



THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

# EXCEL *newsletter*

Winter 2011

## AYBL Program Welcomes First Participants at Elvans Court

The Achieving Your Best Life Now (AYBL) program has officially started, and public housing residents are now on the path to homeownership. We sat down with Kenya Fulford, who on August 20th, was the second person to move into Elvans Court.

Before moving to Elvans Court, Fulford was an 11-year resident of Hopkins Apartments. She moved to the DC area from Brooklyn in 1996 via a job transfer and put her name on DCHA's waiting list shortly thereafter. Four years later, she received a call that there was a unit at Hopkins.

Fulford found out about the AYBL program through the Excel newsletter. She wasn't expecting a call back after the orientation, "there were just so many people," she said. A couple of Fridays after her



Kenya Fulford takes a moment to enjoy a fall afternoon on her porch

orientation session, she received a hand-delivered letter saying that someone would be stopping by to inspect her unit.

That following Monday, DCHA Orientation Coordinator Dottie Roundtree showed up at her door accompanied by Deputy Executive Director Karen Moone. By the end of the week she had a letter congratulating her on being approved to move to Elvans Court.

Ms Fulford had been approved for the AYBL program because she had sufficient earned income, had consistently reported all her income accurately, recertified and paid her rent on time and was a good housekeeper.

Looking back on it, Fulford believes her work ethic and housekeeping really help her earn one of the first 20 slots open in the ABYL program. From retail, to property management, to her current position as a prison security guard, Fulford isn't afraid of work, and said she takes pride in keeping her house clean.

She went from a 3-bedroom 1 bathroom unit to a 4 bedroom 2 bathroom house. When she first saw the house she said, "Oh my goodness, they're letting me live here? It felt like a dream.

"The kids love it because we have more space, they said the only thing missing is their friends from Hopkins."

The homes at Elvans Court totally change the concept of what affordable rental housing should look like. They come complete with hardwood floors and

TAKE A LOOK

INSIDE

For the next AYBL opportunity!!!

have decks constructed from Trex weather-resistant material. They have a closet with hook-ups for resident-supplied washers and dryers and individually controlled heating and air conditioning.

AYBL is a five-year program, designed to prepare the resident for true homeownership. While in the unit, approximately 23% of what the resident pays monthly is placed into an escrow account to be used toward a home purchase.

When the program is successfully completed, along with the funds from the escrow account, participants will receive a voucher which will afford them the opportunity to purchase through the Housing Choice Voucher Program's Home Ownership Assistance Program.

Families who do not achieve homeownership will not lose their public housing assistance as long as the family remains compliant with their lease. They will be transferred to another public housing site so that another eligible family has an opportunity to participate in AYBL.

### How do I apply?

Applications are available:

- on-line at [www.dchousing.org](http://www.dchousing.org)
- at 1133 North Capital Street, NE in Suite 301
- by mail for requests made by phone at 202-535-1856

## Board of Commissioners

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## A Message from the Executive Director



**Adrienne Todman**  
DCHA Executive Director

Greetings All:

What an exciting year it has been.

This summer, we welcomed Commissioners Pedro Alfonso, Clarence Mobley, Terri Thompson, and Bernadette Tolson to our Board. Mr. Alfonso is our new Chair and joins us with years of experience as a businessman and civic leader in the District.

You can read more about our distinguished Commissioners in this newsletter.

We also held Resident Council elections in our communities. New leadership gives us fresh ideas, and the seasoned officers who were re-elected provide experience and stability. I am looking forward to working with all of our new leaders.

We kicked-off our new AYBL (Achieving Your Best Life) program, and the first class of public housing residents has started the path to homeownership. Additionally, we have our first group of residents moving back into the totally renovated Kelly Miller townhomes.

We also supported the creation of community gardens at Sibley Plaza, Kentucky Courts and Garfield Terrace in addition to the garden at Langston Terrace that we reported on in the spring. And, our annual book-bag give-a-way made sure that some of our children started school with supplies in hand.

This is the season of giving at DCHA. Mayor Vincent Gray joined us when we passed out turkeys at Woodland Terrace and Kenilworth Courts, and "Gift of Love" holiday fellowship and toy distribution for our neediest youth is going strong once again. It's always my favorite time of the year!

Finally, as the weather gets colder, please take to heart the article in this issue on how to stay safe and avoid fires. Best wishes and Happy Holidays for you and your family!

Sincerely,



Adrienne Todman



# Resident Empowerment Focus on Healthy Living

The Citywide Advisory Board (CWAB) Health Committee is committed to helping residents to lead healthy lives. The DC Cancer Consortium, one of the member organizations on the committee, arranged for a second printing of health questionnaires.

This new effort resulted in a health questionnaire designed for residents by residents. The CWAB is leading the research with assistance from DCHA and local community health organizations. This will empower residents so that they can take charge of planning and advocacy for their health needs. Residents will be able to tell their own health story with support of community health experts, and it will be easier to match residents with health providers based on both need and location.

Committee Chair Kenneth Council hopes the questionnaire project and the work of the committee in general will motivate residents to seek regular medical care and not use hospital emergency rooms as their first and last resort for medical attention.

He believes that regular medical care and preventive health will lead to better health among public housing residents. "We can have better health. Even as low income persons, we have a city that helps us with Medicaid insurance services more than that in most other cities. We can do more for ourselves to improve our health. We just don't have to rely on the emergency room to treat our illnesses. Routine medical visits are essential to good health." Mr. Council adds that he hopes that as the questionnaire project is completed, the Committee can work with DCHA to find spaces for more

health services including wellness centers to locate on public housing properties based on what the questionnaire results find.



Kenneth Council (right), CWAB Vice President, Health Committee Chair and Ft. Dupont resident worked Office of Resident Services staffer Julian Wilson (left) to coordinate the meeting which was held at Stoddert Terrace.

The committee, formed in 2010, has met regularly since late 2011 and now 18 community health organizations have joined with the CWAB on this committee. These include the Department of Health, Unity Health Care, DC Cancer Consortium, United Medical Center (UMC) and UMC Foundation, Children's National Medical Center, the National Center for Health in Public Housing and the George Washington University School of Health.

To obtain questionnaires, please contact either Kenneth Council at 202.575.3601 or Julian Wilson in the Office of Resident Service at 202.535.2682. If you have any questions about the survey or want to join the committee, please call Mr. Council or email him at [DCHACityWideAB@gmail.com](mailto:DCHACityWideAB@gmail.com) to let him know of your interest.

## 2011 Commitment to Excellence Scholarship Program

This year, Community Visions, Inc., DCHA's non-profit fundraising arm, awarded a total of \$25,000 in scholarships to eligible DCHA students. The following students received scholarship awards for the 2011-2012 school year:

- Ebony Jones, HCVP, Marymount University, Business, \$5,000
- Destiny Phillips, HCVP, Goucher College, Nursing, \$5,000
- Patrice Haney, Potomac Gardens, Middle Tennessee State, Accounting, \$5,000
- Jeanifer Uwachie, HCVP, Rutgers University, Public Health/Biology, \$1,000
- Vanessa Blanco, HCVP, Millersville University, Sociology, \$1,000
- Katrina Gunn, HCVP, Trinity University, Undecided, \$1,000
- Tanisha Tate, HCVP, Trinity University, Criminal Justice, \$1,000
- Tyrec Grooms, HCVP, Elon University, Political Science, \$1,000
- Tomiah Yates, HCVP, Virginia Commonwealth University, Foreign Languages/Piano, \$1,000
- Mercedes Butler, HCVP, Xavier University, Government/Politics, \$1,000
- I'eisha Williams, Garfield Terrace, Concord University, Nursing, \$1,000
- Mark Clark, Sursum Corda, Undecided, Accounting, \$1,000
- Geizel Guerrero, Potomac Gardens, Trinity University, Pre-Med Criminal Justice, \$1,000

Congratulations and best wishes for another successful year.

# Resident Council Elections



The 2011 Resident Council Elections results were finalized in August and the officers were sworn in by Mayor Vincent Gray at the September Board of Commissioners' meeting.

They began their tenures by attending DCHA's leadership retreat for resident officers.

DCHA is responsible for managing more than 8,000 public housing units located in 47 properties throughout the District of Columbia. The residents at each public housing development have the opportunity to organize a Resident Council, comprising residents who are interested in improving the quality of life in and around their community. Each Resident Council Executive Board

serves as the liaison between the residents and DCHA.

# Do Your B.E.S.T. (DYB) Summer Youth Employment Program



The 14th year of the DYB Program wrapped up in August with 65 youth, ages 14 - 18, successfully completing the 2011 program. Nine DCHA departments and 23 external organizations served as DYB Host Sites this year. In addition to working, the young people also participated in workshops; teambuilding/leadership development activities; college tours to Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Union University; community service activities; and a mock court trial.

The DYB Awards Ceremony was held at the Washington Nationals Stadium, and the theme was "DYB Hits it Out of the Park." During the awards ceremony, DYB staff recognized participants with perfect attendance, outstanding job performance, those who are college bound and a "Rookie of the Year." Participants thanked host site supervisors, field trip chaperones and workshop facilitators. After the ceremony, participants enjoyed ball park cuisine and a visit by the Nationals' mascot, Screech.

# DCHA/Girl Scouts Partnership



On Friday, July 29th, DCHA, in partnership with the Girls Scouts of America, hosted a "Super Summer Science Day" event at James Creek. Girls in grades kindergarten through 12 were invited to participate, and 62 girls from James Creek, Syphax Gardens, and Sibley Townhomes participated in the interactive science activities including making ice cream. DCHA and the Girl Scouts have started establishing Girl Scout troops at public housing developments.

The "Taste of Girl Scouts" activities are designed to educate girls and their parents about the Girl Scouts organization, the programs that it has to offer and how girls/parents can get involved. Other outreach events included summer camp activities at Lincoln Heights and Benning Terrace and scholarships

for DCHA girls to attend a week-long camp.

## Board of Commissioners

This fall DCHA is pleased to welcome four new members to the Board of Commissioners, who were nominated by Mayor Vincent C. Gray and confirmed by the Council of the District of Columbia

Pedro Alfonso is the new Chairman of the Board. He serves as Chief Executive Officer of Dynamic Concepts, Inc. (DCI), a high technology firm he started more than 30 years ago in Washington, D.C. In addition to our Board of Commissioners, Chairman Alfonso is active in numerous organizations including currently serving on the following boards: National Small Business Association (NSBA), the Girl Scouts Council of the Nation's Capital and the Public Access Corporation of D.C. He formerly served on the Boards of National Minority Business Coalition, Federal City Council, USO of Metropolitan Washington and Georgetown University Hospital.

Mr. Alfonso is a graduate of Howard University's School of Business and a member of Building Industry Consulting Services International (BICSI), the international trade association for information technology professionals.

Terri Thompson is the Government Relations Officer at Howard University Hospital, where she develops and implements political engagement strategies with federal and local elected officials, regulatory agencies and key policymakers. Previously, she served as director of the Committee on Economic Development for the Council of the District of Columbia, providing legal and strategic support to council members and Executive Branch agencies.

Commissioner Thompson received her undergraduate degree from Howard University, a Master's in administration from Central Michigan University, and a law degree from Georgia State University College of Law.

Clarence Mobley is a licensed architect in five states and the District and the founder of Clarence Mobley Associates, PC, Architects and Engineers. He has an extensive background in urbanism and in planning, designing and constructing diverse projects in both new construction and project renovation.

This Vietnam Veteran earned both his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Architecture from Howard University and is their only graduate architect to be elected to the 28-member Council of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMAC).

M. Bernadette Tolson has more than twenty-five years of professional experience and community service focusing on the development and enhancement of local programs and services for youth and adult residents of the District. She served in numerous positions in DC Department of Employment Services including Customer Relations Manager and Program Supervisor.

Commissioner Tolson currently serves on the Far Southeast/ Southwest Revitalization Committee, working with residents, community leaders and representatives of the business community.

## AYBL Program Taking New Applicants

### What is AYBL?

AYBL is a homeownership preparation program for eligible public housing residents. Participating residents will live at the newly renovated Columbia Road for up to five years; there are still vacancies at Elvans Court, as well. DCHA will provide support and training so that residents can work to prepare for the responsibilities of homeownership and secure a mortgage. During a family's time in the program they will:

- save for a down payment on a home
- work to increase their income
- work to improve credit (if necessary)
- learn about home maintenance

Each AYBL participant will work directly with a case manager to develop an individualized plan to reach homeownership. Participating families that successfully complete AYBL will move out of public housing into their own home.



### Who is eligible?

You are eligible to apply for the AYBL program if you:

- ✓ Have been a DCHA public housing resident for at least one year;
- ✓ Meet bedroom size requirement for the available units;
- ✓ Have a combined earned income of at least \$35,000 (head of household/co-leasee/spouse /domestic partner). Exceptions apply for seniors or people with disabilities; and
- ✓ Are a resident in good standing.

In addition, you must be prepared to make a commitment to yourself and your family to put in the time and effort necessary to become a homeowner.



## Fire Safety Tips

We are providing some reminders to keep your fall and winter seasons safe and fire free, courtesy of Don Wood, DCHA Fire Safety Officer.

- Kerosene heaters are prohibited in the District of Columbia and users will be fined up to \$300. Approved space heaters include: electric space heaters, electric oil or water radiators, electric baseboard heaters
- Be sure to: read manufacturer's instructions before using any portable heater, never leave an in-use portable heater unattended or alone with children, never use electric portable heaters in bathrooms or near water, keep three feet of open space around any portable heater, check power cords regularly for frays and damage, never run the heater's cord under rugs or carpeting, and avoid using extension cords unless absolutely necessary.
- Never use the oven or stovetop for heating
- Candles may be pretty to look at, but they are a cause of many home fires. Use flameless candles in your home
- Fire safe cooking habits begin with choosing the right equipment and using it properly. Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, never leave food that is cooking unattended. If you leave the kitchen while cooking for any length of time turn off the stove
- Don't start cooking if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy
- Keep things that can catch fire away from heat sources: potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains - away from your stovetop. Keep stovetop, burners and ovens clean. Wear short, close-fitting or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire



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