



# ARHA ON THE MOVE

ARHA News

Vol. II No. 1

August 2017

## Future Plans for the Andrew Adkins Site

### **In This Issue:**

Andrew Adkins,  
Pg. 1

CEO's Corner,  
Pg. 2

No Smoking Policy,  
Pg. 3

Resident Spotlight,  
Pg. 4

Resident Association  
News  
Pg. 5

Did You Know?  
Pg. 6

Dream Dog  
Foundation, Pg. 7

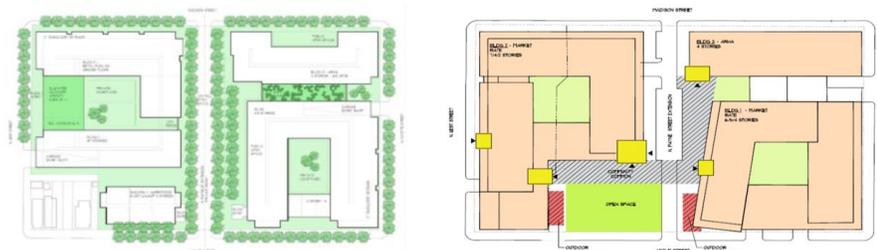
Customer Service,  
Pg. 8

ARHA Staff Comings  
& Goings, Pg. 9

Alexandria Opportunities Housing LLC, on behalf of the Andrew Adkins Development Team which includes ARHA, submitted a revised concept for the Andrew Adkins site on Friday, April 28. The Andrew Adkins effort kicked off on December 18, 2016 with a community meeting at the Charles Houston Recreation Center. This meeting was intended to be a listening session and was well attended by ARHA residents and the community. This meeting shaped the first concept that was submitted. Since that time there have been additional meetings to gather input and on April 28 a revised concept was submitted.

This concept is for one 60-unit ARHA affordable rental building to be situated around a "Community Commons" area that is shared with two market rate, multi-family rental buildings. All of the main entrances to the buildings will face onto this Community Commons and relate to each other as one community. Retail is also planned for this site.

Proposed for the site is a large lawn area for interactive activities including yoga in the park. There will be café seating areas for the retail and activities such as chess tables, exercise stations and children's play equipment. This is an exciting project and we invite you to view the full image boards to see the representative uses of the common space at [www.vhdlc.us](http://www.vhdlc.us)





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Director of Asset Management

### **Newsletter**

**Editor:** Rose Williams Boyd

**Layout:** Denise Kaffka and Jack Smirnow

# **CEO'S CORNER**



Welcome to the revitalized ARHA newsletter. Community outreach and effective communication have always been my priorities. In the past, we depended primarily on paper documents (letters and flyers) to “spread the word” with telephone, in-person visits, or community meetings for follow up. Now, we have websites, texting, e-mail, Twitter, Facebook, and other forms of social media to communicate our thoughts and any program changes. As we seek new ways to disseminate information to our residents and the community at large, we will be reaching out to you for feedback on the best way to communicate with you.

This newsletter is available on the ARHA website, and can be sent electronically if we have your e-mail address. Staff is now making a conscious effort to obtain as many e-mail addresses and cellphone numbers as possible so that we can send critical announcements and information to you in the most efficient and effective manner.

Please make sure that your contact information is current and that we have both your e-mail and cellphone numbers, so you can be on the receiving end of our ARHA newsletter, press releases, and all future forms of communication. Enjoy and comment!

# Update on No Smoking Policy



ARHA is in the process of launching its no smoking policy. This policy, which was adopted by the ARHA Board of Commissions on February 24, 2014, will prohibit smoking in all ARHA owned facilities and residential units. This policy is consistent with HUD's no smoking policy, and was first introduced during several public meetings with residents, the Alexandria Residents Association and the Residents Advisory Board November 1, 2013 to February 24, 2014.

On November 12, 2014, then HUD Secretary Julián Castro and Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy used Alexandria as the host location to announce a proposed rule that would make all public housing units entirely smoke free. HUD's proposed rule would require more than 3100 public housing agencies

throughout the United States to implement smoke-free policies in their properties within 18 months of the final rule. Alexandria and ARHA specifically, was selected as the host site, because in 2014 ARHA began its non-smoking initiative by prohibiting smoking with 25 feet of any ARHA-owned building.

This policy was subsequently expanded to prohibit smoking in all public housing units. On February 3, HUD's regulation became effective. The rule prohibits the use of all lit tobacco products and hookahs (or water pipes) inside all units, common areas, housing authority administrative offices, and all areas with 25 feet of buildings. The Resident Association was one of the initial advocates for ARHA's adoption of the smoke-free policy. "Everyone should be afforded a healthy environment to live and raise their children," said ARHA CEO Roy Priest. His comments were echoed by ARA then Vice President Margo Heard who spoke during the program on behalf of all residents. Mr. Priest and then Resident Council President Shanelle Gayden were subsequently invited to participate in a White House conference on January 6, 2015, which addressed the proposed new rule. More details on ARHA's policy will be forthcoming in a future issue of this newsletter.

# Resident Spotlight



Shanelle Gayden,  
Community & Family Builder

This month's resident spotlight is on Shanelle Gayden. Ms. Gayden and her family have been ARHA residents since 2009. From the moment she moved in, she hit the ground running. Ms. Gayden has always had a plan for herself and her three beautiful children. She considers herself fortunate to be able to participate in ARHA's housing program and is quick to explain the benefits and opportunities that it provides for both herself and family.

Ms. Gayden is driven primarily by two fundamental concepts: community, and family. Her actions over the last six years underscore her commitment to both. She has volunteered (and continues to in most cases) for a multitude of organizations focused on bettering both family and community. Some of these include, The Ruby Tucker Center, The PTA, I Am My Sisters Keeper, and the Boys and Girls Club. She also is a mentor for both adults and children in numerous other organizations. Ms. Gayden is the Immediate Past President of the ARHA Resident's Association. This is a position of great responsibility and experience and she was the perfect choice at that time

Professionally, Ms. Gayden also gives back. She is an ABA certified autistic behavior therapist, a substitute teacher with the Alexandria City public Schools, and is a community health worker. Currently she is creating and establishing her own organization/business called the Creative Minds Mentoring Program which knowing Ms. Gayden will be a great success. Ms. Gayden is always thinking ahead. Her goals for the near future not only include her business but also finishing her college degree, making sure her son gets into college, becoming a home owner, then taking the plunge into complete self-sufficiency.

There is no doubt that Ms. Gayden will achieve her goals. She is quick to point out that being in the housing program has given her the time and resources to apply herself and take advantage of opportunities when they arise. This attitude has allowed her to better herself and the circumstances of her family. Most importantly, she is grateful. Grateful for her children, grateful for her community and grateful that she can actively participate in making the world a better place for everyone.

Thank you Shanelle Gayden!

(To reach Ms. Gayden's new organization please go to [www.creativemindsmentoring.org](http://www.creativemindsmentoring.org) or call 1-888-600-1408)

# ARHA Resident Association



Dear Residents,

My name is Kevin Harris. I am the new President of the ARHA Resident Association. I am happy to be serving in this role and look forward to working with you all to provide a greater living experience.

The Resident Association will serve in many different roles but primarily we will seek to advocate for, inform, empower, and unite the residents. The roles I just mentioned are not simple tasks and impossible for any one individual to accomplish alone. It will take a team effort and you are a major part of the team. If this Resident Association is to succeed and be effective, it will be because you made it

happen. It will take some sacrifice of time, talents, and resources on your behalf. However, I promise the benefits will outweigh the sacrifice.

If you have any questions about the Resident Association or would like to be involved, we can be reached by email at [residentassociation@arha.us](mailto:residentassociation@arha.us) and by phone at 703-549-7115 ext. 124.

Thanks and I will see you soon.

Kevin Harris

Resident Association President



**Miller Homes**



**Princess Square**

# Did You Know?

Did you know that ARHA received a national award from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)? The Award of Merit was given for the Preservation of an Expiring HUD-236 Project for ARHA's efforts related to the acquisition and preservation of the Pendleton Park apartment building. The regional Award of Merit was presented last summer and a subsequent national award was presented in the fall at the National Conference.

Pendleton Park Apartments was constructed in 1971 with HUD-236 funding by Third Baptist Housing. ARHA used tax credit funding to purchase and rehabilitate the building. As a result, five units became available to households earning 40 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), with the remaining 19 units available to households earning 50 percent of AMI. ARHA staff also identified families that were over-income and would be displaced, and helped them use their incentive funds to become homeowners.



**Pendleton Park**

# The Dream Dog Foundation

Lorraine Friedman, award-winning children’s author, grew up in Dallas, Texas before she made her way to Alexandria. In 2002, she created the Dream Dog Foundation. The Foundation’s goal is to: “empower children to believe in themselves through experiential learning, literacy, and empowerment programs that instill a love of learning.”

This Foundation has opened up a multitude of opportunities not only for Friedman, but for the children in the communities, because there has been an overwhelming amount of support coming from all directions. All profits from this Foundation are funneled back into a variety of the Alexandria City programs. This organization sparked the creation of the following interactive days: Kids Make a Difference, Kids Empowering Kids, and Conexiones (Family Links). Each day was dedicated to connecting community/family members together and allowing kids to express themselves in creative ways. As more and more students got involved with these programs, another program called and Books of My Own (BOMO) was created. BOMO allows students to create and compose creative stories and poetry pieces on topics such as life lessons, thankfulness, family, and friends.

Friedman works closely with the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA), specifically the children at the Ruby Tucker Center. She has seen firsthand the impact that her programs have on these flourishing, young children. Friedman has seen grades as low as D’s go up to at least B’s through her BOMO program. Friedman teaches poetry because it allows for a judgment-free space since there are no rules or formats that have to be followed. This works especially well for her students because they are able to freely express themselves without fear of “doing it wrong.” Poetry taps into their creative sides, allowing their emotions and imaginations to guide their creative minds. Friedman also partners with ARHA to do the annual Santa’s Winter Wonderland. During this exciting time, the children get to pick out books as their gift right before they see Santa Claus.

Ms. Friedman’s main motivation is the children; she sees them as her “little family.” Working with the ARHA youth brings her an abundance of joy because “giving is her soul.” So when ACPS cut off funding, it was no surprise that she continued her programs. She believed that “the need is still there, even if the funding isn’t.”

The students she works with at the Ruby Tucker Center write poems about a variety of topics like: life lessons, being thankful, family, and friends. Below is an excerpt about life lessons from one of her students:



**My life lessons to you are to work hard,  
Never give up, live your dreams,  
Never let anyone tell you that you’re not great at  
anything, listen to what your heart tells you,  
and know right from wrong.**

# Good Customer Service Works Two Ways



So often in industry you hear complaints of poor customer service. These complaints can be in stores, restaurants or even at ARHA! But have you ever taken the time to think about what went wrong in the process? Did each of the parties involved in the “poor customer service” actually hear what the other was saying or provide the other what they requested? Listening to each other and providing each other with what is requested is key to both parties having a successful shopping, dining or ARHA experience! Listening is the key to so much in our lives and involves the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process.

Without the ability to listen effectively, there is the opportunity for parties to misunderstand each other. This results in a breakdown of communication, which is the beginning of poor customer service, with either one or both of the parties becoming frustrated or irritated. Adding to that, not listening effectively often limits our ability to bring or provide what has been requested of us.

Here are five steps, to ensure when you are coming to or calling ARHA that you play a key role in giving or receiving **Good Customer Service**:

1. Always try to contact your Occupancy Specialist and make an appointment to come in. Tuesdays and Thursdays are walk in days but if someone has an appointment you will have to wait until they are seen.
2. In the event you are making changes to the members in your household or income, please advise the ARHA staff of this when you call so they can advise you what you need to bring to the meeting.
3. Bring ALL requested information when you are being recertified or when you have been requested to do so by ARHA staff. This will eliminate delays and multiple visits to our offices.
4. If you do not understand what is being asked or if you don't agree with it, please ask the ARHA Team member to repeat it or explain why they have to make that decision or determination.
5. **ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT IT IS THE GOAL OF ARHA TO PROVIDE YOU WITH EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE. BUT YOU PLAY A KEY ROLE IN RECEIVING IT!**

# ARHA Staff Comings & Goings

## Comings

- Racquel Williams-Jones FSS Coordinator (Jan)
- Mohammed Muhsen – Accounts Payable Accountant (Feb)
- Cynthia Dickerson – Executive Assistant (Feb)
- Ravi Chandan Palaniandy – Senior Contract Manager (Mar)
- Jermaine Clemmonds – Compliance Specialist (Mar)
- Rodney Nelson – Maintenance Technician (April)
- Martin Lucero – Senior Development Officer (April)
- Jharmani Simmons-Occupancy (July)

## Goings

- Denusia Denda – Accounts Payable Accountant (March)
- Austin Roberts – Receptionist/ Administrative Assistant (May)
- Douglas Owens – Deputy Executive Director (May)



# ARHA 2017 YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL

This year's Youth Arts Festival (YAF) was a great success. Community participation continues to grow. There was wonderful art produced by City of Alexandria youth on display, as well as, booths that offered artistic activities, such as: painting, collaging, and beadwork for those attending. There were also numerous live song and dance performances on the YAF stage. A great time was had by all!

ARHA thanks all its community partners and volunteers that make this annual event the great success it is. Thank You!



**Don't Forget National Night Out, Tuesday, August 1, from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm**

**See ARHA website for locations and details. [www.arha.us](http://www.arha.us)**

**If you would like to write and/or help produce the ARHA newsletter please contact Rose Boyd @ [rboyd@arha.us](mailto:rboyd@arha.us)**