



HRA, DHS, and MOVA Help New York Veterans Find a Place to Call Home

Army Veteran Clarence Smith has the first apartment he can call his own since coming to New York in 1962. Mr. Smith, who had been staying in a City shelter, found housing last December as part of an initiative by several City agencies including HRA, the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs (MOVA) and nonprofit partners, to end veteran homelessness in New York City.

"I love it, I feel like a million bucks," said Mr. Smith. "This the first time in 53 years in this city I've had a place to call my own, and I wouldn't give it up for anything in the world."

"I like my place so much I don't even like leaving to go to the store," he added with a laugh.

Staff at DHS, HRA, and MOVA helped Mr. Smith obtain a Housing and Urban Development Veterans' Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD VASH) voucher, and with it he was able to rent a studio apartment in one of several buildings the City helped develop as housing for veterans. Mr. Smith is still employed, working as a licensed street vendor.

"I've been working since I was 15 years old," Mr. Smith said. "After the army I drove a Pepsi Cola truck. I've driven a sanitation truck and a delivery truck for a stationery company. I like the vending business, but sometimes it's good and sometimes it's slow."

Spearheaded by HRA's Homelessness Prevention Administration, HRA, DHS, MOVA, the VA, HUD, and a number of nonprofit groups all came together to help homeless veterans transition from shelter into permanent housing. Working round the clock, staff were able to find permanent housing for over 500 veterans who were considered chronically homeless, meaning they had been homeless repeatedly or for long periods of time, and often faced serious barriers to housing. Now that the City has accomplished this goal, the agencies and their nonprofit partners are continuing to work together to ensure that any new veterans that enter the shelter system are housed quickly, and to expand the program's success to other homeless New Yorkers.

"There are really good people working in the shelters," said Mr. Smith. "I hated that I had to go into shelter, but I really appreciate everything they did for me."



NYC Veterans Clarence Smith and Ernesto Garcia pick up the keys to their new apartments