



Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority

WINTER/SPRING 2020

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## ARHA'S 80 YEARS OF SERVICE

2019 marked the 80th year since the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA) was established. Created as a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia and established as an entity by the City of Alexandria on June 27, 1939, ARHA has provided and managed affordable housing for low and moderate income persons in the City since that time.



From its beginning with 110 units of affordable housing built in the 1940's, ARHA has continued to provide a safe environment for its tenants, and currently owns over 1100 units of public and affordable housing.

During the 1960's and 1970's ARHA served as the development arm of the City of Alexandria and in that role oversaw such urban renewal projects as the Gadsby Commercial Urban Renewal; the redevelopment of the King Street commercial area, including Market Square, Tavern Square and Courthouse Square.

More recent projects have focused on mixed income developments such as Chatham Square (2005) and Old Town Commons (2011 – 2016). ARHA's primary mission has never wavered.

Throughout the 2019 year, ARHA recognized this milestone anniversary and noted how far the agency has come since 1939.

On September 28, 2019, ARHA hosted a gala which celebrated the 80th anniversary, and served as a fundraiser for Santa's Winter Wonderland. During this event long-term ARHA employees were recognized, and reflections were provided by individuals who were part of ARHA's history. (See picture gallery on Page 12)

This issue of the ARHA newsletter provides a summary of the year's highlights.

# CEO's Corner



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As we enter a new decade, I would like to take the opportunity to update you on ARHA's journey and activity since my arrival two years ago, and provide a glimpse of the future over the next decade.

When I became CEO in November 2017, my goals were to maintain the level of performance already established in some aspects of agency operations, and enhance performance in all other areas. I have implemented some creative initiatives and expanded current activities. I wanted staff to improve service delivery using three guiding principles: accountability, customer service, and excellence.

Over the past two years, the agency has raised its profile locally, statewide, and nationally, not only in its programmatic services, but also through its portfolio repositioning plans. We have become more efficient and effective in our programmatic operations as well. We have increased Family Self-Sufficiency enrollment and graduates, expanded resident services through collaborative grant opportunities, and increased our voucher utilization through the awarding of Mainstream Vouchers from HUD. You will read more about these changes in this issue of the newsletter.

We are poised to usher in the next decade with unique and cutting-edge redevelopment projects that coincide with the impending regional transformation and excitement due to the arrival of the Amazon Headquarters and the Virginia Tech University campus. The future of ARHA is extremely bright and exciting. I look forward to keeping you informed of our achievements in the coming years.

Keith Pettigrew



# Building Foundations: ARHA's Development Program

ARHA's development program commenced this new decade on firm footing. Supported by a market study that vividly demonstrated the dire need for affordable housing in the City of Alexandria, ARHA started this year with a resolve to help reverse the decade-long reduction of affordable housing in Alexandria. In 2019, the two primary focal points of the development department were to lay the foundation for the new Ramsey Homes site and engage residents in a dialogue to reposition ARHA's public housing portfolio. Having achieved these goals in the last year, ARHA is well positioned in 2020 to change the operating subsidy on public housing units and select partners to assist us in redeveloping our sites.



## Ramsey Homes Construction

In 2019, the general contractor completed the foundation for Ramsey Homes by excavating the site, building the underground parking garage and completing the concrete podium. "2019 was an exciting year to watch the new Ramsey building come out of the ground. The new units will bring joy to the 52 families who will enjoy the comforts of a modern building in a community that they can call home" stated Keith Pettigrew, CEO of ARHA. By laying the foundation for this building, ARHA is helping offset the dramatic reduction in affordable housing that Alexandria has witnessed over the past decade.

With the onset of spring, the residents of Alexandria are witnessing the building take shape. All the units have been framed, the building is under roof, and the interior work has just begun. "ARHA expects to deliver the new units in the summer of 2020. We look forward to welcoming the former Ramsey residents and so many other families that will make this community their home" concluded Mr. Pettigrew. To market, manage and maintain the new building, ARHA will hire a private property management company. For regular updates on when applications will be available, please visit [www.ARHA.US](http://www.ARHA.US).

## Engaging Public Housing Residents

Throughout 2019, Keith Pettigrew visited every public housing community in Alexandria and held either site meetings or neighborhood hearings with almost every community. Through community meetings, Mr. Pettigrew listened to public housing residents' concerns, solicited their input on the annual Agency Plan, and the HUD Repositioning Initiative. Residents consistently told him to fight for more funds for public housing in order to improve their units and to protect housing for low income residents.

# Building Foundations: ARHA's Development Program

Based on this strong support, in June 2019, ARHA submitted several applications to HUD to change the operating subsidy on public housing units to project based vouchers. This initiative will protect residents in that residents will continue to pay 30% of their household income in rent and they will not have to move from their current locations. "I heard the residents say clearly that they want new apartments with modern amenities and a better quality of life. Submitting the applications to HUD is just the first step in the transformation of public housing in Alexandria," concluded Mr. Pettigrew.

## Public Housing Transformation

In June 2019 ARHA submitted numerous applications to HUD for authorization to change the public housing operating subsidy into project based vouchers under HUD's Section 18 application process. ARHA's goal is to increase the operating subsidy on these public housing units without reducing housing opportunities for current and future very low income residents. The increased operating subsidy will allow ARHA greater local control over its housing units and less dependence on uncertain Congressional appropriations for capital improvements. The increased operating subsidy will allow ARHA to seek private financing to make improvements and maintain the units to modern living standards. "Our overriding goal is to rebuild our public housing communities into mixed income communities while continuing to own our sites. By controlling the land, future generations of low income families will continue to call Alexandria their home," stated Mr. Pettigrew.

In 2019, the foundation for the transformation of all the public housing units in ARHA's portfolio through redevelopment and operating subsidy repositioning has been firmly set. Looking ahead to 2020 and beyond, the development team is preparing Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) applications to forward the repositioning initiative. "As we implement these strategies in the coming years, ARHA will not only preserve housing for low-income households, but we will also expand the supply of affordable housing for working families desiring to live in Alexandria," continued Mr. Pettigrew.

## Securing New Partners for Redevelopment

Looking ahead, ARHA will need partners with a wide range of experience and access to resources to assist us rebuild all of our public housing communities. "We look forward to creating public private partnerships so that we can continue to own the land and develop mixed income communities," stated Mr. Pettigrew. In February, ARHA issued a solicitation seeking development partners for five public housing sites. "The goal is to partner with at least one developer by the end of 2020 so that we can begin 2021 with plans for another new community like the one we are building at Ramsey – where we have not only preserved our units, but tripled the number of affordable units onsite," concluded Mr. Pettigrew.



# Eagle Scout Beautifies Ladrey Highrise Grounds



Over the 2019 Memorial Day weekend, local Boy Scout, Campbell Bright, completed his community service project as preparation for becoming an Eagle Scout. His community service project was the beautification of Ladrey High Rise, which helped to create a pleasant environment for the seniors and residents who live there. Campbell planned a project that included the design and installation of two planter boxes in the courtyard. In addition to fundraising and purchasing all of the materials and supplies, he recruited 19 volunteers to assist with the endeavor. By the end of the day, they had not only completed the boxes, but had mulched all of the plants and trees around Ladrey and cleaned the courtyard. The residents are thrilled with the additions. We are working with other scouts and leaders in the troop to identify possible projects for the future.

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## Mainstream Vouchers Grant

ARHA applied for a “Mainstream Vouchers” grant in September 2019 and by November, the agency was notified that the funds for 36 vouchers would be available in January 2020. The “Mainstream Vouchers” are designed to help non-elderly persons with disabilities secure housing in the private market. Asset Management staff is working in collaboration with DCHS (Department of Community and Human Services) staff to prevent and reduce homelessness by confirming eligibility for potential clients referred by DCHS to ARHA.

The program focus is on non-elderly disabled residents who are transitioning out of institutions or at serious risk of institutionalization. This includes the following: persons currently experiencing homelessness; persons who have previously experienced homelessness and are currently clients in a permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing project; and, persons at risk of becoming homeless. These 36 mainstream vouchers will provide critical new housing resources for a population that is typically very hard to serve in the City of Alexandria.

# Resident & Community Services (RACS) Receives Federal Grant

ARHA recently partnered with the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) to become one of five agencies that received more than \$892,000 in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education to provide after-school 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) in Alexandria. The three-year grant, called Linking Instruction Nurturing Knowledge (LINK) promotes opportunities for disadvantaged children by providing age appropriate activities for school day academic programs through LINK Club ACPS. ARHA will operate three locations: the Ruby Tucker Family Center (Grades K-2), Ladrey High-Rise (Grades 3-5), and Jefferson Houston School (Grades 6-8).

The program is built on a combination of academic support and enrichment classes designed to stimulate student learning and broaden their horizons. Students participate in a "Power Hour" where teachers and volunteers provide homework assistance and tutoring in core areas of math, science, and reading. In addition, students may select different activities such as art, phases of matter, experimenting with electricity, navigating a drone, coding, or creative writing to complement their experience.



As part of the grant, ARHA and ACPS are also committed to increasing parent participation and engagement with school administration and teachers. Jefferson Houston Principal M. Scott Berkowitz, along with the school's Parent Liaison Janel Gross, held a workshop at ARHA headquarters, where parents had the opportunity to voice their concerns, ask questions, and learn about the expectations surrounding LINK Club and the grade level curriculum. RACS staff members are excited about embarking on this new and important program initiative.



# Thanksgiving Basket Giveaway

Thanks to the generosity and support of various churches, community organizations, and agencies, ARHA was able to provide 374 Thanksgiving baskets to residents and their families. The baskets contained side items found in a traditional Thanksgiving meal, along with a turkey or a gift card to purchase a meat of their choice. Participating groups included:

- Christ Church
- Alfred Street Baptist Church
- First Agape Baptist Church
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
- Le Towe Basketball Organization
- Downtown Baptist Church
- B3 Solutions, Inc.
- Victory Temple Baptist Church
- Russell Temple CME Church
- Alexandria Police Department

ARHA was also selected as a site for the Steve Harvey Morning Show and the Steve Harvey Foundation to distribute baskets to families. In partnership with their affiliate WHUR 96.3 and the First Baptist Church of Glen Arden/Shabach Ministries, local radio talents Taylor Thomas, Candace Adkins, and Renee Nash personally delivered the turkeys and all the fixings. City Councilman John Chapman stopped by to assist and wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.



# ARHA's Self-Sufficiency Programs



Teresa Ross

Two of the opportunities that ARHA offers to help residents on the pathway towards economic independence and self-sufficiency are the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Program and the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program.

The ROSS Program allows participants to work with a Service Coordinator who evaluates the family needs and helps them develop and create educational, empowerment, and employment goals. As they advance in the program, they are evaluated to track their progress in each area, and participants will graduate when they have met goals in at least two of the three areas.

The FSS Program pairs participants with a Service Coordinator to complete a personal assessment, develop an Individual Training & Service Plan (ITSP), and sign a five-year contract. As they advance, participants in the FSS Program are eligible for an Escrow Savings Account that is held until they complete the goals identified in their ITSP.

Residents can actually start out in the ROSS Program and graduate to the FSS Program, where they can continue their growth and start to earn money for their Escrow Savings Account. During 2019, 12 ROSS participants moved into the FSS Program, and six FSS participants completed their ITSP plans and achieved all of their goals for the program. Check out some of their journeys, described below, of amazing determination to succeed against all odds.

Teresa Ross began the ROSS program in June 2018. The first path Ms. Ross selected was empowerment that led to employment. She completed the Together We Bake Program in August 2018 which led to permanent employment with Together We Bake Program in December 2018. The mission of Together We Bake is to provide a comprehensive workforce training and personal development program to help women gain self-confidence, transferable workforce skills, and invaluable hands-on experience that will allow them to find sustainable employment and move toward self-sufficiency. Together We Bake has been a valuable partnership that continues to create confidence and self-sufficiency.



# ARHA's Self-Sufficiency Programs

The most recent ROSS graduate of Together We Bake was Edna Farmer. Ms. Farmer completed the Together We Bake Program, and received the highest score on her Servsafe (servsafe.com) exam, while maintaining perfect attendance.

This accomplishment has encouraged her to the path of employment. Edna Farmer now serves as an ambassador to other ARHA residents, and encourages them to take advantage of this life changing opportunity.



Edna Farmer

Nataria Phelps enrolled in the FSS Program in April 2016. Her income when enrolling was only \$1,400 per year. Ms. Phelps obtained her goals and graduated from the FSS Program within a three-year span. She earned an Associate's Degree in Business Administration and is now earning an annual income of \$ 47K per year.

Shantree Redmond started the FSS program in December 2015. Her goal was a career in the Criminal Justice Field. While enrolled in the FSS Program, Ms. Redmond has obtained certifications in security and most recently a certification as an Armed Security Agent. She is now a supervisor at a security firm.

Crystal Warren started the FSS program in November 2011. Her goal was to become a licensed Cosmetologist. She has completed all of her cosmetology courses and has passed the state licensing board. She is now a licensed Cosmetologist. She hopes to eventually open her own salon.



Yvonne McKoy

Yvonne McKoy enrolled in the FSS Program in 2016 with the goal of improving her employment and purchasing a home. Through her hard work and determination, Ms. McKoy was able to increase her income, increase her credit score, and accomplish all of her FSS goals within three years. As a result, she graduated in 2019 and was able to use her Escrow Savings Account to purchase a home.

# Congratulations!

During the preview reception for Santa's Winter Wonderland, employees, residents, and youth achievers were recognized. See pictures below:



Margo Heard, recipient of the Ruby Tucker Resident of the Year Award



Amos Simms, recipient of the Melvin Miller Senior Resident of the Year Award



Khalil Morris-Johnson (left) and Serenity Talley (right), recipients of the Youth Resident of the Year Award for Middle School and High School, respectively.



# Congratulations!



Rodney Nelson (Left) and Terry Henderson (Right), recipients of the Co-Employee of the Year Award



Ed Lacy, recognized for 20 years of service with and retirement from ARHA.

# 80<sup>th</sup> Gala Photos

On September 28, 2019, ARHA hosted a gala to celebrate its 80th anniversary, and serve as a fundraiser for Santa's Winter Wonderland. The event featured presentations by Mayor Justin Wilson, current and former ARHA CEOs and Board Chairmen, and recognized several long term employees. Attendees included sponsor representatives, City of Alexandria and ARHA employees, as well as members of the general public. The pictures below provide a snapshot of the event.



From left to right: Ericka Miller, Mayor Justin Wilson, Former Mayor William Euille, Keith Pettigrew, Michelle Chapman, and Roy Priest



Ayau Addou, Sue Armstrong, and Kevin Armstrong of VHDA



David Bauman, Rose Boyd, and Selena Zellers



Gaynelle Bowden-Diaz, Edwin Zelaya, and Kimberly Artis



# 80<sup>th</sup> Gala Photos



Marie Schuler of Comcast and City Councilman John Chapman



Denise Thompson and Markesha Dean



Cynthia Dickerson, Robbie Robertson, and Sarah Scott



Zatana Taylor and Geraldine Spell



# Santa's Winter Wonderland 2019

Santa's Winter Wonderland was a three-day event that included photo ops with Santa and the Grinch, a preview reception, and toy distribution for approximately 1000 children. A photographic review of the event is below.

