



# Community Connection



Volume 12, Issue 1

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

## ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDING TO AID THE ACHA



Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that was signed into law February 17, 2009, the Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) is set to receive 7.7 million dollars in additional capital funds to help address capital improvements throughout the ACHA.

Under the leadership of the Executive Director, Frank Aggazio, the Finance and Development Department have held several meetings to formulate a plan that will meet the regulations in the ARRA, which is to have the funds 100% obligated within 1 year and 100% expended within 3 years. The ACHA has taken steps to procure architectural firms that will assist in the redevelopment efforts. Although priorities can change, it is expected that the funds will be used to make needed repairs in the following communities – Park Apartments, Sheldon Park, Brackenridge, Golden Towers, Carson Hall, Ohioviev Tower, Carnegie Apartments, General Braddock Tower, Prospect Terrace, and Burns Heights. The majority of the work will consist of bathroom and kitchen renovations, electrical upgrades, and site improvements to the developments. The stimulus funding will be used as the funding source in the demolition of the Burns Heights community.

The annual capital fund appropriation from the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development has continually decreased and has hinder the ACHA's ability to address major capital improvement projects. These ARRA funds are in addition to the annual 5 million dollars (approximately) in capital fund allocation. The ARRA funds are allowing the ACHA to address areas that the regular capital fund wouldn't be able to address for many years. The ARRA funds are not only benefiting the ACHA, but most importantly the residents will see improvements that will allow them to continue to live in decent, safe, sanitary, and affordable housing in Allegheny County.

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# PERSPECTIVES

by the ACHA  
Executive Director  
Frank Aggazio



## JOHN FRASER HALL GETS REVITALIZED

Built in 1972 to serve the residents of the Turtle Creek area, John Fraser Hall will be going under a major revitalization effort in the spring of 2009. As it was designed, the building consisted of 2/3 of the total units as efficiency units, which historically have been difficult to lease. The building has started to deteriorate and is in need of major repairs to all systems in the building.

Last year the ACHA was notified by HUD that we achieved "High Performer" designation for FY ending September 30, 2007. This was quite an accomplishment given the funding cuts from the previous administration. 2008 and likely 2009 will be transition years as housing authorities across the country learn the new HUD evaluation system which has not yet been finalized.

I am very encouraged by the actions of the Obama administration. Public housing has once again become relevant. This is evident in the 3 billion in Recovery Act money that the industry has received for modernization and construction. We also look forward to competing for the 1 billion dollars of funding that HUD will soon make available.

One of the most significant recent accomplishments was the ACHA's ability to pass compliance audit for site-based management compliance.

The ACHA transitioned into site-based management, which values the residents while streamlining operations and maximizing funding resources.

Special thanks goes to the Operations and Finance Departments for their roles in passing the Stop-Loss Audit and saving the ACHA 2.8 million dollars in funding.

Using the successful revitalization effort at Homestead Apartments as the model, the ACHA has decided to use the low-income housing tax credit program and mixed finance process as the financial catalyst for the redevelopment process. Through a Developer procurement process, TREK Development Group, Inc. has been selected to lead the development effort. Because of the competitiveness of the low-income housing tax credit program in Pennsylvania, the development did not receive funding in the first submission of the low-income housing tax credit application to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). However, the ACHA and TREK were committed to this redevelopment effort and submitted a second application to PHFA, which received funding in March 2008. As experience had shown, when a development receives funding in March of any year, the financial closings and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development approvals usually occur before the end of the calendar year. So much for prior experience, the economic downturn drastically affected the development in moving forward as the tax credit equity market spirals downward and created major funding gaps in the development budget.

Thankfully, the experience, persistence, and knowledge of ACHA and TREK have kept this development effort moving forward for construction to begin this spring. TREK Development, who took the lead in securing an investor, used their creative thinking in bringing two new investors (S&T Bank and Dollar Bank) to the table to help purchase the low-income housing tax credits which will be the significant financing tool in this transaction. Other funding agencies that will assist in the redevelopment effort are Allegheny County Economic Development, The Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh, and the ACHA.

When construction is complete, with Guardian Construction Management Services, Inc., overseeing the revitalization effort, the building will consist of 72 one bedroom units that feature modern day amenities that will allow for the senior population to age in-place. Demolition and abatement construction has started in preparation of completing the building in spring 2010. 

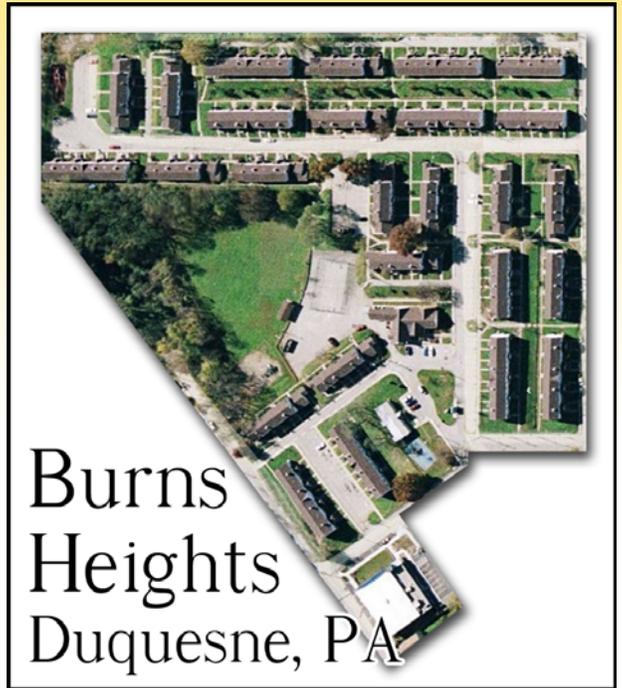
*Frank Aggazio*



## BURNS HEIGHTS AND THE CITY OF DUQUESNE

Striving to make an impact in an area that has suffered since the loss of the steel mill industry, the ACHA, with many vested partners, is undertaking a major revitalization effort in the City of Duquesne and the Burns Heights Development. In an effort to remove blighted and dilapidated properties within the City of Duquesne, the ACHA and development partner Falbo-Pennrose, Inc. have submitted a low-income housing tax credit application to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to develop 53 duplex units that will jumpstart the overall revitalization vision of the ACHA and The City of Duquesne. As part of the process, the Development team will redevelop the Fifth Avenue and Priscilla Street corridor using the low-income housing tax credit program and Allegheny County Economic Development funds as the major financing partners. Presently, the low-income housing tax credit application is being reviewed and scored by PHFA. Most of the properties that are affected in this area have been abandoned or have absentee landlords/owners which means these properties have become eyesores to the community. Tax credits are expected to be awarded in July 2009, but efforts have been made to start demolition on homes that have become safety hazards to the community.

As meetings unfolded throughout the community with the City of Duquesne Officials and the residents of Burns Heights, it became apparent that the Burns Heights Community needed to be addressed with an overall revitalization effort. The ACHA and Falbo-Pennrose intend on submitting a HOPE VI application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) this summer. Although the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) has not been released announcing the HOPE VI funding, the Development Team is moving forward preparing the application based on the 2008 NOFA. The HOPE VI process is extremely competitive and getting a “leg-up” on the competition is very important. To that matter, the ACHA Development Team has met with the residents of Burns Heights to discuss the HOPE VI process. In effort to receive more points in the HOPE VI application process, it would greatly benefit the ACHA and Falbo-Pennrose to have a “site-readied” project. Relocation of the Burns Heights residents has started and with the help of the residents has gone smoothly. Demolition of the development is on schedule for mid-summer 2009. When completed, the existing site will consist of 122 affordable housing units and a management/community building. This redevelopment effort is expected to last for at least 5 years. 



## ACHA ISSUES PET TAGS



Resident pet owners, Ramona Rochelle and Susan Bell Broados

Effective January 1, 2009 the Allegheny County Housing Authority requires all approved dogs and cats to wear an ACHA designated pet tags on the pet’s collar or leash at all times. All residents will be provided a pet tag at the time the pet is registered. The idea of the ACHA Pet Tag came from Isaiah Dent, Hays Manor resident, and President of the Resident Advisory Board (RAB).



ACHA Pet Tag

The Pet Tag allows the Manager and Police Department to identify all dogs and cats that are approved. For information about registering your pet, please contact your Resident Property Manager. 

## UNITED WAY FUNDS SENIOR LIVING ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Congratulations to Northern Area Companies/Northern Area Multi Services (NAMS) one of five agencies designated high performer to receive funding from the United Way to help seniors remain healthy and safe in their home. The program modeled after the Allegheny County Housing Authority's award winning Senior Living Enhancement Program (SLEP) will provide support services to both seniors and people with behavior disabilities. The program will help ACHA residents address problems and to continue to live safely and independently while aging in place.

This program continues the partnership with ACHA and the Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging. The program will be located in 16 ACHA public housing high-rise buildings. It will serve more than 500 seniors and will connect over 400 residents with behavioral health disabilities with the support services they need. A three-year grant NAMS will receive \$129,625 from the United Way.

NAMS was one of 31 agencies that applied for funding under the United Way new competitive system for senior service allocations. The other agencies selected to receive funding where Vintage, Inc., AgeWell / Jewish Association on Aging & Jewish Family & Children Services, East Liberty Family Health Care Center and Family Services of Western Pennsylvania. 



## FSS GRADUATES RECEIVE ESCROW CHECKS

Congratulations to ACHA residents who recently graduated from the FSS program completing all of their individual goals which include the following:

- Credit counseling
- Begin and complete additional education
- Become independent of public assistance
- Start their own business
- Obtain as driver's license
- Consumer credit counseling

A combined total of \$41,202.34 in escrow money will be used to fulfill various personal endeavors. Best wishes graduates!



Melinda Berry



Charmagne Demus



Michelle Gajewski



Lisa Dukes



Ronell Nixon



Erica Norrington



Ronald Berry



LaValle Tucker



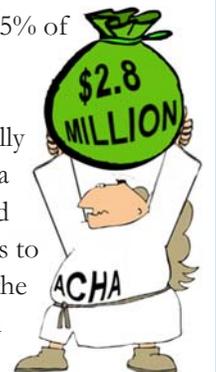
Candy Trombetta

## STOP - LOSS FUNDING



The Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) has been designated a “decliner” under the new Operating Fund Formula of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This designation means that the Operating Subsidy eligibility of the ACHA declined under the new formula resulting in a loss of \$2.8 million. This reduction in our Operating Subsidy was scheduled to be phased in over a five-year period. The Authority had been provided with an opportunity to “stop” our losses if we could demonstrate to HUD that we have successfully converted our agency to comply with HUD’s new Site Based Management (SBM) rules. If successful, our authority would not lose the scheduled \$2.8 million but only 5% of that number or \$140,000. Department of HUD auditors reviewed our agency in 2008.

We are pleased to report that as of September 10, 2008 HUD has determined that the ACHA has successfully converted to Site Based Management. Our review was so successful that the ACHA was invited to lead a web based training session nationwide. The processes and procedures implemented by ACHA were determined by HUD to be superior in nature and worthy of being disseminated nationwide to other Housing Agencies to assist them in their conversions. We believe this is a testament to the innovation, talent, and hard work of the staff here at the ACHA and would like to take this opportunity to commend all the individuals involved in making the ACHA a “model” agency nationwide. 



MILLVUE ACRES YOUTH LEADING THE WAY

Three members of Clairton High school’s Senior Class; Arielle Turner, Devynne Farquharson, and Benjamin Johnson are leading the way in academic excellence as they prepare to graduate with High Honors. ACHA would like to highlight their accomplishments and wish them well as they continue to demonstrate their dedication to academic achievement.

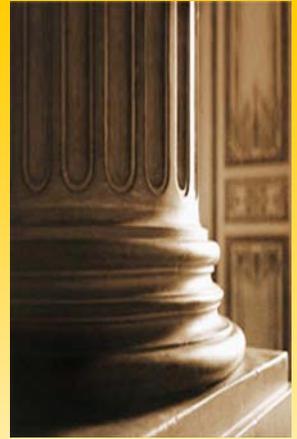
Devynne Farquharson is currently ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in this graduating class and participates in Carnegie Mellon’s SAMS (Science and Math Studies) program. Devynne is a member of Clairton’s basketball team and has been accepted to the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Toledo, and Penn State, Main Campus. Devynne awaits replies from Carnegie Mellon University and Harvard before making his final decision.

Benjamin Johnson is currently ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in his graduating class. He excels in math and science and plans to put these skills to work in the United States Army this summer training to work with radio and satellite signals. Benjamin is the Vice President of CHANCE (Creating Hope and New Found Courage Everywhere). In this capacity, Ben has worked on food drives, Dating Violence Awareness, and a project to build a school and provide a clean water system in Vietnam.

Arielle Turner accomplished High Honors in the last two reporting periods. Arielle participates in CHANCE and has been accepted to Stanford and Brown and will attend in fall 2009.

Ms. Maureen McGarvey, Clairton High School’s Guidance Counselor expressed how pleased she is with the accomplishments of these young people and their hard work to overcome many obstacles to achieve their goals. Ms. McGarvey also stated that last year’s graduating class brought in nearly \$1,000,000 in scholarship money for their educations.

Frank Aggazio, Executive Director of the Allegheny County Housing Authority stated the following in regard to the “Academic All Stars” of Millvue Acres; “I would like to convey special congratulations to Arielle, Devynne, and Benjamin, for their academic achievements and wish them extraordinary success in all their future endeavors.”



HUD AWARDS FUNDING TO ACHA TO PROMOTE SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has awarded a \$629,640 grant to the Allegheny County Housing Authority under the ROSS program. These grants are used to connect public housing residents with education, job training, employment services and homeownership counseling available in the local community to promote self-sufficiency.

“These grants help families on their way to economic independence,” said Pittsburgh Field Office Director, Cheryl Campbell. “Whether it’s taking classes to get a better job or learning what it takes to become a homeowner, these grants help public housing residents achieve their personal and career goals.”

A good example is Tocarra Stanley, a resident of the Allegheny County Housing Authority who attended graduate school full time while working over 55 hours per week, said Frank Aggazio, Executive Director of the Allegheny County Housing Authority. “In May 2009, Ms. Stanley will graduate with a Masters Degree and \$3,000 saved toward a down payment on her first home because of her hard work and this program.”

The funding, part of \$27,960,860 awarded nationally today, is provided through HUD’s *Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) – Service Coordinators* program. These grants are awarded to public housing authorities (PHAs), resident organizations or non-profit organizations acting on behalf of residents to encourage and promote self-sufficiency among residents.

The ROSS program gives grantees the funding to hire a Service Coordinator to assess residents’ needs and link them with local resources that provide job training and placement, education and training opportunities, computer training, financial literacy and homeownership counseling. The funding is also used to provide supportive services such as childcare, and transportation to help families take advantage of training and employment opportunities.



## ACHA BRINGS HOLIDAY CHEER TO SENIOR RESIDENTS



The ACHA Carolers visited the ACHA Senior Buildings in December, to sing Christmas carols and spread Christmas Cheer for the residents. Frank Aggazio, Bev Moore and Bud Joyce, lead the carolers in song. Staff members from the Executive Department, Legal Department, Development Department, Section 8 Department Housing Operations, and the Maintenance Department joined together to sing for and with the residents. Thank you all for participating and giving your time for this worthy cause. Resident Feedback:

*Jim Carnahan of Jefferson Manor: "It was a joy to have the carolers visit Jefferson Manor, with Frank Aggazio leading them in song. They did a fantastic job to enrich the holidays for the residents."*

*Gloria Witherspoon of Carver Hall Apartments: "The Carver Hall residents really enjoyed the ACHA Christmas Carolers. Dawn Price took the stage with her beautiful solo. We appreciate the ACHA staff for taking time to share with the residents."*

### HCVP WAITING LIST LOTTERY

The waiting list for vouchers was opened in mid-August 2008. This was the first time in three years the ACHA has accepted applications for vouchers.

The waiting list opening was announced in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and Pittsburgh Courier in July 2008 in conjunction with an announcement of approximately 100 social service agencies who attended informational meetings to learn about the process for applications.

August 1, 2008 was the first day applications were accepted for a three week period. Approximately 5,000 applicants submitted applications to be on the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list. On September 8, 2008, a random lottery was conducted to place applicants in their position on the waiting list. The computer randomly placed applicants in the order it chose and that determined how vouchers would be distributed.



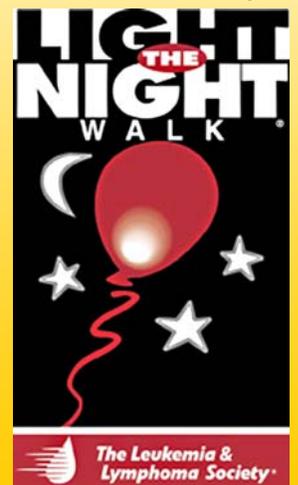
The voucher waiting list was again closed and vouchers will be given in the order the computer selected.

### LIGHT THE NIGHT WALK 2008

ACHA employees along with their families and friends attended The annual "Light The Night Walk 2008" on Thursday, October 2, 2008, hosted by The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. ACHA's Kim Evans, a survivor of Leukemia and 7-year veteran of "The Walk," continues to fight for the cure by serving as the team captain. Kim's team is named "The Faith Crusaders" because faith in God, a supportive family, caring friends and co-workers, is exactly what it took to get through such a difficult time in her life.

This year Kim renamed her team "Patty's Crusaders for a Cure" in honor of Patricia Caslin, an ACHA colleague. Support from fellow co-workers joining the walk raised a total of \$2,251.00. We're hoping to see everyone again for "Light The Night Walk 2009".

Special thanks to Walter MacFann for the picture designed by Alpha Graphics for our banner, Rich Stephenson for participating in our balloon fundraiser, and Jack Busch for the donating the lettering of our banner.



## THE RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD NEEDS YOU

The ACHA Resident Advisory Board (RAB) needs you. The RAB provides the PHA and the residents with a forum for sharing information about the Agency's Annual Plan. Section 511 of the United States Housing Act and the regulations in 24 CFR part 903 require that PHAs establish one or more Resident Advisory Board(s) (RAB) as part of the PHA Plan process. RAB membership is comprised of individuals who reflect and represent the residents assisted by the PHA. The role of the RAB is to assist the PHA in developing the PHA Plan and in making any significant amendment or modification to the Plan. To participate or get more information please contact Frank Aggazio at 42-402-2450.

## MEMORIAL - ACHA SAYS GOODBYE TO VALUED EMPLOYEES

### RICHARD 'DICK' CROWLEY

In July 2008, the Allegheny County Housing Authority lost one of its most valued employees, Richard "Dick" Crowley a man who would come to the aide of a co-worker no matter what the job.

Dick Crowley began his career with the Housing Authority in July 2002 as a Supervisor in the Section 8 where he was responsible for the management of the Section 8 Housing Inspectors. Two years later, Dick was transferred to the Housing Management Operations Department where he made his mark as a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Coordinator, Dick put his writing skills to work securing two major HUD ROSS Grants for the Agency. He also created several NAHRO award winning programs "Team Up With Sparky Children's Fire Safety" and the "CSS and FSS Newsletter".

In addition to his work at the Housing Authority, Dick was a volunteer fireman for the Forest Hills Volunteer Fire Department. Dick will be best remembered as the Christmas Blessing Santa Claus who brought laughter and glee to the children of ACHA arriving with sirens and lights blazing on the big red fire truck.



Richard "Dick" Crowley

### PATTY CASLIN

On February 5, 2009, The Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) lost a wonderful employee, a true friend, colleague, and family member. Patty Caslin, who fell ill in January 2008, lost her courageous battle with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia.



Patty Caslin (1951-2009)

In October 1992, Patty joined the ACHA as a Counselor in the Housing Choice Voucher Department. Through her hard work and dedication to the Agency, Patty was promoted to the position of Quality Control Auditor. In this position, Patty performed interdepartmental audits and quality control to ensure that each department was performing to standards that helped the ACHA achieve and maintain a High Performer status designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Under the direction of the Executive Director, Frank Aggazio, Patty was asked to take the lead with media events, such as groundbreaking and grand opening events. This role was quickly expanded into becoming the driving force for the ACHA Golf Classic that is held annually to benefit The First Tee of Pittsburgh at Pleasant Ridge Golf Program. Patty dedicated numerous hours to this very successful fundraising event that has raised over \$300,000 to aid the construction of the facility and programming area. Patty will be deeply missed by her colleagues and friends from the ACHA and its business partners.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

# GOLF CLASSIC VIII

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 2009

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