffing has become challenging and additional funds would benefit in the provision of more services.

Category One staff made a final report to the HACE Board stating that overall, the relationship between the Housing Authority and its social service providers is extremely positive and productive. Social service providers deliver invaluable services to the Housing Authority. HACE provides invaluable funding and support to service providers and residents benefit from these services the most.

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## The Housing Authority Purchases a New Vehicle for The Community Oriented Police and Probation Services Program. (C.O.P.P.S)

As part of its two-year contract with the City of Erie to provide Community Policing Services in all Housing Authority neighborhoods HACE purchased a new fully equipped police cruiser for use by the officers in the C.O.P.P.S. Program. The current cruiser will remain with the COPPS program and be shared with the newly created crisis unit that is headed by former C.O.P.P.S. officer Sgt. Marc Bellotti. Having use of two vehicles allows the C.O.P.P.S. officer to do combined patrols, putting more officers in HACE neighborhoods throughout the month and during specialized patrols.





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## Summer Garden Activities

Every summer Housing Authority communities are filled with beautiful vegetable and flower gardens. Some are planted by tenant groups like the one pictured at Ostrow Apartments or the one created by Sister Pat Lupo from the Neighborhood Art House and her Youth Green Team comprised of young residents from the John E. Horan Garden Apartments. HACE also sponsors a summer flower and vegetable garden contest every year that rewards residents for beautifying their community with their garden creations.

Yevgeniya Zvyagintseva, a resident of Harbor Homes Annex, is the winner of the 2023 Housing Authority Flower Garden Contest. Akeela Alsaeedi, a resident of Pineview, is the winner of the 2023 Housing Authority Vegetable Garden Contest. Over 30 Gardens were judged in this year's contest. Thank you to all of the residents who planted Gardens that beautified Housing Authority neighborhoods.



### Flower Garden Winner

Yevgeniya Zvyagintseva



### Vegetable Garden Winner

Akeela Alsaeedi