



Housing Authority of Plainfield Newsletter

Winter 2016

New Exciting News from HAP!

Message from Randall Wood Executive Director



It is my pleasure to announce that this year is off to a great start for the Housing Authority of Plainfield. One of the most significant advances thus far has been the demolition of Elmwood Gardens. Although this is a great step in the right direction, we realize how sentimental Elmwood Gardens is to many in the Plainfield community. We will ensure that the new development will have significant community involvement and will be a source of pride.

In this issue of our newsletter we will highlight our very successful inaugural Family Self Sufficiency youth program. HAP values our youth and wants to make sure that all our children have the right tools to help them succeed. As the saying goes, "it takes a village to raise a child."

You will also read about new exciting updates from the Richmond Towers Residents Association (RTRA), Resident Opportunity Self-Sufficiency Program (ROSS) and Plainfield Community Development Corporation (PCDC).

Since our last newsletter, West End Gardens has been renamed "Joanne Hollis Gardens." She very much deserved such an honor for her commitment to HAP. Moreover, It saddens me to know we have lost one of our long-time residents, tenant association member and mother of Joanne Hollis, Marjorie Hollis. We will remember her for her dedication to the community and HAP.

I also ask that you please keep Commissioner Bernard Horner in your prayers. We are hoping he has a speedy recovery.

My very best to you and your family as we eagerly look forward to spring.

Randy

Family Self Sufficiency Finds Success

Working with young men and women alike, ages 13-18, the HAP's Family Self Sufficiency Program partners with nonprofit organizations YES Girl, Inc. and C.U.R.E. Group to encourage self-empowerment.



The program focuses on the many issues that young people face every day, such as financial literacy, money management, sexual education, social etiquette, hygiene, peer pressure, college preparation, and creative self-expression. They were all building blocks in the recent six-week program.

Aside from the program's weekly meetings, the youth also learned about agencies in Plainfield and how they could be served. HAP leveraged strong relationships with its strategic partners throughout the city to ensure a positive experience for all participants.



The program culminated with an etiquette dinner for the teens. It was the ideal time to honor the bright young women and men who participated, as well as the sponsors who made it all possible.

Because of the enormous success of the program, and the need, HAP looks forward to launching a new series later this year.

Richmond Towers Residents Association Nurtures the Neighborhood



The Union County Food Bank is the benefactor for our monthly food bank.

The Richmond Towers Residents Association (RTRA) has three goals: to maintain a good working relationship with the Housing Authority of Plainfield, to become a self-sufficient entity and to make Richmond Towers feel like as warm of a home as possible. And, that's exactly what it's doing.

The association holds monthly food banks, casino bus rides, Sunday services, a Birthday Club and a Garden Club. RTRA recently held its annual Super Bowl party where

residents indulged in great football, food and fun. RTRA is also marking Black History Month with a number of programs through February.

This past holiday season, in conjunction with local organizations, RTRA hosted a pre-Thanksgiving Dinner, a Christmas dinner and a New Year's party. Program organizers are eager to plan for more events through 2016, ensuring a vibrant schedule that brings residents together.



Elmwood Gardens - A Look Back



L to R: Plainfield Fire Chief Frank Tidwell, Plainfield DPW Superintendent John Louise, HAP Executive Director Randall Wood, and Plainfield Housing Finance Corp. Chairman Kenneth Scott

Elmwood Gardens was built in 1961. At that time, public housing developments were often high-rise construction, sometimes as high as 17 stories. As time went on, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was eager to change this architectural style. It was hard to maintain and secure, and residents were eager to live in the community, not a high-rise.

In the 1990's, housing developments made some sweeping changes. According to a Harvard Study, the old high-rise style of housing developments were deemed unattractive and counter-productive to encouraging self-sufficiency. The study also stated that there was a need for "green space," as the dream of many is to have a front stoop and a backyard.

"Every family deserves a front and back door," said Housing Authority of Plainfield Executive Director Randall Wood. "Elmwood was extremely outdated."

Though Elmwood Gardens is now gone, HAP wants residents to know how much of a staple the housing development was in the community. It did serve a tremendous service for a generation of Plainfield residents.

"A lot of great people have come out of Elmwood Gardens," Randy said. "You always hear about the bad but we've had former Plainfield Mayor Richard Taylor, professional boxers, NFL athletes, scholars and professionals all come out of Elmwood."

Cecil Allen, the first African American Fire Chief in Plainfield, and Frank Coit, the first African American shoemaker in Plainfield, were both products of Elmwood Gardens.

Demolition of Elmwood Gardens began in 2009, as it was cost prohibitive to modernize the structure and make it fully accessible to people with disabilities. HAP made sure that residents in good standing received vouchers and were relocated appropriately. Elmwood residents also received counseling and were



aided in finding new homes.

"We wanted to make this move as safe and comfortable as possible," said Housing Authority of Plainfield Executive Director Randall Wood.

The future of the former Elmwood Gardens is bright. HAP plans to build a new townhouse style development for people of mixed incomes. The new development will serve as a shining example of how affordable housing has evolved since the 1960s, as architects and planners have designed the type of complex where people will be proud to reside.

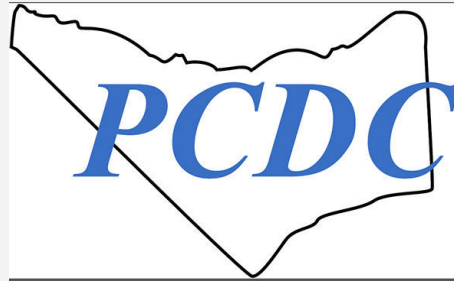


L to R: HAP Commissioner Dollie Hamlin, HAP Commissioner Joseph Ruffin, HAP Commissioner Joylette Mills-Ransome, HAP Executive Director Randall Wood, HAP Chairwoman Pamela Dunn-Hale, HAP Commissioner Jeanette Edghill, and HAP Commissioner Louise Colodne.

Missing: HAP Commissioner Bernard Horner

An Update on the Plainfield Community Development Corp.

The Plainfield Community Development Corp. (PCDC) has been awarded grants to develop housing for hard-working families in the area. Currently, PCDC is working on renovating a house on St. Mary Avenue. The house will be renovated on the inside and outside, and will be sold at an affordable price. PCDC is identifying two additional properties to renovate and sell.



As part of its service to the Plainfield community, PCDC will also offer homeownership counseling under the federal Housing and Urban Development certification. Those seeking homeownership will be trained about various financing options and will be provided with support to apply for a mortgage.

Learn How ROSS Can Help You



The Resident Opportunity Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Program has been making incredible strides. The main objective is to help the residents of Richmond Towers continue to live/age in place, independently, without having to move to expensive assisted care environments.

Some ROSS Program projects this winter include a Veterans Club, Garden Club, greenhouse construction, health and wellness classes, free wireless phone distribution, cultural events, personal finance workshops, senior fraud protection seminars, and tenant certification training.

One of the most anticipated projects is the on-site Health Professional Office, giving residents regular access to various health care professionals, from general practitioners to specialists, including mental and physical therapists.



Joanne Hollis Honored in Renaming Ceremony

A special ceremony was held to mark the renaming of West End Gardens after a Plainfield icon.

The housing development now honors the legacy of the late Joanne Hollis, who served as Fourth Ward Councilwoman and commissioner for the

Housing Authority of Plainfield.



The two-hour ceremony at Mount Olive Baptist Church included speeches by state and local dignitaries, as well as family and close friends of Ms. Hollis. Each shared personal stories of Ms. Hollis, underscoring the impact she has had on so many lives in Plainfield.

L to R: Joanne Hollis' sister and Fourth Ward Councilwoman Bridget Rivers, HAP Executive Director Randall Wood and former Councilwoman Vera Greaves

"Joanne was a fierce and vocal advocate for the residents of West End Gardens," said HAP Executive Director Randall Wood. "Her vision for a better future was driven by an extraordinary faith that was inspirational to our board of commissioners. She was a gift to our community."

Ms. Hollis is remembered for her commitment to Plainfield as an activist for over 30 years and her service as a resident president for 22 years. Of her many accomplishments was the founding of the Housing Authority of Plainfield Summer Camp and summer youth employment programs.



Joanne Hollis' mother, the late Marjorie Hollis, and her daughter, Latice Hollis

Housing Authority of Plainfield Commissioners

Louise A. Colodne

Jeanette Edghill

Pamela Dunn-Hale - Chairwoman

Dollie S. Hamlin

Bernard Horner

Joylette Mills-Ransome

Joseph Ruffin

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