



## Residents Play Vital Role in Plan NYCHA

By Eric Deutsch

“It’s like they’re coming to burn your house down; it is not overstating things to say that. We have a lot to fight against.”

Sheri Clemons, the Vice President of the Stapleton Houses Resident Association (RA), does not pull her punches when she speaks to her neighbors about the future of public housing in New York City. Ms. Clemons was at the Plan NYCHA resident engagement meeting held at the Stapleton Community Center in Staten Island on March 19. NYCHA has been meeting with residents all over the city to outline the Authority’s strategic plan for preserving public housing.

“The agency is 78 years old, and the way that things were done before is not working,” NYCHA Commissioner Margarita López told the crowd. “We need to adjust to survive.”

A major adjustment NYCHA is stressing is the importance of resident

involvement. Whether it is getting involved in a Resident Association or spreading the word to neighbors or lawmakers, residents have the chance to influence the future of their homes now more than ever.

“We have a lot to fight against.”

“We have to alert residents that this plan is going to be moving forward and we can join the movement,” said Brenda Charles, the RA President at Mariner’s Harbor. “If there are things we must do, then we must do them, even if it’s downsizing to a smaller apartment.”

Downsizing, or right-sizing, focuses on residents who live in under-occupied apartments, with more bedrooms than are needed by the families that live in them, to move into appropriately-sized homes. (To read more about this, please see the Chairman’s Message on page 3.)



Stapleton Houses Resident Association Vice President Sheri Clemons speaks to her fellow Staten Island NYCHA residents at a Plan NYCHA resident engagement meeting on March 19, 2012.

A large part of NYCHA’s current situation stems from a shortfall of \$2.2 billion in capital and operating funds since 2001, said NYCHA Acting Executive Vice President and Chief

Financial Officer Andreas Spitzer. Plan NYCHA features numerous ways to try to address the funding shortfall, including ensuring every resident is paying their fair *continued on page 2*

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## Resident Gardeners Grow Their Green Thumbs at Annual Conference

By Heidi Morales

The room was buzzing. They clapped and wooed, and pumped their fists in the air. The excitement could be felt like currents of electricity jumping off the walls. A whole year had gone by and NYCHA’s resident gardeners had been waiting with anticipation. The 10th annual NYCHA Grows with its Gardeners conference on March 22 at the Johnson Community Center in Manhattan drew hundreds of resident gardeners from all five boroughs to increase their knowledge about gardening, share ideas and support and celebrate each other and their efforts to beautify their developments.

The NYCHA Grows with its Gardeners conference has become a symbol of residents’ collective efforts to live more environmentally sound lives. Gardeners have made great strides not only in beautifying their community, but also educating their fellow residents about the benefits of planting for themselves and the environment.

Arnetha Singleton from Ingersoll Houses in Brooklyn is the garden leader at her development, which has more than 40 gardens stewarded



NYCHA residents learn how to can their own food during a workshop at the 10th annual NYCHA Grows with its Gardeners conference on March 22, 2012.

by her neighbors. “I love beauty. I love God’s creation. I love working with my hands. For me it’s the best exercise. It gives me joy,” said Ms. Singleton, 71, who grew up on a farm in North Carolina. She added that gardening comes naturally to her, and believes everyone should take part in it to help keep their community clean and beautiful.

Joseph Benjamin from Stuyvesant Gardens in Brooklyn likes the peace that gardening makes him feel. “I like planting. I feel good when I garden,” he said.

NYCHA Board Member Margarita López, who leads the Authority’s environmental efforts, praised the gardeners for their contributions to their developments and the “Green” movement. “You gardeners are very special. Thank you for doing what you do, because that will allow us to make Mother Earth whole again,” she said.

Many resident gardeners spoke of the satisfaction they felt of being part of something bigger than themselves and becoming cleaner, greener and

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# NYCHA Board Meetings



Notice hereby is given that the New York City Housing Authority's Board Meetings take place every other Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. in the Board Room on the 12th floor of 250 Broadway, New York, New York (unless otherwise noted). The remaining meetings for Calendar Year 2012 are as follows:

April 11	June 20	August 29	November 7
April 25	July 5	September 12	November 21
May 9	July 18	September 27	December 5
May 23	August 1	October 10	December 19
June 6	August 15	October 24	

Any changes to the schedule above will be posted here and on NYCHA's website at [nyc.gov/nycha](http://nyc.gov/nycha) to the extent practicable at a reasonable time before the meeting.

These meetings are open to the public. Pre-registration at least 45 minutes before the scheduled Board Meeting is required by all speakers. Comments are limited to the items on the Calendar. Speaking time will be limited to three minutes. The public comment period will conclude upon all speakers being heard or at the expiration of 30 minutes allotted by law for public comment, whichever occurs first.

Copies of the Calendar are available on NYCHA's website or can be picked up at the Office of the Secretary at 250 Broadway, 12th floor, New York, New York, no earlier than 3:00 p.m. on the Friday before the upcoming Wednesday Board Meeting. Copies of the Disposition are available on NYCHA's website or can be picked up at the Office of the Secretary no earlier than 3:00 p.m. on the Thursday after the Board Meeting.

Any person requiring a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the Board Meeting should contact the Office of the Secretary at (212) 306-6088 no later than five business days before the Board Meeting. For additional information, please visit NYCHA's website or call (212) 306-6088.

## Check out NYCHA's Facebook page!

Got a web-enabled smartphone? Now you can access NYCHA's Facebook page and bonus content in this issue by scanning or taking a snapshot of the QR codes. The QR code for NYCHA's Facebook page is on the right.

**Step 1:** Download a QR code scanner application from your phone's marketplace (many of these "apps" are free to download). **Step 2:** Point your phone's camera at the QR image.



## Residents' Voices



March 1, 2012

(via e-mail)

*Ed. note: the writer attended the Plan NYCHA Resident Engagement Meeting at Queensbridge Community Center.*

I would like to thank you for a very well planned and informative meeting last night. For me it was a glimmer to what the future can have in store for NYCHA and for myself.

The audience questions in large part focused on the 30% rent guidelines. I can say that at times I paid less than 30% of my income for my rent. Paying less than 30% afforded me the ability to send my oldest to a top notch Catholic school, and now an elite boarding school where he is in the top 5%, and has received numerous accolades for his work. As for my youngest, I am able to pay his tuition which is way more than my current rent. For me it about my legacy, being able to give my boys roots and wings.

From NYCHA I went through the Housing Youth Training Program. Through NYCHA I was able to be a resident business owner. Through NYCHA I became a resident leader. Now I work for a large bank as an Executive Assistant to a one-percenter who grew up in NYCHA. I am a member of Community Board 8 in Queens, a Queens Congress Civic leader, Queens College Advisory board member, Girl Scout troop leader and a Farm School NYC student. All because NYCHA has given me roots and wings.

**Monica Corbett, Pomonok Houses  
Resident Association President**

February 13, 2012

(via mail)

Can NYCHA use community centers to school the youth on how the

system works? How even if they have been arrested, they can go to vocational training or school – have instructors, probation officers, and someone from the welfare system there to explain things to them so they don't feel like they're getting the run around. Some of these youths (like I was) come from foster homes, boarding homes or drug-addicted families, so common sense has not been nurtured in them. Can NYCHA help them?

**Marcella Wallace, Drew-Hamilton Houses  
NYCHA response:**

NYCHA's Departments of Community Operations and Family Services work collaboratively with many partners, including the Citywide Council of Presidents, Resident Associations, District Attorneys offices, the Police Athletic League, elected officials, PSAs, Community Boards and Community Based Organizations to help youth understand these different systems and the support services available to them. Any resident interested in having such a workshop at their development can contact the Community Operations Borough Offices:

**Bronx (718) 409-8626**

**Brooklyn (718) 453-1296**

**Manhattan (212) 306-3324**

**Queens / Staten Island**

**(718) 969-6240 / (718) 815-0140**

## Tell us what is on your mind!

*Residents' Voices* accepts letters, photographs, poems, drawings – anything that allows you to express yourself!

Please include your full name, development name, address and phone number. We will print only your name and development on our pages; we need your address and phone number for verification purposes only.

Please limit written submissions to 250 words.

The *Journal* reserves the right to edit all content for length, clarity, good taste, accuracy, etc. Because of space limitations, we must limit all contributors to one letter per person per issue.

There are many ways to share your thoughts with us at the *Journal*:

Send an e-mail to [Journal@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:Journal@nycha.nyc.gov)

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If you have any questions, please send them to [Journal@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:Journal@nycha.nyc.gov).

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## Residents Play Vital Role in Plan NYCHA

share of rent. Over the next five years, the maximum amount that residents pay in rent will be removed so that all residents will pay 30 percent of their income. This will affect approximately 47,000 NYCHA households.

Despite the many new ways NYCHA will look to generate revenue, Mr. Spitzer told the residents that they should be sure to stay active. It's that attitude that drives Doreen Williams, the Resident Watch Supervisor at Todt Hill Houses.



Doreen Williams, the Resident Watch Supervisor at Todt Hill Houses, speaks during the Plan NYCHA resident engagement meeting on March 19, 2012: "We can get things done if people get involved."

"I have to go door-to-door and hold meetings on every floor to get people involved," she said. "I tell people 'You can't come out now? Well here's my phone number, call me.'"

To learn more about Plan NYCHA and how to get involved, go to [plannycha.org](http://plannycha.org).

To see more photos from the Plan NYCHA resident engagement meetings, point your smartphone's camera here.



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## Message from the Chairman

NYCHA is proud to be a place where families can grow, thrive and build a life around the assurance of an affordable home through both good and bad times. While our mission always remains the same, we have transformed over the years to better serve New Yorkers and the great city we call home.

Just as NYCHA evolves, so do the lives of residents. Families expand, children grow into adults, people move on and move out, and their housing needs change. NYCHA

and residents share a responsibility to make sure that we keep up with those changes, and that residents' apartment sizes reflect their family's true needs.

You may have heard about "right-sizing," a key part of Plan NYCHA, our road-map for the preservation of public housing. Right-sizing means that NYCHA is doing all it can to help residents living in under-occupied apartments – with more bedrooms than are needed by the families that live in them – move into appropriately-sized homes. This allows us to open up these larger units for families who need more space or are on the waiting list. Because almost half of these units are occupied by seniors, we also are helping many of our elders who may have difficulty taking care of a large apartment move into affordable senior housing with onsite support services. This will enable them to continue living independently in their own apartments.

More than 50,000 NYCHA apartments around the city are under-occupied. Half of them have two bedrooms occupied by one person. Many are headed by residents whose children have grown up and started their own households, or members of larger families who have inherited bigger apartments than they need.

DeReese Huff, the Resident Association president at Campos Plaza, was one of those

residents. Her mother raised 10 children in the five-bedroom apartment she moved into in 1979. Eventually those kids moved on and the apartment was passed along to Ms. Huff and her own daughter. Recognizing that there were many others facing the situation that her mother once had and who needed the extra space, she requested a transfer to a smaller apartment and now shares a two-bedroom unit with her 13-year-old daughter. "NYCHA gave us a great place to live," says Ms. Huff of the apartment she and her siblings grew up in, "and it's only fair that we do the same for others."

With more than 160,000 families on the public housing waiting list – that is almost one family waiting for every unit of NYCHA housing – and many more that have outgrown their current apartments and urgently need more space, there is a growing need to make things right. With your help, NYCHA is taking action.

If you are living in an apartment with more bedrooms than you need, you may have received a letter from NYCHA asking you to put your name on the transfer list as soon as possible. We will work with you to find an adequate apartment that works for you in a neighborhood of your choice, including your current development should an appropriate unit become available. We recognize that not all residents can be accommodated with their first choice. We also know some residents will consider a range of housing alternatives, from new senior housing to Section 8. NYCHA understands that a one-size-fits-all solution is not the answer and we are prepared to work with each family (including providing moving assistance) to ensure an appropriate outcome.

I am sure many of you have questions and concerns about right-sizing, and I encourage you to talk to your Property Manager for more information. Working together, we can maximize access to public housing and give more New York City families the opportunities so many families have enjoyed throughout NYCHA's 78-year history.

*John Rhee*

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more self-sufficient. Their hope is that their neighbors catch on and join in. Luther Stubblefield from Baruch Houses in Manhattan has been gardening with NYCHA since 1996, and is as passionate today as he was then. "This is an amazing opportunity for the youth and seniors, and other residents to be more informed and gives us the opportunity to work together," he said.

The conference included a green resource fair that brought together more than two dozen gardening and environmental partner organizations that provided educational materials and free or low-cost gardening resources to resident gardeners. There were 16 workshops throughout the day on topics such as composting, tree stewardship, selecting seeds for a garden and the power of herbs.

The NYCHA Grows with its Gardeners conference was established in 2002 and is part of the Authority's Garden and Greening Program, which began in 1962 and is the longest running program at the Housing Authority.

## Love at First Bloom

By Heidi Morales

*This is the latest in a series of Journal profiles of NYCHA's resident gardeners as part of the celebration of the 50th year of the Authority's Garden and Greening Program.*

**R**osaura Milan, a 49-year resident of McKinley Houses in the Bronx, has fond memories of tending to a garden as a child. Her mother, she said, enjoyed gardening very much. "But that was many moons ago," she said in between chuckles.

That was Mrs. Milan's introduction to gardening, but it wasn't until five years ago that she really dedicated her time and energy to nurturing a flower garden – and that's when she fell in love. "I love to experiment with my flowers. I always get excited when I see them growing. I have about 200 to 250 tulips right here at the development," she said proudly.

The grandmother of three boasts just as many wins in NYCHA's annual Garden and Greening Competition; but winning is not the reason for her passion. "First and foremost, I think it's a big help to beautify the community. I get such pleasure doing it," Mrs. Milan said, whose happiness and playfulness in her voice and laugh are endearing and borderline contagious. "I feel such pleasure when I see the neighbors enjoy it – my garden has a lot of benches and tables. Gardening is my relaxing time."

And she has high hopes for this year's competition. "Even if I don't win, I'm still going to enter," she said. "I just love it."

Mrs. Milan takes full advantage of the year-round technical assistance and gardening resources available to her through NYCHA's Garden and Greening Program. "I like to go to the meetings; meet new people; and learn more about gardening," she said. "Gardening has done wonders for me. I was in a bad accident and I feel the garden has helped me health-wise and mentally too. I feel peace when I'm there."



## THE NYCHA NOT WANTED LIST

Below is a partial list of names of individuals who have been excluded permanently from NYCHA's public housing developments. This list keeps residents informed of the Authority's ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life for New Yorkers in public housing and to allow for the peaceful and safe use of its facilities. The full list can be viewed at [on.nyc.gov/nychanotwanted](http://on.nyc.gov/nychanotwanted). The following are the people, with their former addresses, excluded as of October 19 and 26, November 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, and December 7, 14 and 21, 2011.

### Prohibited as of October 19, 2011

**Charles Barber** Mitchel Houses, 360 E 137th St., Apt. 9F, Bronx  
**Ismael Cruz** Carey Gardens, 3031 W 25th St., Apt. 14A, Brooklyn  
**Demetrius Pope** Ravenswood Houses, 12-20 34th Ave., Apt. 3H, Queens  
**Ralph Rivera** Ravenswood Houses, 12-20 34th Ave., Apt. 3H, Queens  
**Reggie Santiago** Wagner Houses, 445 E 120th St., Apt. 14E, Manhattan

### Prohibited as of October 26, 2011

**Armando Anderson** Nostrand Houses, 3040 Avenue W, Apt. 6E, Brooklyn  
**Willie Billingslea** Morrisania Air Rights Consolidated Houses, 3125 Park Ave., Apt. 15F, Bronx  
**Juan Boneu** Eastchester Gardens, 3020 Yates Ave., Apt. 7F, Bronx  
**Tyrone Craig** Bronx River Houses, 1460 Bronx River, Apt. 5J, Bronx  
**Jeffrey Demorh** Grant Houses, 55 LaSalle St. Apt. 17C, Manhattan  
**Karl Yearwood** O'Dwyer Gardens, 3950 W 35th St., Apt. 1005, Brooklyn

### Prohibited as of November 2, 2011

**Anthony Alston** Langston Hughes Houses, 315 Sutter Ave., Apt. 8B, Brooklyn  
**Oscar Benitez** Castle Hill Houses, 2275 Randall Ave., Apt. 1J, Bronx  
**Keith Campbell** King Towers, 71 W 112th St., Apt. 6A, Manhattan  
**Ray Dubois a/k/a Gary Dubois** Drew-Hamilton Houses, 200 W 143rd St., Apt. 7J, Manhattan  
**Damon Guzman** LaGuardia Houses, 286 South St., Apt. 7B, Manhattan  
**Kymkwan Hall** WSUR (Site B) Houses, 74 W 92nd St., Apt. 10B, Manhattan  
**Angel Rodriguez** Sumner Houses, 10 Lewis Ave., Apt. 9I, Brooklyn  
**Damon Roundtree** Carey Gardens Houses, 2836 W 23rd St., Apt. 11M, Brooklyn  
**Kashawn Shaw a/k/a Kashawn Shah a/k/a Kashawn Shand a/k/a Kashawn Shawn** Murphy Private Houses, 1203 Westchester Ave., Apt. 2B, Bronx

### Prohibited as of November 9, 2011

**Tashari Blake** Marlboro Houses, 30 Avenue V, Apt. 15G, Brooklyn  
**Ashlee Francis** Clinton Houses, 1738 Lexington Ave., Apt. 2H, Manhattan  
**Richard Liranzo** Wald Houses, 725 F.D.R. Dr., Apt. 7F, Manhattan  
**Quran Walker** Ravenswood Houses, 12-22 35th Ave., Apt. 2B, Queens

### Prohibited as of November 16, 2011

**Kenneth Lopez** Mill Brook Houses, 164 St. Ann's Ave., Apt. 15C, Bronx  
**Anthony Riley** Polo Ground Towers, 2999 Eighth Ave., Apt. 30A, Manhattan

### Prohibited as of November 23, 2011

**Steven Broadhurst** Farragut Houses, 233 Sands St., Apt. 3H, Brooklyn  
**Yaritza Valle** Wald Houses, 50 Avenue D, Apt. 8G, Manhattan

### Prohibited as of November 30, 2011

**Jose Corujo** Melrose Houses, 320 E 156th St., Apt. 6C, Bronx  
**Troy Dawson** Pomonok Houses, 154-05 71st Ave., Apt. 3D, Queens  
**Robert Matos** Douglass Houses, 60 W 104th St. Apt. 2B, Manhattan  
**Anthony Sherard** Riis Houses, 1023 F.D.R. Dr., Apt. 2A, Manhattan

### Prohibited as of December 7, 2011

**Barry Bostic** Throggs Neck Houses, 2755 Sampson Ave., Apt. 2D, Bronx  
**Devon McClain** Lincoln Houses, 2133 Madison Ave., Apt. 3C, Manhattan  
**Jose Vargas** Mott Haven Houses, 353 E 141st St., Apt. 20B, Bronx

### Prohibited as of December 14, 2011

**Luis Chapotin** Chelsea Houses, 420 W 26th St., Apt. 5C, Manhattan  
**Wasir Gardener** Red Hook West Houses, 472 Columbia St., Apt. 5C, Brooklyn  
**Jeremy Ortiz** Chelsea Houses, 420 W 26th St., Apt. 12G, Manhattan  
**Aaron Stevenson** Wagner Houses, 350 E 124th St., Apt. 4C, Manhattan

### Prohibited as of December 21, 2011

**David Gilmore** Sheepshead Bay Houses, 2354 Batchelder St., Apt. 3B, Brooklyn  
**Alrashid Moreira** Patterson Houses, 2615 Third Ave., Apt. 4A, Bronx  
**Michael Washington** Pomonok Houses, 69-09 Kissena Blvd., Apt. 3A, Queens

## Notice of HUD Inspections

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be conducting a physical inspection of NYCHA developments within the next few weeks. The system that HUD developed for these inspections is called the Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS). As part of this process, a certain number of residents' apartments will be inspected.



### Residents can assist by reviewing the following items:

#### Electricity

- Your circuit breaker or fuse panel should not have any missing breakers or fuses (you should not see any of the wiring or parts inside the breaker or fuse panel). Do not block access to the panel.
- All light switches and outlets should operate properly and have cover plates over them. Light fixtures should be functional.
- In apartments with Call for Aid units, switches and pull cords should operate properly with pull cord hanging down to the floor and no furniture blocking access to the cord.
- Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI) outlets should test properly when pushing the Test button.
- Leaks near electrical devices (e.g. light fixtures, fuse panels or breaker panels) should be reported.

#### Smoke Detectors/Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Detectors should be installed and function properly.
- There should not be empty brackets with missing detectors.

#### Stove/Oven

- Check each burner. Each burner should light individually by turning the knob.
- The oven should work and have no missing knobs.
- Range hoods should be clean and functional.

#### Refrigerator

- The refrigerator door should close all the way. Door gaskets should not be cracked or broken.
- Lights should work.

#### Doors

- Bathroom, bedroom and closet doors should close and latch properly.
- Apartment entrance and bedroom doors should not have a double-keyed cylinder or padlock.
- Door knobs and latches should be in good working order.
- Doors should be free of holes or damage.

#### Windows

- Windows should work properly, staying up when opened and latching when closed.
- Window glass should not be cracked or broken.

#### Faucets

- Faucets and their parts should not leak when either on or off.
- You should have rubber stoppers for the sinks and tub.

#### Toilets

- Toilets should function properly and have no apparent leaks.

#### Mildew and Mold

- Mildew and mold conditions in any area of an apartment should be reported.

#### Exterminator

- You should not have any type of infestation condition.

#### Mailboxes

- Mailbox doors must lock with a key.

If any of the above items are not in good order, please contact the Customer Contact Center at (718) 707-7771 to schedule an appointment to have those items repaired. If you already have scheduled an appointment for these repairs, it is not necessary to call the Customer Contact Center again.

#### Resident Owned Items:

- Resident owned items also are inspected during the physical inspection of the apartments and should be checked and corrected as necessary.

#### Fire Extinguishers

- Resident-owned extinguishers must have a valid annual inspection tag.

#### Double-Keyed Cylinders

- Resident-installed double-keyed cylinders and/or padlocks must be removed.

#### Air Conditioners and Fans

- Resident-owned air conditioners must be in working order.
- Fans must have protective covers.

#### Mirrors

- Broken mirrors should be removed and/or replaced.

**NYCHA thanks you in advance for your continued cooperation.**

## NYCHA Chair Appears on Section 8 Panel

NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea appeared on a panel at the New York University Furman Center's Institute for Affordable Housing Policy Breakfast on March 5. The topic was "Fulfilling the Promise: Improving Housing Choice Voucher Holders' Access to High Opportunity Neighborhoods." Currently there are nearly 95,000 households receiving Housing Choice (Section 8) Voucher Program assistance from NYCHA, with more than 32,000 participating building owners.

Chairman Rhea discussed NYCHA's mission to help connect families to opportunities and to ensure that voucher holders have the information they need to make housing decisions for their family. NYCHA provides voucher holders with a list of building owners who participate in the program, along with information on how the voucher

may be used anywhere in the United States.

Chairman Rhea also mentioned that NYCHA would like to do even more to assist families in their housing searches, but the Section 8 program continues to be hindered by steep declines in federal funding. "Since 2005 we have lost a total of \$35 million in administrative fees for which we were eligible," Chairman Rhea said. "This year we expect to receive less than 75 percent of what we need."

As part of Plan NYCHA, the Authority will explore alternative funding options for the Section 8 program.

Joining Chairman Rhea on the panel were Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, the Furman Center's Director, Ingrid Gould Ellen, Jennifer Lee O'Neil of the Quadel Consulting Corporation and Sheldon Mann of Langsam Property Services.

## Safety and Security Enhancements Create Employment Opportunities for NYCHA Residents



NYCHA residents learn how to install cable for security systems during a training course organized by the Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES) on March 15, 2012.

When an advertisement for Brooklyn Networks, a free six-week cable installation training program hosted by Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI), arrived in the mailbox, Diego Cifuentes knew it was the perfect opportunity for him. "I'd seen advertisements for other training programs in my development," says Mr. Cifuentes, a resident of Woodside Houses in Queens, "but I knew that this training would be a great match for my interests and long-term career goals."

This opportunity for Mr. Cifuentes is a result of NYCHA's work, through the Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES), to leverage its resources, including its spending power, to create economic opportunities for residents.

Thanks to funding from the New York City Council and New York State Legislature, NYCHA is implementing safety enhancements to building entrances that also will create employment opportunities for residents. These enhancements are an outgrowth of NYCHA's Safety and Security Task Force, a collaborative effort among residents, the Authority and the NYPD to improve safety in NYCHA developments and the quality of life of residents.

In keeping with NYCHA's commitment to extend economic opportunity to residents, NYCHA has required that the contractors hired to do this work employ qualified residents. Con-

tractors are looking for workers with the following skills: cable pulling, pipe bending and basic electrical work.

BWI works closely with the NYCHA contractor, Security Management Systems, to customize their cable installation training program, Brooklyn Networks. "We are committed to hiring qualified NYCHA residents and ensuring that they have meaningful opportunities at our company," says Craig Albrecht, Vice President at Security Management Systems. "The collaboration with BWI gives us the opportunity to hire workers that we know have been trained in the skills we need."

"I'm very impressed with the quality of the program," said Mr. Cifuentes. "The certifications we're working toward will put me and my classmates a step ahead of the competition. The other training programs I've looked to at this level were way too expensive – I'm so grateful that NYCHA and BWI are offering this for free!"

REES led a citywide recruitment effort to fill the program, ensuring that interested residents would have an opportunity to participate. The classes will prepare many residents for opportunities with NYCHA contractors and other private sector partners over the next two years.

For information on more training opportunities with REES, call the REES Hotline at (718) 289-8100.

## Eye on Housing Fraud

Through the quarterly feature "Eye on Housing Fraud," the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) provides names of residents, as listed below, who have been convicted and sentenced for defrauding NYCHA. In these cases, restitution is collected through a payment schedule until fully paid, including wage and asset garnishments, if necessary. Anyone with information regarding fraud or wrongdoing should call DOI's NYCHA Inspector General Hotline at (212) 306-3356.

**Ernestina Marimon** – pleaded guilty to federal charges of Theft of Government Benefits and Making False Statements and sentenced to 18 months in federal prison followed by three years of probation for defrauding the government of more than \$85,000 by illegally obtaining dual subsidies from NYCHA and the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, residing in a Section 8 apartment in Manhattan while allowing unauthorized individuals to reside in her NYCHA apartment in the Douglass Houses.

**Migdalia Marrero** – pleaded guilty to the federal charge of Making False Statements and was sentenced to two years of probation for failing to report the income and presence of her husband in her Section 8-subsidized apartment in the Bronx and defrauding NYCHA of \$26,660, the same amount she was ordered to repay NYCHA as part of her sentence.

**Enercida Garcia and Victor**



Department of Investigation Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn

**Garcia** – each pleaded guilty to the federal charge of Conspiracy to Commit Theft of Government Property and Theft of Government Property for illegally obtaining Section 8 benefits by concealing their ownership at different times of a Section 8-subsidized property and their familial relationship in which Victor was the landlord and Enercida was a tenant. Enercida was sentenced to six months of supervised release and Victor to one year of probation. Together they were ordered to repay NYCHA a total of \$43,416.

**Keisha Rease** – pleaded guilty to the federal charge of Theft of Public Money for failing to report her City employment, most recently with the Department of Juvenile Justice, and defrauding NYCHA's Section 8 program of \$27,650. Rease was sentenced to three years of probation and ordered to repay NYCHA \$27,650.

### Fake Parking Permit Ring Busted

DOI recently announced the results of its proactive investigation into the use of fraudulent NYCHA employee parking permits that investigators found displayed on vehicles in outdoor parking lots in NYCHA developments. After DOI

investigators found an initial fake parking permit in 2011, it expanded its investigation searching for possible similar abuses at other NYCHA developments. DOI found fraudulent parking permits displayed in vehicles parked in J.P. Mitchel Houses in the Bronx and the James Weldon Johnson Houses, Frederick Douglass Houses, Martin Luther King, Jr. Towers, and Alfred E. Smith Houses in Manhattan.

Since December 2011, DOI has arrested 14 people, including six NYCHA residents who also face administrative action by the Authority. The investigation found that the fraudulent permits were likely computer-generated facsimiles. They were spotted because of differences from genuine permits, including a different-colored background and invalid permit numbers. DOI continues its investigation and is working with NYCHA to strengthen oversight procedures.

A limited number of parking permits, for a fee, are available for NYCHA residents who apply through their management office. Anyone with information about fraudulent parking permits should contact DOI's NYCHA Inspector General hotline at (212) 306-3356.



Photo Courtesy DOI

A fraudulent NYCHA employee parking permit confiscated by DOI investigators on the left, compared to a genuine permit on the right.

**SENIOR NEWS**

**Important News About Your Federal Benefit Check**

If you receive a monthly check in the mail for Social Security, SSI or any other federal benefit, a major change will take place in 11 months. Beginning March 1, 2013, the federal government no longer will mail checks. Instead, you will receive your benefits by one of the following two electronic payment methods:

- Direct Deposit: Have your payment sent electronically to a bank or credit union account that is in your name.
- Direct Express® Card: Receive your payment in the form of a "Direct Express" (debit) card that can be used at any bank teller machine (for cash) or location that accepts credit/debit cards.

If you don't make a choice before March 1, 2013, you automatically will receive a Direct Express Card in the mail when the new program begins. So start thinking about which choice you would like to make. For more information, call (800) 333-1795, or visit [www.GoDirect.org](http://www.GoDirect.org).



**Women's History Month: Staten Island RA Presidents Honored**

Several Resident Association Presidents were honored for their volunteer service to their communities and to Staten Island as a whole on March 10. The second annual Women's History Month Celebration was sponsored by State Senator Diane Savino, State Assembly Member Nicole Malliotakis and City Council Member Debi Rose. Shown are, seated from left to right, Geraldine Parker, Stapleton Houses RA President and Citywide Council of Presidents Staten Island District representative; Florence Grossmann, New Lane Shores RA President; Mary Shalo; Brenda (Kiko) Charles, Mariner's Harbor Houses RA President; and Sylvia Cunningham, Todt Hill Houses RA President. Standing, from left to right, are Victoria Cirigliano-Doria, Berry Houses RA President; Senator Diane J. Savino; Assembly Member Nicole Malliotakis; City Council Member Debi Rose; Scherise Lewis, South Beach Houses RA President; Eunice Love, Richmond Terrace Houses RA President; and Beatrice Everett, West Brighton Houses RA President.

**More Jobs Coming to Coney Island**

Coney Island is open for business, now more than ever, with the kick-off of New York City's annual job fairs to fill more than 450 jobs in Brooklyn's amusement district this summer. This is the third year in a row the City has held job screenings to connect local Coney Island residents with jobs in their communities. Last year, nearly half of all open positions were filled by local residents. This year other local businesses such as Nathan's Famous, Ruby's and Brooklyn Beach Shop, among others, have joined the efforts and are looking to hire.

Carey Gardens Resident Association President Shirley Aikens volunteers at the job fairs and said she saw more than 150 people from her development and other neighboring NYCHA public housing attend. "I know five people from my development that got jobs several years ago and they got called back, and they're very happy about that," Ms. Aikens said. "They also get a raise each year they get called back. I'm really glad to see interest in letting people from the community get these jobs."

The recruitment effort is part of the City's Coney Island Revitalization Plan, which aims to preserve and grow the historic amusement district; create new retail and nearly 5,000 units of housing; and generate more than 25,000 construction jobs and 6,000 permanent jobs.

NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea participated in a news conference recently held by Mayor Michael Bloomberg to announce the job fairs. "Last year, along with our partners in private, public, and nonprofit sectors, and through extensive efforts in getting the word out in public housing



NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea speaks at a Mayoral news conference on February 28, 2012, to announce City summer job fairs for Coney Island-area residents.

developments, NYCHA placed more than a thousand of its residents into jobs, including more than 500 jobs right here in Brooklyn," Chairman Rhea said. "Bringing employment opportunities to our residents to help them gain self-sufficiency is a top priority for NYCHA."

Interested NYCHA residents can attend two remaining job fairs on April 24 and 26 from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM in MCU Park at 1904 Surf Avenue in Coney Island. Job seekers may apply to fill positions in customer service, retail, food and beverage service, ride and game operations and ticket sales.

The outreach efforts are being led by the New York City Economic Development Corporation's HireNYC program, which connects the City's workforce development services to economic development projects, in coordination with NYCHA, the Coney Island Development Corporation, Department of Small Business Services, Councilmember Domenic M. Recchia, Jr. and a number of community organizations.

**The Force Is in His Hands**

Maurice Davis, 21, a resident of Rutgers Houses (Manhattan) and a member of the Green City Force – a service corps that prepares young people for sustainable careers – recently was named 2012 Corps Member of the Year. The Corps Network, which represents 33,000 Corps Members across the country, selected Maurice as one of six national corps members who, through their accomplishments and personal stories, exemplify the organization's ideals. Mr. Davis and his fellow award recipients were honored recently at The Corps Network National Conference in Washington, D.C.

"For four days at the conference, I talked to many different people who represent The Corps Network all across the United States," Mr. Davis said. "I spoke in front of many people about my background and how much these past eight months meant to me. I learned so much

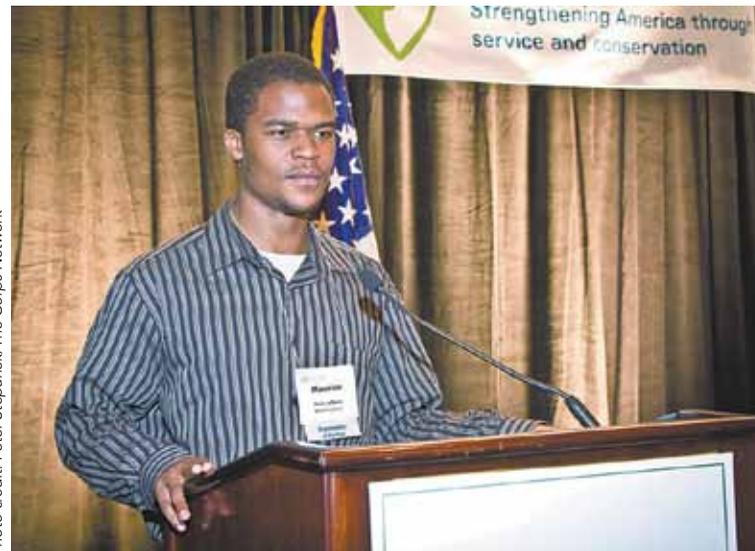


Photo credit: Peter Stepanek/The Corps Network

from the experience."

As part of NYCHA's Green Agenda, the Authority has been working with the non-profit Green City Force (GCF) for the past two years to connect residents between the ages of 18-24 with training and job opportunities in the emerging green economy. In addition, members receive training in job readiness, eco-literacy, outreach

and energy efficiency auditing for homes and small businesses. Last year 23 NYCHA residents graduated from the GCF training, including Mr. Davis. He, along with other Corps members, have participated in the NYC Cool Roofs campaign and built an urban green space at Lillian Wald Houses in partnership with Planters and The Corps Network.

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DIRECTED BY  
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Katori Hall. Photo by Gregory Condante.

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Residency Five is supported, in part, by funds from the City of New York Theater Subdistrict Council, LDC and the City of New York.

Hurt Village is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award.

It's the end of a long summer in Hurt Village, a housing project in Memphis, Tennessee, and a government Hope Grant means relocation for many of the project's residents. A bold, gritty and devastating work, *Hurt Village* earned Katori Hall the prestigious Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, given annually to an outstanding female playwright.

### February 7 - March 18, 2012

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# IT Programs a New Career Path for Residents

By Howard Silver

Cheers rang out for some young residents at a recent NYCHA Board meeting, as an initiative was approved that made their employment at NYCHA and training at Columbia University possible. The residents are among 23 young people now working part-time as consultants with major employers while attending a specialized training course that will lead to a certificate in computer technology support, underwritten by Columbia University. The training at Columbia consists of helpdesk support; for Siebel and Maximo, two computer programs used by NYCHA; and mentoring and business writing courses.

"The program not only allows us to know about the Information Technology (IT) field but also about ourselves," said 23-year-old Victoria Vasquez, a resident of Vladeck Houses in Manhattan. "Through the training we are receiving, we are being groomed into becoming an asset for any company. I am so grateful."

The pioneering program was developed by NYCHA's Department of Information Technology under the direction of Acting General Manager Atefeh Riazhi, in conjunction with Resident Economic Empowerment & Sus-

tainability (REES) and the Office of Public and Private Partnerships, in response to a challenge from the NYCHA Board to increase the number and quality of resident job opportunities.

"This program is the culmination of the Board's commitment to creating employment development opportunities for residents," Chairman John B. Rhea said. "This is an incredible program that leverages the dollars that we put out to make sure they have a broader impact."

David Price, 24, of Jackie Robinson Houses in Manhattan remarked, "Throughout the last six months, I have had the op-

portunity to develop a variety of IT skills. But I believe the most important skill is handling the unique responsibility that comes with being a student in this program."

Development of the employment program tailored to the unique demands and rewards of the technology industry was challenging, and had been tried before. "Residents often don't have the skills needed by IT vendors to be hired for Section 3 jobs," IT Project Manager Diane Chehab said. "Acting GM Riazhi insisted that we find a way to prepare residents for IT employment opportunities, so we had to try something new. The skills they will have are in demand not just at NYCHA but everywhere."



Some of the residents being trained to be Information Technology professionals stand with NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea (center) and Acting General Manager Atefeh Riazhi (third from left). From left to right, Sandy Liao, Chelsea Houses; Jessica Cardona, Morris Houses; Ian Holly, Polo Grounds Towers; Victoria Vasquez, Vladeck Houses; Yokasta Vargas, Sotomayor Houses; David Price, Robinson Houses; Jason Giraldo, Douglass Houses; and Franklin Arce, Williams Houses.

# RA Presidents Honored for Black History Month

Ann Cotton-Morris, the Citywide Council of Presidents Queens District representative and Woodside Houses Resident Association (RA) President, and Carol Wilkins, Ravenswood Houses RA President, were honored for their commitment to tenants' rights at New York City Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer's annual Black History Month Celebration and Awards Night. Ms. Cotton-Morris (below) and Ms. Wilkins (right) received framed City Council proclamations from Council Members Van Bramer and Letitia James at the event on February 28 in the Jacob Riis Settlement House in Queensbridge Houses. Pamela Thrower, the RA President of Queensbridge Houses, also spoke during the ceremony.



Photo courtesy Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer's office

"I find it to be a special privilege and honor to receive an award for serving the many residents in my community," said Ms. Cotton-Morris. "It is inspiring to know the service I render is recognized and appreciated by the many caring residents, NYCHA and the surrounding community."



Photo courtesy Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer's office

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- Participation is voluntary and of no cost to you
- Compensation will be provided for your time and travel costs.

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Rutgers youth meet WABC-TV news anchors Bill Ritter and Liz Cho after watching them perform a live newscast on March 1, 2012.

## Lights, Camera...Read!

Fifteen young booklovers from the Rutgers Community Center recently toured the WABC-TV (Channel 7) studios, their reward for their dedication to the printed page. The NYCHA youth took part in a reading challenge to see which community center in Manhattan could read the most books during last summer. A total of 70 youth at Rutgers read more than 1,300 books, averaging more than 19 books per child.

The contest was part of the NYC Literacy Enterprise/NYCHA Reads program, an effort to engage children in activities that foster reading during the summer and throughout the year. Children from 14 community centers participated. On average citywide, each child read more than seven books.

Part of the studio tour on March 1 included watching a live broadcast of a WABC news program.

WABC/DISNEY Inc. donated 10,000 books last summer to NYCHA-run and sponsored community centers.

## NYCHA Youth Takes Prize in Statewide Competition

As reported on in the March issue of the *Journal*, Sadia Nusrat, who lives in Gowanus Houses in Brooklyn, was nominated by NYCHA for a college scholarship given by the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA) and the New York State chapter of the organization (NYSPHADA). Ms. Nusrat, a senior

at Midwood High School in Brooklyn, won second place in the NYSPHADA competition, for which she will receive a new laptop computer.

"Wow! That made my day," Ms. Nusrat said. "When I told my mom that I got nominated for the scholarship she gave me a big hug and said 'I have a feeling that you will win.'"

## Polo Grounds Community Center Opens its Doors to Harlem

By Heidi Morales

After more than a decade of waiting, the Polo Grounds Community Center finally opened its doors. Cheerful children, seniors, teenagers, community members, NYCHA staff and elected officials clapped, stomped, sang and danced as they celebrated the grand opening on March 2.

Ruth Smith, the former Resident Association President at Polo Grounds and originator of the idea of building a community center at the site, was present to see her vision become a reality. "I could cry because this was in 1980 and look at it now. It took all that time, but we got it, we got it," she said.

The Community Center includes a gym, multipurpose room, performance stage, locker rooms, game room, video room with a sound booth, arts and crafts room with a kiln and a commercial kitchen.

"The center is going to expand kids' horizons," said NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea. "It's an opportunity for them to build friendships, a place where we're going to nurture our future leaders, and most importantly a place where we're going to provide vital support for families."

The charitable organization



Youth dance on the stage at the new Polo Grounds Community Center as part of its grand opening on March 2, 2012.

Children's Village is providing programs and activities at the center, including after-school homework help, sports and recreation, dance, arts and crafts and a summer camp. Children's Village also provides snacks and meals daily to all participating children.

Yadira Cruz plans to bring her eight and 14 year-old children to the new center. "I'm so happy, this building is beautiful. Now there are more opportunities for the kids, they help them out a lot. There are more distractions so the kids are involved in positive things not thinking about drugs and bad things," Ms. Cruz said.

"I think the center is going to give the kids an opportu-

nity to do things they never thought that they could do," said Tonyma McGhee, Assistant Vice President at the Children's Village. "It's going to give them a safe place. It allows them to open their minds, give them new experiences and hopefully save their lives."

Joining Chairman Rhea, Ms. Smith and Ms. McGhee in delivering remarks at the grand opening were NYCHA Vice President for Community Operations Deidra Gilliard, Department of Youth and Community Development Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav, State Assemblyman Herman D. Farrell, Jr., and Nikeya Stuart, Assistant Director for Children's Village.



One of NYCHA's 2011 scholarship winners, Nostrand Houses (Brooklyn) resident Virgilio Rivera, stands with his wife and sister at last year's ceremony.

## \$1,000 Scholarships for NYCHA Residents

To support the educational pursuits of residents, NYCHA offers two types of scholarships: the NYCHA-CUNY Resident Scholarship

awards NYCHA residents who are full-time undergraduates at a City University of New York (CUNY) college, and the Regina A. Figueroa Memorial

Scholarship awards NYCHA residents with disabilities who are enrolled in a CUNY undergraduate program. Scholarships are worth at least \$1,000. To qualify you must:

- Be an authorized NYCHA resident
- Be a full-time sophomore, junior or senior student enrolled in a CUNY Associates or Baccalaureate degree program
- Have a minimum 3.0 GPA
- Demonstrate financial need
- Submit a 500 word autobiographical essay
- For the scholarship for students with disabilities, have a documented disability

The application period is open from **April 30-June 15, 2012**. For more information and an application, go to [www.nyc.gov/nychacunyscholarship](http://www.nyc.gov/nychacunyscholarship) or call (212) 306-3322.

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## MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES



### Marble Hill Houses Celebrates 60th Anniversary



Marble Hill Houses in the Bronx now is 60 years old. Joining together to mark the occasion were, in the front from left to right, Teresa Williams, Property Maintenance Supervisor; Victor A. Gonzalez, NYCHA Board Member; Paulette Shomo, Resident Association President; Simon Mukkatt, Property Manager; and Wendy Anderson, Assistant Property Manager. In the back, left to right, were Miguel Molina, Borough Administrator; Garth Small, Assistant Property Maintenance Supervisor; Andy Maldonado, Supervisor of Grounds; and Kevin Briggs, Supervisor of Caretakers.



### Mill Brook Houses Celebrates 50th Anniversary



Mill Brook Houses Extension in the Bronx recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Commemorating the occasion were, from left to right, Thomas Johnston, Borough Administrator; Samantha Campbell, Secretary; Gwendolyn Junious, Assistant Property Maintenance Supervisor; Donald Patterson, Property Maintenance Supervisor; Victor A. Gonzalez, NYCHA Board Member; John Johnson, Citywide Council of Presidents Bronx South District Chair; Princella Jamerson, Resident Association President; Melania Allen, Borough Director; Allison Williams, Property Manager; Carl Walton III, Boro Administrator; and Frank Potulin, Maintenance Worker.



### Manhattanville Houses Celebrates 50th Anniversary



Manhattanville Houses in Manhattan turned 50 recently. On hand to celebrate the moment were, from left to right, Carol Williams, Resident Association (RA) Treasurer; Jean Gray, RA Sergeant-At-Arms; Emma Baricelli, RA Vice President; Deborah Candrevas, RA Recording Secretary; Ann Morris, RA President; Michael Rosen, Senior Deputy Director of Mixed Finance; George Crawford, Assistant Property Maintenance Supervisor; Camilla Kmiec, Property Manager; Paul Crews, Property Maintenance Supervisor; Alverista Hall, Mixed Finance Administrator; and Caroline Torres Soriano, Supervisor of Caretakers.

## Smith Houses Gets Shiny

Some residents at Smith Houses in Manhattan found a way to meet their community service requirement while making their homes more beautiful. They are gathering with NYCHA staff to clean the walls

and staircases in one building in the development once a month, and they plan to get to every building. The residents break into teams and work floor-by-floor.

Federal law requires all public



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housing residents who are not exempt to perform community service or economic self-sufficiency activities for eight hours every month. Starting this year as part of residents' annual review process, NYCHA is providing resources to support compliance with the federal Community Service law. NYCHA will be expanding its efforts to ensure that everyone complies with the

law and meets the Community Service requirement.

Many residents earn hours by joining Resident Watch or assisting at government or community organizations like church or faith-based run programs, schools, libraries, non-profit organizations, hospitals and nursing homes. Residents can check the following websites for opportunities in their

neighborhoods:

**www.volunteermatch.org**,  
**www.NYCSservice.org** or  
 call 311 and ask for volunteer opportunities. NYCHA's borough Family Services offices also offer assistance: Bronx **718-409-8699**, Brooklyn **718-498-3243**, Manhattan **212-334-2506**, Queens **718-206-3286**, Staten Island **718-816-1521**.

Comments? Questions? E-mail [Journal@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:Journal@nycha.nyc.gov).