



THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

# LINK

Fall 2011

## Participant Advisory Committee Officer Results Are In

The results of the vote for Participant Advisory Committee officers are in, and your Executive Committee has been hard at work since their swearing in at the September Board of Commissioners' Meeting.

In addition to their regular monthly meetings, the PAC leadership have already met with DCHA Executive Director Adrienne Todman to begin charting a path for the next three years—the length of time PAC Executive Committee members serve.

The first official action for the group was to attend a three-day leadership training retreat for resident officers.

The retreat is for all residents elected to leadership offices. It allows them the opportunity to get to know each other and gain the necessary skills it takes to be effective leaders.



(l-r front) Tracey Hooks, President; Claudette Johnson, Vice-President; Betty Boatwright, Sergeant-at-Arms; (l-r back) Marline Coughman, Treasurer; Jennifer Bush, Member-at-Large and Carolette Sweatt, Acting Secretary

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 policy-makers.

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.

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 the DC Department of Employment Services including Customer Relations Manager and Program Supervisor.

## 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. Mr. Alfonso is a graduate of Howard University's School of Business and a member of Building Industry Consulting

## A Message from the 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 elections for new officers of our Housing Provider Association and Participant Advisory Committee. New leadership gives us fresh ideas, and the seasoned officers provide experience and stability. I am looking forward to working with all of our new leaders.

This summer we had our first HCVP Basketball Tournament, which was held in Ward 8. The event was so successful that we were contacted about doing it in other parts of the city. Since the event took place right before the back-to-school season, we were unable to hold another tournament but intend to do it again in the summer of 2012.

For our landlords, I invite you to attend a Housing Providers Association meeting. It is run by landlords for landlords, and the reports coming out of the meetings have been good. Additionally, I invite you to take part in our Thursday Housing Fairs. This ground-breaking concept allows housing providers to directly market their unit(s) to voucher holders.

Over the past few months we have made excellent ground in our partnership with HUD the Veterans Administration to house homeless veterans. Our VASH partnership has allowed us to house more than 500 veterans, and I had the privilege of speaking at a round table for the Congressional Black Caucus where our local program for housing veterans was recognized as the best run program of its kind across the nation.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you, and thank you for your patience as we continue to find new and innovative ways to serve you better.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Todman

## Board of Commissioners

Pedro Alfonso

*Chairman*

Angie Rodgers

*Vice Chairman*

Ken Grossinger

Victor Hoskins

Frank Lancaster

Clarence Mobley

Terri Thompson, Esq.

M. Bernadette Tolson

Aquarius Vann-Ghasri

Marie Whitfield

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202.535.1315

[www.dchousing.org](http://www.dchousing.org)

Dena Michaelson

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## On the National Stage



Pictured above DCHA Executive Director Adrienne Todman with Wisconsin Congresswoman Gwen Moore, (WI-04); Honorary Host of "The Homeless Experience" panel discussion.

Todman laid out DCHA's groundbreaking approach to housing homeless veterans with vouchers during the panel discussion, which was sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus.

Later that week she received Executive Director of the Year award from NARSAAH Director Samuel B. Little at the organization's national conference in Orlando, FL.

# Ward 8 Plays Host to HCVP Basketball Tournament

DCHA Executive Director Adrienne Todman and HCVP Director Ron McCoy were joined by DC Mayor Vincent Gray and others who invested their final weekend in July to help DCHA's younger residents receive valuable life lessons.

The Mary Virginia Merrick Center in Southeast was the site for the First HCVP Youth Basketball Tournament. The two-day event, targeted for families participating in the voucher program, attracted more than one hundred youth ranging from ages 8 to 14.

The tournament was the first in a series for HCVP initiatives to enhance the lives of rent voucher recipients by engaging them in life affirming activities in the District.



Ward 8 youth were given the opportunity to exercise their bodies and stretch their minds at the first HCVP Basketball Tournament--photo courtesy of Khalid Naji-Allah, Washington Informer.

In addition to the competitive games and spirited cheerleading, HCVP took the opportunity to educate the youth at the same time. When not on the court, there were workshops led by community leaders on skills needed for success, how to give back to the community and a host of other topics.

Mayor Gray gave the participants some sound advice, "I am very pleased to see that the DC Housing Authority has set up workshops in life skills that you can attend between games. Take advantage of these workshops; I believe the best thing that you can learn in life is how to make smart choices . . . both on and off the basketball court."

For this inaugural event, HCVP partnered with landlords and other District area businesses and agencies including Hope Findings, 100 Fathers, Honest Tea, IITF Technology, DC Department of Recreation, and the DC Arts and Humanities Council.

DCHA Executive Director Adrienne Todman said, "We're pleased with this great turnout and to see the enthusiasm of so many young people. Our team planned this event to help inspire youth to reach their full potential through education, positive sportsmanship, and team development. The goal is to develop good players and strong youth leaders."

# HCVP's New Direction



Ron McCoy has been a dedicated DCHA employee for more than 10 years. In August he was introduced as the new Director for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, adding that to the many other positions he's held in that office.

DCHA Executive Director Adrienne Todman said she initially knew of Ron's work, but didn't know how well he'd work as director. After vetting him for more than a year, she confidently stated that he was knowledgeable, dependable and definitely the man for the job.

McCoy does have a wealth of experience from the many different positions he held within the program, including Compliance Manager, Financial Analyst, Interim Finance Manager, Leasing Manager and Deputy Director.

Since his arrival, McCoy has always had a vision for the program. He said he would like to look beyond just performing the core required functions of inspection, recertification, and leasing and providing rental subsidy to owners on behalf of our participating families.

"We must become active listeners to hear the real needs of our families to assist them with obtaining the services they need to survive and better their lives. We must also not overlook the needs of our partners—the property owners—who over the years have stuck with us through the ups and downs of the economy."

Since he stepped in as Interim Director more than a year ago, he has made several changes.

McCoy feels the best improvement for the program over the past year was the restructuring of the Inspections Department.

He believes the HCVP program has the potential to become a national model for success. He said, to achieve that goal the program needs to focus on customer service, accountability and improving communication using technology.

# Amended Recertification Policy for Elderly & Disabled Families

The District of Columbia Housing Authority is required to re-examine the income and composition of Housing Choice Voucher families at least every two years.

The Housing Authority is testing a modified policy to accommodate its single elderly and single disabled families to allow such families to complete their recertification by mail. In addition to mailing the information, your Recertification Specialist will be contacting you by the telephone number on record. If this number is incorrect, or has been changed please contact your Recertification Specialist at 202-525-1000 and update your telephone contact.

To be part of the mail-in recertification program, you must meet the following guidelines and provide needed information

1. You must be disabled or at least sixty-two years of age
2. The household composition must be comprised of either a single household member (elderly or disabled), or a disabled couple
3. You must be receiving a fixed income, such as Social Security and or Supplemental Security Income, Annuity Income or Veterans Benefits
5. You must mail a copy of all current income statements
6. You must provide all out-of-pocket expenses such as over-the-counter prescription bills and/or Medicare premiums
7. Your telephone numbers on record with DCHA must be current
8. DCHA must have a valid picture identification of you on file

Your application for continued occupancy and other requested information must be returned to your Recertification Specialist by the due date written in a letter you will receive from the HCVP Recertification Manager.

## Attention Landlords and Owners:

### Remember the HCVP Rent Increase Policy

Landlords may only receive a rent increase in accordance with HCVP Policy which states that all rent increases shall be determined based on the LESSER of three criteria:

- The current contract rent multiplied by the applicable annual adjustment factor published by Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in effect; or
  - The maximum approved submarket rent as most recently determined (or re-determined) by HCVP; or
  - The amount requested by the landlord/owner
- The owner may not have any inspection final fails in the last 12 months from the rent increase request and the family must reside in the unit for at least a year
  - Project-based owners may request an increase annually for all units no more than 90 days from their contract month.
  - Rent increase requests must be submitted on the HCVP approved rent increase form, and must be submitted no later than 90 days from the family recertification month—which may differ from the contract effective date. Forms can be found on our website at [www.dchousing.org](http://www.dchousing.org)
  - If you want to know a family's anniversary month or last date to submit a rent increase request, please contact Ms. Octavia Jones at 202-535-1000 or email your inquires to [hcarring@dchousing.org](mailto:hcarring@dchousing.org)

### Other HCVP News

- Effective October 1, 2011 if, there is a \$75 dollar fee for HCVP to come out a 3rd time if a unit fails twice for landlord violations, more information email [Pmitchell@dchousing.org](mailto:Pmitchell@dchousing.org)
- Landlords can now rent their units up to 10 times faster buy advertising availabilities directly to families looking for units - email [jmccray@dchousing.org](mailto:jmccray@dchousing.org)
- Landlords must email [jmccray@dchousing.org](mailto:jmccray@dchousing.org) their email address no later than January 10, 2012 to be the first to sign-up for electronic notices from HCVP in lieu of regular mail
- HCVP will be publishing new payment standards and submarket rents on February 1, 2012

# HCVP Family Self Sufficiency Program Graduates 41 Participants

DC Councilmember Michael Brown, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Workforce Development, joined DCHA Commissioners Frank Lancaster and Bernadette Tolson, DCHA Executive Director Adrienne Todman and Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) Director Ron McCoy as they honored the 2011 Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program graduates.

This year's event was held at THEARC in Southeast Washington, DC. The FSS staff, along with Commissioners Lancaster and Tolson, started the program off with encouraging words and kudos to all the graduates; McCoy described this achievement as the "Epitome of success." DCHA understands that its job is not to enable its customers but to empower them. The FSS Program is designed to change the life of HCVP participants. The program is voluntary, but participants are required to sign a contract in order to participate.

Clients are required to declare their goals, which can range from improving credit and education, to getting a job and even homeownership. The average time for FSS program participation ranges from five to seven years. While in the program, a portion of their rent is saved into an escrow account which many graduates use toward a home purchase.

Out of the more than 40 graduates for this year, 11 achieved the goal of homeownership. The graduates were

given a chance to speak about the joys of being homeowners, and Mary Wren said, "When I first moved in, I didn't want people to touch my walls or have their shoes on my carpet."

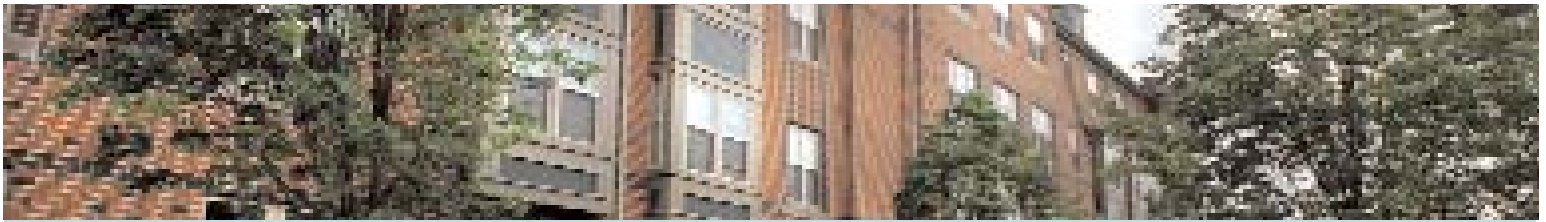
Another graduate testified, "When I was young I remember cooking Thanksgiving dinner on a hotplate, we didn't have a stove. But now I am a homeowner!" This testimony put smiles on the faces of the FSS staff. Ronald Fisher, HCVP case worker, later explained how a bond is built between the case worker and the client, and the client's triumphs become the case worker's triumphs.

The guest speaker, Octavia Caldwell, is the owner and CEO of ROC Consultants, LLC. ROC Consultants provide entrepreneurial services to FSS participants. She entitled her speech "Don't Quit." Caldwell highlighted the life of former President Abraham Lincoln and his struggles on his road to success. The graduates nodded their heads because they, too, could relate to struggles and hardships. Caldwell closed her speech saying, "President Lincoln never gave up no matter how hard it got, and that's what I encourage you to do."

The FSS Program is currently accepting new applicants, for more information or to apply please call 202-435-3281.



DCHA Commissioner Frank Lancaster and Octavia Caldwell (extreme left) and DCHA Commissioner Bernadette Tolson and FSS Manager Cheryl Robinson (extreme right) pose with HCVP Director Ron McCoy (fourth from left), other HCVP staff and a jubilant collection of FSS Graduates.



## 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.



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1133 North Capitol Street, N.E.  
Washington DC 20002-7599