



THE RESIDENT

NEWSLETTER

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A GED Program, As Close as Home

A new GED program is putting Peoria Housing Authority (PHA) residents on a fast track to meet their self sufficiency goals. PHA operates a self-sufficiency program for residents living in its popular scattered site units. The aim of the 5-year program is to help residents obtain a living wage. However, PHA Administrators realized that the majority of residents lacked the education they needed to get and keep jobs, much less improve their earning potential. Complicating the situation, all of schools in the public housing neighborhood were closed and the residents have limited access to public transportation. PHA stepped in to fill the gap, offering GED classes at several housing developments with "a faster, more intense, and more personalized curriculum," according to Program Manager Meghan Lundeen.

Lundeen calls the additional education program, "Self-sufficiency on steroids." The program was born in March of 2010 but was threatened with losing its teacher due to school district funding cuts a few months later. Lundeen was among administrators who pursued outside help, which came from both the Mayor's education commission and Illinois Central College (ICC). ICC gifted the housing authority with a part-time teacher who offers classes in the evenings.

Lundeen says this program has improved the public perception of public housing residents by earning positive coverage from the local media. Moreover, local community members have donated supplies, such as calculators and dictionaries as well as funding for GED testing. In the past, some residents who completed GED programs would not get their GED because could not afford the \$50 exam fee.

Attendance for the program is very high: 75 percent of current students attend the program on a weekly basis, which Lundeen considers evidence of their drive and dedication. While it typically takes several years to complete a GED when beginning around a 2nd grade reading level, five residents have gotten their GED in the program's first year. Lundeen also credits the program with benefits beyond the classroom. "Participants now walk taller, dress better, look you in the eye, and shake your hand. There is a noticeable change in their confidence levels—a change noticed by everyone."

To learn more about the program, contact Meghan Lundeen at mlundeen@pha.peoria.il.us.

UPCOMING DATES

- » **Going Green: Intelligent Investments for Public Housing**
Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities
April 12-13
Boston, MA
<http://bit.ly/e3jp4W>
- » **Tax Day: April 15, 2011**
For information on free tax help:
<http://bit.ly/qO22>
and The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, 1-800-906-9887
- » **Healthy Neighborhoods webinar**
Environmental Health
April 19, 2011, 2:00-3:30 Eastern Time
<http://bit.ly/eKpekq>
- » **The State of Environmental Justice in America Conference**
April 27-29, 2011, Washington, DC
www.ejconference.net/home.html

How are we doing so far?

We want to ensure that The Resident newsletter is relevant and user-friendly. You can help. Please let us know your comments on the newsletter. Do you like what you've read? Is there something you'd like us to cover?

Let us know by dropping an email to TheResident@hud.gov.

Gaining New Skills at Milwaukee Neighborhood Networks



Yolanda Hamilton at her computer. Photo: HACM

HUD recently asked for Neighborhood Networks Centers success stories. Neighborhood Networks Centers are technology hubs located at public housing developments that offer residents access to computers and other services such as job preparation classes, English classes, and mentoring for youth. This success story was written by the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) and is just one example of how public housing residents are taking advantage of learning opportunities at Neighborhood Networks Centers.

Injured in a car accident while in her teens, Yolanda Hamilton receives disability benefits. The first day she came to the Carver Park/Hillside Neighborhood Networks Center, the married mother of four said, "I don't want to just collect a check for the rest of my life, how can the Neighborhood Networks Center help me? I want to be able to support my children with a real job."

Since Hamilton started using the center 3 years ago, she has received tutoring in math, social studies and reading—each bringing her closer to her goal of independence. Hamilton is now a student in Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), taking pre-requisite classes for a certificate course to become a Health Unit Coordinator. Upon graduation, her goal is to work in an emergency room.

Today, Hamilton volunteers regularly in the computer lab. She recently completed a year of service as a community representative assisting medical students in the Medical College of Wisconsin. She is also a community outreach worker with the Medical College helping to teach parents the value of immunizations.

TIPS

Getting the Most Out of CSSR

The Community Service and Self-Sufficiency Requirement (CSSR) says that public housing residents, 18 and over, must participate in community service or an economic development program for 8 hours a month. CSSR is required by law. Community service can provide residents with a rewarding experience that allows them to give back to their neighborhoods and enhance their job skills at the same time. The types of allowable community service organizations include:

- Local public or nonprofit institutions, including those serving PHA residents and their children such as: schools, daycare centers, before- and after-school programs, nursing homes, recreation centers, and more.
- Programs under the Older Americans Act such as senior centers, Senior Meals on Wheels, and Green Thumb.
- Public housing agency (PHA) developments, including work to improve grounds or create gardens.

Residents can also care for the children of other residents so that their parents can volunteer.

Programs that meet requirements for economic development or self sufficiency can include:

- Job readiness or job training
- Higher education such as vocational college, community college, junior college or college
- GED classes
- Apprenticeships
- Substance abuse or mental health counseling
- Reading, financial, or computer literacy classes
- English as a Second Language or English Proficiency classes
- Budgeting and credit counseling

Some residents do not need to meet CSSR requirements. This includes people who are 62 years of age and older, people who are blind or disabled or the primary caretaker of someone who is blind or disabled, and people already participating in work activities. If you think you may be exempt from CSSR, contact your PHA.

Your PHA might offer its own community service activities or coordinate activities with an existing Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) or Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. It may have created partnerships with local schools or organizations to develop a list of referrals. To find out more, contact your PHA.

Contact us:

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More On Father's Day 2011

Father's Day 2011 will take place on June 18. HUD is inviting all PHAs to host events to bring fathers and their children together to celebrate fatherhood and family while also learning about local resources. At HUD's Web site, you can register your PHA if you are holding an event, download a toolkit or a marketing brochure, watch a webinar about the event, and more.

Visit: <http://www.hud.gov/fathersday2011/>