



THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

Reflections from Public Housing Residents and Partners

A PUBLICATION OF THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR URBAN AFFAIRS

VOL. 1, No. 1 Fall 2001

A Special Thanks

Dear Resident Leaders,

We here at the MSU Center for Urban Affairs want to express our congratulations and deep respect for the important work you have accomplished in the past eight months. Your personal commitment, creativity and perseverance throughout the first round of the Public Housing Resident Leader Capacity Building Training Program have been inspirational to us and our partners and sponsors. This, the first volume of the The Peoples House, is dedicated to you all.

We admire your humanity as individuals. We are heartened by your responsibility to your communities as citizens. Some of you are seriously considering roads to public office. Others have made it all the way to



Public Housing Fellows spend a day at the Capitol for the last training session of ROSS I. Left to Right: Gwen Coney, Virginia Blosser, Tom Wheatley, Charlene Bentley, Mexia Lawson, Clinton Smith, Tom Dennie, Mary Ann Day, Perline Townsend, Patricia Patrick, William Bundy, Betty Louise Day, Agnes Pettway, Regina Lefear.

the pages of the Lansing State Journal. Still others are just now becoming acquainted with all of the opportunities to make change happen in your communities. Throughout the program, you all inspired us with your dedication, drive, intelligence, thoughtfulness, and sense of community. We know you will join with us now to carry that inspiration on to the next round of Leadership Training by widening the circles of awareness and participation by Public Housing Residents in new leadership roles. You have served yourselves and your communities

yes, but you have also served the future of Public Housing in Michigan. We look forward to working with you, our new partners, to strengthen and support public housing communities across Michigan.

Sincerely,

The MSU/CUA Public Housing Team

A Different Approach

By Sandra Kowalk,

Lansing Housing Commission Resident Initiatives Coordinator

As the Resident Initiatives Coordinator, I assist with the process of conducting Resident Council elections for the Lansing Housing Commission. In April 2001 we conducted Resident Council elections at each of our three multi-family developments. At Hildebrant, where there was the largest voter turnout for a Resident Council election in the past ten years, more than 25% of the residents elected Gwen Coney (MSU Fellow and Resident Leadership Program Graduate) as President and Sandra Bailey (Resident Leadership Program Participant) as Vice President. Similarly, Patricia Patrick (MSU Fellow and Resident Leadership Graduate) was unanimously re-elected as President of the LaRoy Froh Development. But, at our largest multifamily development (140 units), no one was nominated (so a blank, write-in ballot was prepared) and on election day not a single person voted! For the first time in 10 years, there was no Resident Council at Mt. Vernon.

Mt. Vernon has undergone a lot of changes in the past year (changes in management and changes in residents). May 2001 tested the entire housing development because more than one million dollars worth of renovations were slated to begin (new siding, parking lots, landscaping, etc.)! A letter was mailed to every resident regarding a meeting to discuss the renovations. The Housing Commission director, manager, architect, and contractors were present at the meeting, but only four senior citizen residents showed. To say that there was a lot of apathy at Mt. Vernon would be an understatement! Having worked for the Housing Commission for 11 years, I personally knew of a dozen or so leaders who still lived at the complex, and I realized that they were tired of doing things by themselves. They were observing new management styles, and they were waiting for someone else to step forward.

In order to try to find out what was happening, I contacted the community police officer assigned to Mt. Vernon to assist me with starting a neighborhood watch. I was confident that if we could get block

captains in each section dedicated to keeping an eye on just their immediate area, we could generate a powerful working group. Ironically, the afternoon that the police officer and I went door-to-door talking to residents and asking them to represent their building, an elderly gentleman had been beaten up and hospitalized the night before while walking back from the store. Residents knew about the incident and realized that the time to get involved and step forward was now! (Note: Neighborhood Watch was not a totally new concept for us. Each development at one time or another had implemented a Neighborhood Watch program.) When the officer and I went door-to-door, we started with the leaders whom I had gotten acquainted with over the years. They appreciated the confidence (and recognition) I had in them.

Two days after the officer and I canvassed the neighborhood, I mailed out letters saying “...thank you for agreeing to represent your building/area...” I also mailed a roster, which included the names and addresses of the leaders I had targeted and talked to under the heading, “Confirmed.” The list also included the leaders who weren’t home, but whom I was targeting, under the heading “Invited.” Thirteen out of 19 residents came to the first meeting in June of 2001. Almost every resident told me that if I had just mailed a general flyer about a meeting, they would not have come. Because I listed the residents as “Confirmed,” they felt obligated to attend. They also said that seeing other leaders in the neighborhood on the list made them feel like there was a good, strong group of people to join. Every single resident who attended the June meeting attended the July meeting (and four new residents from the “Invited” list joined the “Confirmed” column in July)! Today, when members of this group look at each other around the table, they know that they are powerful. There is an energy present now that has been missing for the past 3 or 4 years.

Every notice I mail includes a statement that says, “...this is not an exclusive group, it is open to all residents.” I also continue to address the notices to

the identified leaders, which gives them both recognition and a sense of pride. The Neighborhood Watch will perform many of the duties of a Resident Council (communicating with management, identifying concerns, making suggestions for programs / activities, etc.) until we hold Resident Council elections next year. I hope that some of the leaders who have stepped forward now, will participate in the next round of MSU's Capacity Building Training Program.

FROM THE HEART

Since the very first hands-on training session, I knew I would not want to miss any of them. We had great sessions.

I learned valuable information at each hands-on session and I shared it with our residents at Smith Manor. They listened and asked questions. I knew some of our residents were interested in HUD matters, and I appreciated this interest.

One very important session for me was about troubled children. Gosh, that really got to me! I think about this a lot. Parents raise their children so differently today compared to when I was a child. I often feel sorry for the children. Parents do not have time to care for and listen to their children, and children sometimes go to street gangs for companionship. This is sad, and I hope it's not too late to help them with much needed youth programs.

Our training sessions will end soon. We have all become friends, and I will miss and always remember everyone. I would like to share the following words I once read:

Don't walk in front of me
For I may not follow.
Don't walk in back of me
For I may not lead.
Just walk beside me and
Be my friend.

Sincerely,
Virginia Blosssey
Resident Advisory Board Member
Bay City Housing Commission

Understanding How HUD & PHAs Operate Know Your Rights and the Chain of Command

(The following article was taken from "Housing Matters," a newsletter from the Public Housing Residents' National Organizing Campaign, a Resident-Led National Organization. The article summarizes a training session for Resident Leaders which looked at the rights of public housing resident organizations).

For resident organizations that are trying to effectively partner with their housing authority, here is some advice.

- Get Organized. Be organized.
- Have your own house - your own resident council - in order. Have by-laws and clean elections for your resident council.
- Know your rights
- Learn the rules that relate to the issue you care about.
- Learn what is negotiable and what is mandatory or required under the law.
- Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the housing authority.
- Have regular meetings with the housing authority.
- Form a professional working relationship with the housing authority.
- You don't have to be friends.
- You should have respect and accountability on all sides.
- Document **in writing** your concerns with the housing authority and with HUD.
- Make allies in the community.
- Know your housing authority and HUD Chain of Command. Then work your way up the ladder until the problem is addressed, starting with:
 - Key Housing Authority Staff
 - Executive Director
 - Board of Commissioners
 - Mayor's Office/City Council
 - Local HUD Office
 - HUD Headquarters

Remember: **All politics is local!**

Printed with permission from the Center for Community Change.

Graduation Day Reflections

On July 20, 2001, a graduation ceremony was held on the Michigan State University campus at the Kellogg Center. Many distinguished guests were in attendance and shared their philosophies of community development.

Here we take a moment to reflect on some of their words and the words of other great leaders, so that they might influence what we do in our own communities.

“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” -President John F. Kennedy

“Everything you need to begin already exists in your community. It’s up to you to identify, locate, and shepherd the available resources to best benefit your community.” -Ms. Regina Solomon

“To some people leadership means power, honor, prestige or personal advantage. But real leadership begins with service to others, which is what community service is all about.” -Mr. Tommie Dennie

“Study, but not so much that you don’t move forward.” -Ms. Regina Solomon

“Even if you are on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there!” -Will Rogers

“Vision is much more than just eyesight. It is a matter of the heart and mind. Vision sees the world not the way it has always been, nor the way everyone knows it has to be, but the way it could be.” -Mr. Tommie Dennie

“The most important thing for government is not to do things which individuals are doing already, and to do them a little better or even a little worse, but to do those things which at present are not done at all!” -President John F. Kennedy

“Learn everything you can about the subject so you can speak with confidence and assurance—you must realize what is actually going on before you can effectively deal with it—whatever ‘IT’ is.” -Ms. Regina Solomon

Dreamer

A **dream** to me is a simple fantasy that I wish would come true.

A **dream** to me is the day I am off Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)

A **dream** to me is when I give my life back to the Lord

A **dream** to me is when I get married

A **dream** to me is to see my children grow up and make it on their own

A **dream** to me is for everyone to come together,
BLACK and WHITE

A **dream** to me is for all of the children today to stop
being disobedient

A **dream** to me is to end all of the graffiti drawing

A **dream** to me is just a dream no matter what you see

It is a **dream** to me no matter where I am, it’s just a
place where I wish to be.

By Pearlline Townsend

RECOGNIZING MSU'S PUBLIC HOUSING FELLOWS

All the Resident participants helped each other learn and grow during the 2000-2001 Leadership Training Program, and the Graduation Ceremony was truly a family celebration. But there were a few resident participants who went the extra mile: who not only participated in nearly all the sessions but also helped to plan and recruit for the program, or who took on new leadership back at home as a result of this program.

These seven resident participants were chosen to become the first Public Housing Fellows at Michigan State University's Center for Urban Affairs. In some cases, these individuals took on leadership roles within the training program (for example, assisting with the design and implementation of the training program.) In other cases, the participants applied their new skills and knowledge to serve their public housing community (for example, by starting a new resident program or service, or mobilizing residents around a pressing problem that required unified action.)

All seven resident participants were chosen and approved by the MSU/CUA Faculty Board of Advisors. As the first MSU/CUA Housing Fellows, these residents are the core of a growing number of CUA Fellows to be recognized as key community resources in Michigan. Below are a few "words of wisdom" from each of the Fellows.



*Charlene Bentley, MSU/CUA
Public Housing Fellow,
Bay City*

"I am really blessed. I don't think of public housing as the 'Projects.' I see public housing as a true blessing for troubled times, and I am encouraged by how it can help people like myself and give me the ability to fluctuate my rent in times of need.

"This training has really helped me to work with people. Sometimes I have a way of getting worked up to help someone, a little pushy. I've learned how to share, brainstorm in meetings, get THEM to speak, let the other person share, maybe offer a few words and to listen. This has really changed things, I think."

"We can watch over each other, and help each other. As a result of the training, I speak up! I'm



*Virginia Blossey, MSU/CUA
Public Housing Fellow, Bay*

tired of people thinking they can do anything they want. And I tell others to do the same thing. I'm 70 and have health problems, but God gave me a mouth. I can talk even though I'm physically limited. And it's really

working! We need to set some high standards, to make this place nicer, more of a community. Now people are speaking up more, keeping the place nicer, friendlier."

RECOGNIZING MSU'S PUBLIC HOUSING FELLOWS

Continued from 5

"I want people here to take as much pride in their home as if they lived in their own house. We can't let people call this the 'Projects' -- like it's 'low-caste' instead of low income. I'm really trying to change that perception, and the way we're treated. This is no different than any residential neighborhood, except that we live closer together. We have the same problems, same opportunities."

"I try to stress awareness: the importance of being aware of everything that's going on here, and in the community. I've taken people to go to town meetings, I've made presentations to different organizations, and I've helped [the Housing Commission] to recruit residents for various things. I want to change the perception, and to get residents to participate more in decisions, so that things don't just affect us with no say in the matter."



Gwen Coney, MSU/CUA Public Housing Fellow, Lansing

"There's a real enthusiasm in the community now. We're raising money, saving Spartan Food coupons and mailing them in and we've just had a yard sale. I've been working on getting people

to be more aware, and they're responding. People are keeping up the yards better and are stopping all that hanging on the corner. We're even working together trying to get another baseball team for the youth. We're trying to help this place feel like more of a community."



Betty L. Day, MSU/CUA Public Housing Fellow, Muskegon Heights Housing Commission.

"I've been working with a group to help

us get the park we want here. [The Coalition of Southeast Side Leadership Committee]. We need to create a voice to not dump stuff here. The Parks and Recreation Department told us they would build a park, but when we saw their plan, we saw it wouldn't benefit us at all -- it would just be a money-raiser for them. We need to speak up if we want to make this a better place to live."

How Precious is a Mother?

The one who bares your soul
the one who is there when you're sick
is also the one who is there when you're cold.

A mother can mean so much in so many ways
that can't be explained, you just have to go day by day
and trust in her name.

She is there to pick you up when your face is to the
ground and most definitely she is there when you know no
one else is around.

Be thankful for the mother who has been by your side
through thick and thin, she never has lied.

So I am writing this poem to let you know
that a mother will never let you down.

Pearline Townsend

Public Housing Capacity Building Training Program Staff

Dr. Rex LaMore
John Melcher
Celeste Starks
Dr. Jose Gomez
Dr. Melissa Quon Huber
Kassandra Ray Smith
Kathy Smith

Executive Director
Associate Director
Program Specialist
Program Specialist
Program Specialist
Graphics Design
Admin. Assistant

Program Assistants (Graduate Students)

Jill Harper, Maryellen Lewis, Tamara Juarez, Cathy Stauffer

RECOGNIZING MSU'S PUBLIC HOUSING FELLOWS

Continues

"The more we can involve residents, the more they will feel a part of it. Now that we have a mix of elderly and families, you have to plan for everyone, and that means everyone has to be more involved. In my training work with the Resident Councils, I've got board members going door-to-door knocking, talking to each other, to fellowship with others. It's a long process, but



Tom Dennie, MSU/CUA Public Housing Fellow, Muskegon Housing Commission

now they feel more comfortable to talk to others. I've got them setting goals and objectives, planning and discussing their futures."

"The information I take back from the training has really been helpful to folks. They learn to focus on what is more important, and how to reach all. They are more prepared to deal with situations, to be more comfortable with

them. Instead of creating hostility, they deal with situations based more on information and conversation. Hostility usually comes when nobody has the information!"

"For my Councils and for the others in this program, I think now we can help one another to help prepare ourselves so that things aren't completely foreign. We can be mentors to each other."

"This training has really helped me to speak out. Now I ask a question instead of just keeping to myself and I take the next step. It has helped me to deal with situations of how to talk with people when you need to. Before the training, I didn't know I could do this. For example, with drug prevention, I understand

more how we can get help and what we can do."

"It has also helped me to know how to better set up a meeting, and how to get people to come. Now the residents are more willing to speak up,



Patricia Patrick, MSU/CUA Public Housing Fellow, Lansing

and new people are coming out. People are also more willing to be board members. This program made me want to do more for public housing, to really be a leader so people here can have a better life. Now I have an idea how to do it better, and this has helped me to try."



Public Housing Team: Jill Harper, Maryellen Lewis, Celeste Starks, Tamara Juarez, Cathy Stauffer, Jose Gomez, Melissa Huber, Mary Carlson, John Melcher, Dewey Lawrence, Regina Solomon.

Public Housing of the New Millennium

By Ed Moses

With the passage of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA) of October 1998, Congress radically shifted the focus of public housing. These changes created a new atmosphere for the nation's Public Housing Authorities to operate and, ultimately, will change the environment in which public housing residents live. This article will briefly summarize the major components of the QHWRA and discuss some of their possible implications.

Because of the perceived failures of "vertical" or "isolated" public housing developments, QHWRA drastically realigns the source of federal housing assistance for low income Americans. The new voucher program is now the "subsidy of choice" favored by Congress to house this population. Vouchers are encouraged because they are flexible enough to be used anywhere they are accepted in the United States. In addition, the new law forces transformation in existing public housing communities by mandating that these communities become, over time, filled with mixed income individuals. The QHWRA requires housing authorities to set aside 40% of their units for very low-income families: those families whose incomes are at or less than 30% of the area's medium income (AMI). The remainder of the units can be used to house all other public housing eligible residents; families with incomes that are no more than 80% of AMI. It is hoped that the combination of these two policies will lessen the concentration of poverty typically found in public housing throughout this country (particularly in major urban centers) and will ultimately make public housing communities of the future indistinguishable from any other community in a locality.

To ensure that public housing authorities can transform communities to the law's new vision, Congress has set new standards within QHWRA that give housing authorities increased operational flexibility, and mandates that housing authorities periodically conduct strategic planning to chart their course of operation. This flexibility changes the housing authority's policies on resident selection, rent determinations, and family income calculation processes.

For example, prior to QHWRA, the federal government told housing authorities exactly who could receive housing selection priority through federal preferences requirements. If an eligible family met the requirements of the federal preferences, they would move to the head of the line on a housing authority's wait list and would be considered first for housing. These preferences included eligible families who were living in substandard housing (homeless), those persons who were involuntarily displaced (including victims of domestic violence), or those who paid more than 50 percent of their income for rent. With the passage of QHWRA, all federal preferences were removed, and housing authorities were given the right to

establish a local set of preferences that are based on their service area housing needs and priorities. With this change, housing authorities can now flexibly design strategies to meet the statutory and regulatory requirements on poverty deconcentration, income targeting, and mixed-income goals.

In addition, the new law also gave public housing residents some discretion in determining how they calculate their rents. This discretion permits a family to decide if they should calculate their rent based on 30 % of the family's adjusted income (referred to as income-based rents), or on the "market value" of the unit the family is seeking to rent (referred to as flat-rents). The flat rent option helps to keep working class families in the developments by not allowing their increase in income to price them out of their homes in areas where the rental markets are tight. In cities like New York, Chicago and Detroit, flat rents can make public housing very competitive in the marketplace for families with modest incomes.

The QHWRA also gave housing authorities the right to establish site-based waiting lists. Once a housing authority exercises this option, this right gives the "power of choice" to public housing applicants by allowing them to select and apply for a particular development among the housing authority's properties. Through the use of site-based waiting lists, housing authorities have another valuable tool to market properties in a more competitive fashion to public housing eligible families who might not have otherwise considered public housing for their housing option.

Similarly, the law's requirements on income calculation give housing authorities an enhanced ability to offer powerful incentives to encourage residents to experience the "dignity" of work. Through the law's requirements on optional income deductions and income disregards, the housing authority can institute policies that financially reward, instead of penalizing, families to enter the workplace.

Under the optional income deductions requirement, a housing authority can choose to establish income deductions that would permit certain categories of families to deduct some portion of their income from their rent calculations. For example, the earned income disregard requirement rewards a family member who has been out of work for at least a year by allowing the family to exclude that family member's new earned income from being used to calculate the family's rent for the first twelve months. During the second twelve-month period, 50% of the new earned income is excluded from the rent calculations.

To further promote goals that help to create “economic lift” among public housing families, QHWRA provides linkages to the nation’s welfare reform efforts by encouraging housing authorities to form partnerships with their local welfare agencies to coordinate and target their economic independence services. Through this partnership, housing authorities can enter into Memorandums of Agreements (MOA) to support their common clients trying to achieve economic freedom. Using this MOA, housing authorities can now have the supportive services provided by the local welfare agency that they need to aid TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) recipients in overcoming the barriers that prevent them from working. This “wrap around” system of support is increasingly being used as an economic self-sufficiency strategy for low income people.

Lastly, QHWRA mandates that all housing authorities must conduct a strategic planning process to address their community housing needs. This mandate requires a housing authority to complete a five-year agency plan. Housing authorities must update the plan annually to see whether goals are being accomplished or to decide if goals are still relevant. In putting this plan together, a housing authority must actively involve its residents. It must also seek input from the community at-large, coordinate its efforts with the locality’s consolidated planning process, and review available resources and service options.

Clearly, the passage of QHWRA has brought with it new challenges and new opportunities. Its new rules will dramatically change the face of public housing. Housing authorities and their residents can use QHWRA to create sustainable and nurturing communities that develop living environments where families can grow to their fullest potential. How you use it depends on whether you see the glass half empty or half full. That choice is yours to make.

Ed Moses is the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of HUD’s Office of Community Relations and Involvement. He is currently the managing partner of Joseph Shuldiner and Associates, Inc. and serves as the Resident Initiatives and Involvement Consultant for the Detroit Housing Commission.

LOSS OF PUBLIC HOUSING

*The following article was taken from “Housing Matters,” a newsletter from the Public Housing Residents’ National Organizing Campaign
A Resident-Led National Organization*

The article is a summary of a training session for Resident Leaders in April and June. The session looked at different ways that housing authorities can remove or decrease the number of public housing units in its community and the rights of residents when the loss occurs. What follows is a very general overview of some of the materials presented at the session. Presenters of the session included Henry Korman, Ed Williams, Lynne Ide, Dick Tenenbaum, and Ruth Williams

Removal Strategies

Program-HOPE VI Demolition and Revitalization

HOPE VI is a HUD program that provides housing authorities with money to improve severely distressed housing. HOPE VI funds can be used to demolish, reconfigure, rehabilitate, and/or replace housing. Before being awarded HOPE VI money, a housing authority must have permission from HUD to demolish or dispose of public housing.

Program-Demolition

A housing authority can demolish part or all of a public housing development (even if it does not get money from the HOPE VI program) if it gets permission from HUD. Under federal law, public housing is eligible for demolition only under certain conditions, one of which is that the housing is unsuitable for housing purposes because of its physical condition or location.

Residents’ Rights

Resident’s Rights—A housing authority **must** involve residents in the HOPE VI planning and application process **prior** to applying for funds. **For a copy of HUD’s resident involvement guidelines, contact the Campaign.**

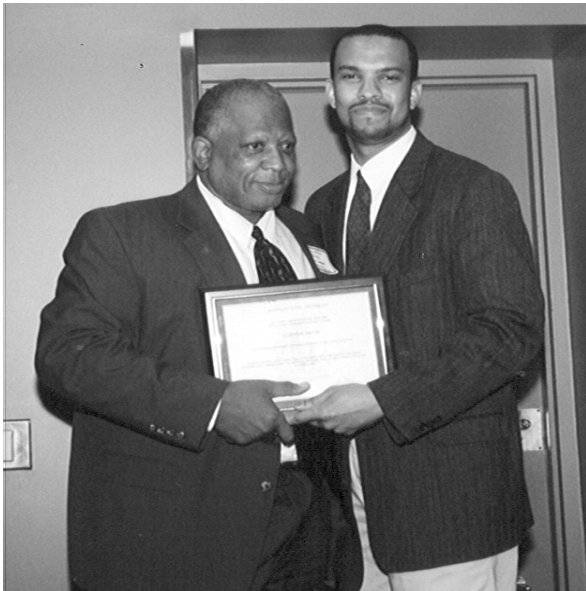
A housing authority must develop a relocation plan that minimizes displacement. Residents permanently displaced are entitled to replacement housing payments.

Resident’s Rights—A housing authority **must** consult with residents and resident organizations **prior** to asking HUD for permission. Residents have a right to relocation assistance, which includes the right to comparable replacement housing, advisory services, and moving expenses.

RECOGNIZING MSU'S PUBLIC HOUSING FELLOWS

Continued from Page 7

"This training showed me how the tenants can really participate in the decisions that affect us. You have to know the ins and outs of policies and your roles and responsibilities so you can use them to further the goals of tenants. And I've seen the importance of the connectedness between the different cities, how we can help each other and be a bigger voice. This has shown me how there really is strength in numbers, which is how you really get things done."



*Clinton Smith, MSU/CUA Public Housing Fellow,
Ann Arbor Housing Commission*

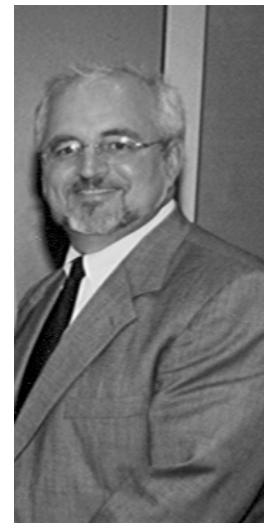
"This has really enhanced my view of public housing. I can see that if people are working together, we can make public housing much better. The new laws, regulations and policies can be used to foster more cooperation from administration and management than before. But you have to be willing to push it: "Excuse me, but according to [Rule] 964, XYZ and so I request this" instead of just letting it go or getting scared and flustered. I use the system to straighten people out"

WELCOME TO ROSS II PARTNERS

■ We are happy to announce that with the assistance of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Resident Leader Capacity Building Training Program will be expanded to include even more public housing communities across Michigan. As you may know, last year's training program (ROSS I) served 13 public housing communities across Michigan in the cities of Albion, Ann Arbor, Bay City, Ecorse, Highland Park, Lansing, Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, River Rouge, and Ypsilanti. New support from HUD is allowing us to begin a new training program (ROSS II) in the cities of Benton Harbor, Detroit, Inkster, and Pontiac. We are so happy to be able to expand the program so that more resident leaders can gain the skills and capacities that they need to more effectively serve their communities. In order to provide an opportunity for participants from the cities included in ROSS I and participants from the cities included in ROSS II to get to know each other and to learn from each other's experiences, a number of the training sessions and other activities will combine all of the training participants from both ROSS programs.



*Special thanks to
Ms. Charlene Bentley and Ms.
Patricia Patrick for serving
on the Public Housing
Newsletter Committee and for
making the publication of this
newsletter a reality.*



*Dr. Rex L. LaMore,
State Director,
MSU Center for Urban
Affairs*

Training Schedule

As you know, this year's Resident Leader Capacity Building Training Program will begin in October 2001. There will be one hands-on training session and one distance learning session each month for a total of eight months. Those participants who complete at least 80% of the training sessions will receive a Certificate of Completion from Michigan State University and will have the opportunity to become an MSU Public Housing Fellow. Located below is the schedule for the first three hands-on sessions of the Public Housing Resident Leader Capacity Building Training Program. Please remember that there will also be one distance learning session offered in each of these months. You will be advised of the dates and locations of these distance learning sessions as soon as they have been confirmed.

October's Program for ROSS I and ROSS II

Topic:

- Understanding HUD'S Policies and Procedures

Date/Time:

- October 12, 2001 10:00-2:00

Location:

- Library of Michigan, Lansing, MI

November's Program for ROSS I and ROSS II

Topic:

- Increasing Resident Participation

Date/Time:

- November 9, 2001 10:00-2:00

Location:

- Ann Arbor Public Housing Community Room

December's Program Ross I

Topic: Leadership Fundamentals

Date/Time:

- December 7, 2001 10:00-2:00

Location:

Library of Michigan, Lansing, MI

December's Program Ross II

Topic: Leadership Fundamentals

Date/Time:

- December 14, 2001, 10:00-2:00

Location:

- Diggs Community Center Detroit, MI

AHC SMART CENTER

By Margaret Parker
12 years old

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about the Albion Housing Commission Smart Center so you will know what AHC kids are doing here. The Smart Center provides kids with a place to study and learn, especially on computers. Our Smart Center is equipped with 5-state of the art Gateway computers connected to the Internet by cable modem. We also have a copy machine, a scanner, and a laser printer at our disposal. The Center also has games, books, a refrigerator for refreshments, new chairs, and a relaxed atmosphere.

The Smart Center opens at 12:00 and closes at 5:00 pm., and is really helpful to the kids when we need a place to study. Uncle Michael Scott, the computer instructor, has helped us to understand how to use the computers. This is important for our future success in school.

I would like to thank the people that have helped to make the Center a success, and to encourage those kids in the Albion Housing Commission to come to the Smart Center.



Community Police Officer

by Officer Daryl Green

My name is Officer Daryl Green and I have been employed with the Lansing Police Department for approximately 5 years. I have worked exclusively in the patrol section and I am currently assigned as the "Community Police Officer" for the La Roy Froh housing complex. I have been at the La Roy Froh complex for approximately four months and volunteered for this position. I volunteered for this position because I believe that community policing improves police-community relations and is an overall effective form of policing. Presently, at La Roy Froh I am meeting residents, assessing community concerns, addressing specific community problems and attempting to open communication channels between La Roy Froh residents and the police. In order to accomplish these goals, I invite La Roy Froh residents to express their concerns and to voice their concerns to a variety of governmental agencies including the police.

The majority of recent policing concerns expressed to me from La Roy Froh residents have involved quality of life issues such as noise, trash and juvenile problems. What I have found in my 4 months of community policing experience is that the vast majority of these problems stem from the actions of non-residents or unregistered residents on the La Roy Froh property. As a result, it is the task of management, the La Roy Froh Resident Council and myself to remind residents that they are responsible for the actions of their guests according to their tenancy. This type of reminder is easier said than done, and an effective system of communication is needed to achieve successful results.

With the above in mind, trying to find an effective communication channel is my goal as a community police officer. I need to identify a system of communication that will work best in a diverse community like La Roy Froh. In effect, I need the participation and assistance of Resident Council leaders, community leaders and management to get a variety of my messages communicated. Currently, I am attempting to gain more community participation, but things are moving slowly. I am optimistic, however, that these things will improve.

My success as a community police officer depends on community communication and mobilization. Further, the community's ability to thrive is dependent not only on my success but most importantly on their own participation. It is from belief in this statement and through the help from community leaders like Patricia Patrick and Sandra Kowalk that I am optimistic that I and the La Roy Froh community will be successful in our endeavors. In conclusion, I look forward to a challenging assignment at La Roy Froh and hope that I will make a positive difference in the lives of all La Roy Froh residents.

Continued from p. 9

Program-Disposition

A housing authority can "dispose" of a development, meaning sell or transfer ownership, but only if it gets permission from HUD. Public housing is eligible for disposition only under certain circumstances, one of which is that it is in the best interest of the residents and the housing authority.

Program-Conversion to Vouchers

A housing authority can remove public housing units by converting the housing and the funds for the housing to other uses. Residents may be relocated from the converted housing with vouchers, project-based assistance, or to other public housing. The two types of conversions are:

- **Voluntary conversion** – A housing authority may voluntarily convert public housing to vouchers under certain conditions, including that the conversion will benefit residents, the neighborhood, and the housing authority.

- **Required conversion** – A family development with 250 units or more must be converted to vouchers under certain conditions, one of which is that at least

Resident's Rights-A housing authority **must** consult with residents and resident organizations **prior** to asking HUD for permission.

*A housing authority **must** offer to sell the property to the residents or resident organization in that development.*

Residents have a right to relocation assistance, which includes the right to comparable replacement housing and advisor services.

Resident's Rights-If a housing authority decides to submit a conversion plan for a particular development, it must develop the plan in consultation with public officials and with significant participation from residents of that development. The housing authority should provide residents with copies of the conversion plan and a reasonable time to comment on the plan. Residents' comments must be submitted to HUD with the final conversion plan.

Residents' Rights-If a housing authority decides to submit a conversion plan for a particular development, it must develop the plan in consultation with public officials and with significant participation from residents of that development. The housing authority should provide residents with copies of the conversion plan and a reasonable time to comment on the plan. Residents' comments must

Program Continued

10% of the units have been vacant for 3 years in a row. HUD's conversion rules are not yet final. Until then, housing authorities are instructed to begin the assessment process.

Resident's Rights Continued

be submitted to HUD with the final conversion plan.

Printed with permission from the Center for Community Change.

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF COMMUNITY GROWTH

Speech by Mr. Tom Dennie

Presented at the MSU Public Housing Resident Leader Capacity Building Training Program Graduation Ceremony

July 20, 2001

LEADERSHIP

To some people leadership means power, honor, prestige or personal advantage. But real leadership begins with service to others, which is what community service is all about. One of the fundamental principles of good public service begins with encouraging the active participation of the customers served, so that community members have the opportunity to significantly influence decisions that affect their situation.

KNOWLEDGE

We must acquaint ourselves with the resources of the area and the problems and challenges facing the community. We must be strongly committed to the mission and goals of the organization, boards, and committees in which we serve, and be constantly alert for opportunities to further the mission and goals of the organization.

UNITY

Community building is an approach to comprehensive neighborhood development where residents and other stakeholders come together with collective determination to create and strengthen relationships. The process builds healthy, viable, and sustainable communities that promote personal growth and civic responsibility.

VISION

Vision is much more than just eyesight. It is a matter of the heart and mind. Vision sees the world not the way it has always been, nor the way everyone knows it has to be, but the way it could be. This demands a special kind of courage: The courage to act with real commitment while the questions are still open, and the courage to put oneself out when the events demand it.

HAVE YOU HEARD

**By Charlene Bentley, Resident Advisory Board Member
Bay City Housing Commission**

Now that I have your attention, I would like to share my gratitude for being able to participate in the Public Housing Resident Leader Capacity Building Training Program. I, along with Tom Wheatley and Virginia Blossey, am a Resident Advisory Board Member for the Bay City Housing Commission and I serve the residents of Pine Towers. Frightfully, I almost missed the opportunity to be a part of this training program. Thankfully, Tom Wheatley invited me to join him and Karl Opheim at the October 20, 2000 function in Lansing, and it happened to be the start of the upcoming eight-month training seminars.

I have been so encouraged by the many influential leaders who are a circle of friends committed to Celeste Starks and the MSU Resident Leader Training Program. I am moved by their supporting efforts to educate all of the participants, by their continuous patience, and by the enthusiasm promoted from month to month. I applaud Celeste in the professional way she conducted each session and the humble way she expressed the road that she has traveled, (from childhood to adulthood, from adulthood to motherhood, from motherhood to mentor), to get where she is today. Because of her, I now look for even a little humor in the most devastating situation, and it gives me the strength to carry on.

The hands-on training sessions have taught me to reach out to leaders in our community for help concerning issues in our community and to remain respectful of their position without fearing the outcome. I've learned much pertaining to HUD and have been able to share it intelligently with any interested person. The hands-on and distance learning training sessions have really made a difference in my life and each goal that I achieve now becomes a solid rock that I can add to the one I first received from Celeste in December of 2000 when the training began.

Not only have I accomplished a lot in my public life as a resident leader over the past eight months, but I have also gained a lot personally through the many relationships that I have formed. Like Celeste, I have learned how to hunt for empty pop cans/bottles. My friend and I started this on June 15, 2001 and we have proudly accumulated a nice sum toward a vacation (one tank of gas). I've also lost a few pounds due to the walking that Celeste inspired me to do.

Thanks Celeste. I wish to thank Tom Wheatley (my partner-in-crime) and Virginia Blossey (one of Bay City's "Three Musketeers") for their friendship and support. Also, thanks to the Bay City Housing Commission for making this opportunity a reality. Thanks to Pat Patrick and all the partners who made the newsletter a success. Most of all, I wish to thank Celeste and her staff for keeping the doors of communication open. I wish you much success with future hands-on and distance learning sessions. Thank you all for every valuable lesson. Stay encouraged.

FUNDING FOR RESIDENT PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

This article was taken from “Housing Matters,” a newsletter produced by the Public Housing Residents’ National Organizing Campaign, A Resident-led National Organization

What’s the New Rule?

Do you know that public housing authorities must now provide funding for resident participation directly out of their operating budget? This requirement applies to about 3,000 of the 3,400 housing authorities in this country that receive federal operating subsidies.

This is significant! And it is a direct result of strong organizing and negotiating efforts on the part of resident leaders.

Many resident leaders may recall that HUD’s 964 rule on resident participation has always had a provision requiring housing authorities to provide \$25 per unit/per year to resident groups for resident participation activities, but housing authorities had to only if funds were made available for this purpose by Congress. The problem was, Congress never provided or *appropriated* money to fund resident participation.

Under the new \$25 resident participation fund requirement, when housing authorities calculate their yearly operating budgets and send them to HUD, they must include a request for \$25 per “occupied” unit/per year for resident participation. The good news is that the funding requirement is no longer dependent on whether Congress funds resident participation.

How Much Money for Resident Participation Will Your Housing Authority Get?

You will need to monitor this. Under a new HUD rule, HUD will provide housing authorities with \$25 per “occupied unit” per year for resident participation activities. Housing authorities must also include units lived in by employees and police officers.

How can you find out how much money your housing authority has requested for resident participation?

Ask your housing authority for Form HUD-52723, “Calculation of Operating Subsidy.” Housing authorities submit this form to HUD to request operating money. In Part D, Line 12, the housing authority must state the “Total Units Eligible for Resident Participation” and the next line multiplies this number of units by \$25. That is the amount of resident participation money that has been requested.

Note: If a housing authority receives less than the

full amount of the operating budget it has requested (resident participation funds + other expenses), the resident participation funds must still be provided- but they will be proportionately reduced.

How Can Funds Be Used?

In January 2001, HUD published a new notice with instructions about the use and distribution of the \$25 per unit/per year resident participation funds.* The notice says that funds may be used for activities such as:

- Outreach to Residents
- Resident Training
- Organizing
- Leadership Development
- Elections
- Resident Surveys

Who Gets the Money?

That is up for negotiation between a housing authority and residents. Those eligible to receive funds include duly elected Resident Councils and Resident Advisory Boards.

Who Decides Who Gets the Money?

Although the rules are not entirely clear, what they say is that to determine who gets funds and how much, a housing authority must:

1. Negotiate with the duly elected citywide or jurisdiction-wide residents council.
2. If there is no citywide residents council, a housing authority must negotiate with the duly elected resident councils with individual developments.
3. If there are no duly elected resident councils for some developments, the duly elected resident councils that do exist can negotiate on behalf of residents who have no resident council.
4. If there are no duly elected resident councils, the housing authority must negotiate with a Resident Advisory Board.

All decisions must be set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which must be reviewed and updated yearly.

Don’t wait until your housing authority comes to you. Start working with residents and the housing authority now!

*Notice PHI 2001-3

Printed with permission from the Center for Community Change

Leadership Training for Public Housing Residents: My Personal Call

By Dr. Jose E. Gomez

In 1999, when the Director of the Center for Urban Affairs at Michigan State University, Dr. Rex LaMore, asked me to join the Public Housing Team, I did not know much about public housing. My first task was to help the team to prepare a proposal to HUD (U.S. Housing and Urban Development) for funding to provide skill building training to public housing resident leaders so that they would be able to effectively represent public housing constituents in their roles as Commissioners and leaders.

I had some ideas about public housing from my coursework on the history of urban development during my urban planning studies at MSU. At that time, I associated public housing with high-rise distressed buildings and a good example of bad planning. My real learning about public housing came during my work with the Michigan State University Center for Urban Affairs Public Housing team. The Pandora's box opened and what it showed me was a community in turmoil. Public housing faces many challenges in the areas of crime, drugs, changing regulation, and funding cuts. The solution to these challenges requires special skills that few individuals can offer to their public housing community.

The MSU Public Housing Team undertook a survey to Public Housing Resident Commissioners to identify their training needs in early 1999. Results were in all directions; all types of training were required, which in part reflected the distress and pressure on the Public Housing system. The same pattern was displayed in another 'needs assessment' survey done by the MSU/ CUA Team to document the HUD-ROSS proposal to fund the leadership training.

Through this assessment I realized that the problems of public housing in Michigan were beyond what the University could possibly do and probably out of the power of any single Public Housing Authority. Public Housing is in a process of policy devolution and reform. HUD is returning the power to set policy to Public Housing Authorities, residents are having more access to participation in public housing administration, and **more** flexible rules are being proposed to increase the effectiveness and efficiency in the management of public housing resources.

From the residents' perspective, the task is to build the capacity of public housing residents to process these additional resources and power given by new legisla-

tion. Under previous rules, HUD set policy that Public Housing Authorities had to follow, and residents had little to say. Since public housing communities have been out of the game in the past public housing advocates suggest that the system is not ready for residents to take the responsibility that is given by the new legislation. The task of the MSU/CUA team is not just to train Public Housing Leaders to effectively represent residents, but to increase their confidence, self-esteem, and knowledge about the new rules of the game.

The Public Housing Team at MSU/CUA submitted a proposal to HUD to finance a training program consisting of eight face-to-face and eight distance learning sessions in a period of eight months. The training topics included HUD Policies and Procedures, Leadership Fundamentals, Planning, Resident Participation, Economic Development, Youth Programs, Drug Elimination, and a Working Day at the Michigan Capitol. At first I argued that this program was too modest to face the challenges presented by public housing. The MSU Team, however, had the notion of building communities through small gains and successes rather than exposing communities to unreachable goals.

The first year of Capacity Building training was a remarkable success. The first phase helped to identify seven Public Housing Fellows that will assist the MSU Team in facilitating the second phase of the Capacity Building Training Program. The contribution of Celeste Starks, a member of the MSU Team, was particularly outstanding. Many organizations joined MSU to share their experiences and resources with public housing leaders.

Mr. Dushaw Hockett of the Center for Community Change, JoAnn Adams of HUD-Detroit Office, and Robert James of MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority), among many others, shared their time, experiences, and dreams with our 64 participants. This first training phase also helped us to identify the many community resources that are available to help building public housing residents' skills.

You never know where and when your personal call will come. Public housing, an issue that hardly was on my agenda, showed up in my life to stay. I know now that public housing in Michigan is a well-organized community with lots of democratic values, a history, and many people eager for a better future. The rest is up to public housing residents and their leaders to accept their personal call in seeking a more independent life, in working for an improved standard of life, and in making it meritorious to future generations.



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
E. Lansing, MI
Permit No. 21

Urban Affairs Programs
Community & Economic Development Program
W-104 West Owen Graduate Center
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1109