

NEWS FROM



Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

RISING TOGETHER

SUMMER 2021

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The Lineage Is Open

On April 20, ARHA celebrated the opening of Lineage, the newly constructed building that replaces Ramsey Homes. "The opening of Lineage represents a remarkable transformation of this property," said ARHA CEO Keith Pettigrew, alongside ARHA Board members and local officials during a ribbon cutting ceremony at 699 North Patrick Street. "The building ushers in a new model at ARHA in which residents come from a wide range of income levels as we redevelop properties and increase the availability of affordable housing across the City."

The name Lineage pays tribute to the property's history. The original structures, 15 two-bedroom apartments, were built as temporary housing for African-American war industry workers in the 1940s. The homes then served as permanent affordable housing for Alexandria residents until 2018.

Former Ramsey residents who moved to other locations to make way for the 2019 demolition and construction of the 4-story building were offered priority to move back to Lineage. The property is being managed by Edgewood/Vantage of Maryland.

ARHA Board Commissioner Kevin Harris – A Winner Even in Defeat

When is a loss a win? ARHA Commissioner Kevin Harris sees coming just a few votes (622) short of earning a seat on the Alexandria City Council in last month's election as a win.

"I may have missed that final spot, but I consider the experience a win because it put me in a better position to help my community," said Harris, a resident of Chatham Square and one of nine commissioners who make up the ARHA Board. "In the networking I created from running, I met a lot of people who I didn't know before that can help me get things done."

For example, Harris now has a stronger relationship with the unions.

"We're going to be doing some job fairs and training for ARHA residents and other minority members of the community," he said. "We're working with the school superintendent on trying to bridge a gap between those families whose children are on free or reduced-cost lunches, connecting them to jobs and job training. Running put me in a position to help in these areas. Don't get me wrong. It would be easier to get things done if I were on Council, but I can expand my advocacy for the community because I ran and established this network."

Getting things done is nothing new for Kevin Harris. (Continued on Page 3)



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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As we navigate through this devastating pandemic towards a "new normal," I want to provide an update on ARHA's activity and offer a glimpse into our future.

Since becoming CEO in 2017, my goal has been to maintain the high performance levels established in certain areas of the agency while continuing to enhance performance in all other areas. We continue to explore, develop and implement creative initiatives,

and expand current activities to improve services to our residents.

We have accomplished these goals through my three guiding principles: accountability, customer service, and excellence (ACE), while always striving to become more effective and efficient.

In response to the pandemic, my team mobilized quickly to ensure that our residents were afforded the same level of service provided pre-pandemic, and in some areas, improved service during the pandemic. I am extremely proud of our efforts to ensure our senior population was prioritized and served, especially the well-coordinated vaccination program with the Alexandria Health Department.

The agency continues to raise its profile locally, statewide and nationally through our programs and services, as well as our portfolio repositioning/redevelopment strategy.

We recently held a wonderful ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Lineage, a beautiful 52-unit affordable property (formerly the 15-unit Ramsey Homes). Lineage serves as the prelude to more exciting repositioning and redevelopment activity that will include our usage of HUD tools such as Section 18, Rental Assistance Demonstration Program (RAD) and RAD blends in the next five years.

Through the incredible assistance and guidance of HUD and our Field Office Team, we are poised to begin implementing a creative repositioning/redevelopment strategy to improve our portfolio, and more importantly, better the lives of our residents. This strategy will also allow ARHA to increase the number of affordable units in our portfolio.

As we move forward, we are extremely excited and proud of what we have achieved, the initiatives and activities in which we are actively engaged, and our future. Talk to you later.

Keith Pettigrew



Running for office was an outgrowth of the community work he has done for years. He is a strategy team member for VOICE, Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement. He worked with that group at the state level to help get the eviction moratorium extended, lower the felony threshold, and advocate for cash bail reform.

"I want to increase representation of working class, minority, and low-income residents in the city," he says. "Those Alexandria residents' voices are largely underrepresented, and ARHA residents fall into that category."

Harris believes the agency does an excellent job of listening to how residents feel. That is especially true, he says, since Keith Pettigrew arrived as CEO in 2017.

"Residents are at the heart of our decision-making process," Harris says. "That's important for anyone in public service, understanding that the people you serve are the top priority. As commissioners, we understand the budgets and the other business aspects, but none of that matters if you're not taking care of the people."

Harris wears many hats aside from his community work. He runs a small business called Hoop Life, a company that conducts basketball camps, player skill development clinics, coaching clinics, team skill development training and after-school programs. He is also a minister at Alexandria's Love of Christ Church.

Harris concedes he got into the race for City Council late in the game, campaigning for just three months while others campaigned for a year or more. The late entry hurt him since early voting started two months ahead of election day instead of the normal one month, so he had to run a come-from-behind race if he was going to win. If he runs again in three years, he says he won't make that mistake again.

Harris attributes his success and his drive for equity to the memory of seeing how his mother was treated and marginalized as a working-class woman without higher education. Born in D.C., Harris moved to Alexandria as a child and attended John Adams Elementary School. Ultimately, he would land at Alabama State University where he played basketball and earned his degree before returning to Alexandria to start a family and his business.

He says no one should experience a lack of respect because of their living situation, educational background or how much money they make. "Net worth doesn't equate to self-worth and neither does academic achievement equal intelligence," he says. "We can have a more equitable Alexandria that includes all of us, and I'm determined to do my part to help build it."



FSS GRADUATES EXCEL



Almaz Abara in June 2021 graduated from the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program for HCVP and Public Housing Residents. The program enables families to increase their earned income and reduce their dependency on welfare assistance and rental subsidies.

Abara said the workshops were informative and helped her to improve her academic and language skills. "Completing the FSS Program helped me realize that I could accomplish anything if I put my mind to it," said Abara, who also completed her GED and took ESL classes while enrolled in the FSS Program. She is also happy to announce that she is in the process of buying her first home!

ARHA continues to implement the FSS program for HCVP and Public Housing Residents and expects to graduate three more residents this year. All graduates have accrued escrow.



From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent quarantine orders in March 2020, ARHA staff demonstrated their commitment to serving our community by providing around-the-clock services to our clients while readily adapting to the evolving public health guidelines.

Chief Executive Officer Keith Pettigrew, cognizant of the trials ahead, challenged all senior managers to pivot appropriately and prevent service disruptions to allow every ARHA department to safely and effectively serve our clients throughout the quarantine.

We immediately stopped walk-ins and mandated clients call to schedule an in-person appointment, and retrofitted doors with secure drop slots.



Ladrey Advisory Board Member Estella Herrera receives the 2nd dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

These steps enabled us to limit capacity in our lobby, which was often crowded before the pandemic, and complete the necessary cleaning in each area designated for meeting clients.

In alignment with the safety measures recommended by the Center for Disease Control and the Alexandria Health Department, we purchased automated temperature stations where employees and visitors can check their temperature before entering the building. Simultaneously, we placed hand-sanitizing stations by every entry/exit point and ordered enough Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be distributed to all staff, as well as our clients.

As face-to-face collaborations transitioned to phone conferences, email and Zoom, ARHA staff remained in constant communication to maintain operations during this historic pandemic.

ARHA staff answered the calls like caped crusaders and are akin to a “Superhero Squad.” While ARHA staff went above and beyond to keep our clients safe and informed, ARHA leadership made efforts to do the same for employees. ARHA offered flu and COVID-19 vaccines throughout the past year, an initiative that remains a top priority. As we gear up for all staff to return to the office, we are also providing staff the opportunity to become Red Cross CPR-certified. After all, we’ve got to keep our Superhero Squad healthy!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Webster Allen, one of our returning summer interns, graduated with his Bachelor’s in Architectural Design from James Madison University. Webster says he hopes “to design equity environments for developing communities.” ARHA is a great place for him to get his start!

Along with Webster, we are happy to welcome nine other college interns this summer who live and attend school in Virginia.



RESIDENTS OF THE YEAR

ARHA recognized our 2020 Residents of the Year at a virtual ceremony during the January Board of Commissioners meeting. The ceremony marks the third year we have recognized adult residents and the second year for youth residents.

RUBY TUCKER RESIDENT OF THE YEAR: Loren Depina



Loren Depina stepped up for her community during a year of unprecedented challenges. Eager to ensure residents' voices were being heard, she joined the newly created ARHA Resident Association Safety Committee and became its first-ever Chairperson. She has helped open lines of communication between ARHA residents and the Alexandria Police Department, and align public safety priorities to better address the community's concerns.

Humble and passionate, Loren contributed to her community by volunteering in the 2020 "Push to the Polls" initiative, which provided education on the voting process and transportation assistance to our elderly and disabled residents. "I just want everyone to see us and recognize us, and acknowledge that we matter," she said.

She also recently became a parent advocate for her children and others at Jefferson Houston Elementary School. She volunteers her time to assist parents with printing assignments and technology so students can access their online classes, and committed to working with the school's Parent Liaison to improve communication with parents and increase parent involvement.

MELVIN MILLER SENIOR RESIDENT OF THE YEAR: Pauline Terrell



Pauline Terrell, an engaged member of the ARHA community for more than a decade, continued to make positive contributions throughout 2020 despite the difficulties that the pandemic caused.

As a co-leader of the Volunteer and Activity Committee at the Ladrey Senior High Rise, Pauline has hosted games and activities, decorated the building's bulletin boards and common areas, delivered meals to home-bound residents and assisted with ALIVE food distributions. When the pandemic began, her volunteer efforts endured. She donated items of need, such as clothing, shoes and hygiene products, to other seniors at her own expense, and assisted with vaccination clinics and food distributions for seniors at Ladrey and Annie B. Rose.

Pauline's caring heart and warm spirit were already well known among the "Krunch Bunch," aka the Senior Center at Charles Houston Recreation Center where she has been an active participant for more than 13 years. She regularly assists with special programs, such as the Black History, Mother's Day, and the Senior Center Anniversary celebrations, and readily jumps in to help serve meals or assist other seniors with whatever they need.

Partner Spotlight: Arlington Chapter of The Links

The Arlington Chapter of The Links is one of several community organizations to partner with ARHA during the pandemic to ensure residents' needs were met.

The Arlington Links Chapter led programs that impacted youth, families and seniors. It provided activity books for seniors and sponsored an art contest at Ladray to help ease the isolation felt by so many. The art contest winners were (bottom row, L-R) **Willie Mae Brown, Soburhal Kahn and Althea Robinson**, who each received a gift bag and a \$25 Visa Gift Card.



RESIDENTS OF THE YEAR



**MIDDLE SCHOOL/
ELEMENTARY YOUTH
RESIDENT OF THE YEAR:
Mai Mohdali**

5th Grader Mai Mohdali has long been a straight "A" student" and the pandemic did not disrupt her academic success. Mai is often the first student to raise their hand to answer a teacher's question and is always willing to challenge herself to learn new skills - a true pioneer in the classroom! She is a perfect team player too, happily volunteering to assist her classmates whenever they need extra help.

A leader inside and outside of school, Mai is active in the youth community garden program and the LINK Club at the Ruby Tucker Family Center. Mai is also a champion when it comes to helping others. If she sees any one struggling, she does everything in her power to alleviate their stress and genuinely wants to help everyone however she can.

Mai says she loves animals and wants to pursue a career as a veterinarian or a marine biologist.



**HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH
RESIDENT OF
THE YEAR:
KIANNI DANIELLE
BRACEY-KELLY**

T.C. Williams High School senior Kianni Danielle Bracey-Kelly is a leader among her peers. She maintained a 3.3 GPA while immersing herself in AP classes, participating in extracurriculars like rugby and art, holding a part-time job to earn money for college and serving as an Athletic Trainer Student Aid.

She has been an active member of AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), which helps develop the skills needed to be successful in college, since middle school, and gives back in her community by volunteering and fundraising at school and with other local organizations.

Kianni received a full scholarship to Old Dominion University, where she plans to major in Kinesiology and Athletic Training.

Kianni's advice to her classmates: Don't let anything stand in the way of your dreams.



**Partner
Spotlight:
Arlington
Chapter of
Links**

The Arlington Links Chapter sponsored a six-week STEAM webinar for girls that included lessons on drones, coding, film making, cyber security and IT. The webinar also provided extra academic support, taught technical skills that are transferable to the classroom and introduced participants to women who currently work in STEM careers.

The Arlington Chapter of Links offers scholarships to individuals who have demonstrated a strong academic background and the potential to become significant contributors to society.

Serenity Talley, a STEAM participant and ARHA's 2019 High School Youth Resident of the Year, was selected as one of their scholarship recipients for 2021. Serenity will receive a \$3,000 annual scholarship, which she will use to advance her secondary education at Michigan State University.

In addition to its senior and youth programming, the Arlington Chapter of Links also provided grocery store gift cards totaling \$2,500 to families during the pandemic to help ease food insecurities.



ARHA HAI GROUP SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Program Funded by ARHA's Insurance Provider



Yoneal Tekleberhan is a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University, majoring in business. The son of immigrants, Yoneal credits his parents for their encouragement and support of his pursuit of the American dream. He is proud to receive the scholarship, which will provide the additional financial support needed to complete his degree.



Natasha Cross is a senior at George Mason University majoring in individualized studies with a focus on management information systems and health information technology. The scholarship will allow Natasha, a single mother and now two-time scholarship recipient, to take additional classes while alleviating her financial worries. "Receiving this scholarship means the world to me because it is truly a blessing in helping me achieve my academic and professional goals. As a result, my children have been inspired to attend college in the near future, too."

The Housing Authority Insurance (HAI) Group is committed to helping improve the lives of people who live in public and affordable housing. HAI Group's Resident Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$1.4 million to more than 450 students to date. To qualify, students must live in a housing authority property or in a property with a housing choice voucher administered by a housing authority that is a member of HAI Group, and be enrolled in the fall 2021-2022 academic year in an accredited/licensed technical school, college, or university. This year, HAI Group awarded \$6,000 scholarships to 20 students, including Yoneal and Natasha.

Congrats to our college- & military-bound H.S. graduates!

Cadence Claypoole, Columbia College Chicago

Dajon Grimes, Northern Virginia Community College

Dejan Penn-Andrews, US ARMY

D'Markus Patten, Northern Virginia Community College

Edom Mulugeta, Northern Virginia Community College

Kianni Bracey-Kelly, Old Dominion University

Ma'Leah Smalls, Northern Virginia Community College

Noah Abay, George Mason University

Serenity Talley, Michigan State University

Taylor Johnson, Virginia Commonwealth University

Weldon Corbin, Northern Virginia Community College

Zamiah Davis, Northern Virginia Community College

TOWN HALL: SAVE THE DATE!

Each week, residents at the specified property will be able to join a conference call meeting with **ARHA CEO Keith Pettigrew** and representatives from the **Alexandria Health Department** to answer questions about the COVID-19, learn the latest updates on the housing authority and address your concerns.

PHONE NUMBER: 701-802-5220

ACCESS CODE: 7493674#

Wednesday, August 4, 12:00 noon

- Ladrey High-rise
- Park Place
- Saxony Square
- Pendleton Park

Wednesday, August 11 12:00 noon

- Chatham Square
- Hopkins Tancil
- Samuel Madden
- Andrew Adkins

Wednesday, August 18, 12:00 noon

- Old Town Commons (JB I, II, IV, and V)
- West Glebe
- Old Dominion

Wednesday, August 25, 12:00 noon

- Princess Square
- Quaker Hill
- Miller Holmes
- All Scattered Sites (I, II, II, & BWR)



RENT PAYMENTS MADE EASY

Your Rent. Your Way. Sign up for RentPayment today.

Just a reminder! Online rent payments using the RentPayment portal began April 1. **Effective June 30, payments are no longer accepted at the office.**

When you use RentPayment, you can:

- Get credit for your payment instantly
- Use multiple payment options (credit/debit card, echeck, cash/money gram)
- Receive FREE credit reporting service (RentPayment will report your payment to TransUnion)

Stop worrying about late fees!

No searching for stamps & envelopes!



With RentPayment, you can securely pay, from anywhere, by credit or debit card, online, with mobile app or more.

1 

Simply **download the app** or visit [RentPayment.com](https://rentpayment.com).

2 

Select **New to RentPayment** to set up your account.

3 

Add your **preferred payment method** and you're all set!

Have a question? Email us at customerservice@rentpayment.com.

HOW TO SUBMIT MAINTENANCE REQUESTS

What is an ARHA maintenance emergency?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Clogged toilet | • Inoperable elevators |
| • Gas leak or toxic fumes | • Damaged entrance doors |
| • Sparking or downed electrical wires | • Power outage |
| • Inoperable smoke detector | • Lockouts |
| • No heat (seasonal) | • Loss of refrigeration |
| • No air conditioning (seasonal) | • Severe or major water leaks |

The Maintenance Department now offers three methods for submitting maintenance requests - by phone, online or email.

To submit a request, call 703.823.ARHA(2742), go to www.arha.us/form/work-order, or send an email to maintenance@arha.us. During our office hours, calls are answered by an ARHA staff person.

All after-hours calls are answered by a live answering service. A customer service agent will collect information related to your request including your name, address, a contact phone number, and the nature of your maintenance request. At the conclusion of the call, you will be provided a unique identifying number for your reference. If your request is deemed an emergency, the customer service agent will dispatch your request to an ARHA Maintenance Technician.

