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# The NYCHA JOURNAL

## NYCHA CHAIR ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP TO PRESERVE PUBLIC HOUSING

On March 27, Chair & CEO Shola Olatoye addressed more than 900 affordable housing leaders at the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment (NAHRO) annual meeting in Washington. She announced that NYCHA and NAHRO have banded together to build a national movement of Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and their advocates and partners. The coalition will lobby at the local, state and national levels for increased investment in public housing as a critical public health measure. Here is an excerpt of her address.

I'll be honest, when the President proposes a \$6.2 billion cut to HUD's budget and a reported two-thirds slash to the capital fund — you have to wonder if public housing will even have a tomorrow, let alone a "better" one. Luckily, where I'm from, we don't take these kinds of threats lying down.

Public housing authorities and housing administrators have embraced private investment not as a last resort but as a bridge to a 21st century business model. As public housing is faced with a fundamental shift in funding, programs like RAD (the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)



NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye addresses housing leaders in Washington, D.C.

## Farm in a Box

A NYCHA resident and Green City Force graduate launches farm inside a shipping container.

Lexington Houses resident Paul Philpott at work in his shipping container farm, Gateway Greens.

**P**AUL PHILPOTT, 25, has grown various veggies on his farm, Gateway Greens, such as kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, and a variety of herbs, including sage, thyme, and oregano. But Gateway Greens doesn't look the way most people imagine farms. Instead of rolling hills, barns, and tractors, Philpott's farm is housed inside of a 40-foot shipping container in Brooklyn.

A resident of Lexington Houses in East Harlem, Philpott is one of the first group of entrepreneurs to work with Square Roots, an urban farming company that aims

to empower young people to grow real food by helping them grow crops in vertical farms built in shipping containers. Philpott's farm uses hydroponic technology, in which plants are grown in water instead of soil. Hydroponic farming can be done literally anywhere.

Philpott, a recent graduate of the Green City Force (GCF) Urban Farm Corps, was chosen to speak at GCF's Urban Farm Corps graduation on January 19. As a GCF Corps Member he maintained the Red Hook Farm and helped build the three farms at Bayview, Howard, and Wagner Houses. *The NYCHA*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

# A SUSTAINABLE NYCHA



**APRIL IS TRADITIONALLY THE MONTH** when people around the world focus on the quality and sustainability of our precious environment. There's no question that a unified focus on sustainability is urgent: You need look no further than the destruction that Superstorm Sandy inflicted on NYCHA developments and the rest of our City to understand that climate change is real and devastating. Individuals, corporations, organizations and governments all have a role to play in protecting and restoring the health of our planet for our generation and generations to come.

As part of our *NextGeneration NYCHA* strategic plan, the Authority has already made a number of significant steps toward reducing NYCHA's impact on the environment by improving our energy conservation, using sustainable materials,

implementing recycling at every development, planting farms to provide residents with locally grown produce, and more. We will continue these efforts to help keep our city a safe, healthy place for all residents to live. In this issue, you will read about some of our sustainability initiatives, many of which will create jobs for residents, and our environmental heroes who are making it happen.

But sustainability is not just about environmental quality of life. At this moment in time, for NYCHA, there is an even more pressing sustainability issue. Our

funding for this year has been cut by tens of millions of dollars by HUD. These cuts alone will jeopardize the progress we have made in the past two years with our strategic plan. It will mean longer waits for repairs, fewer staff at developments, and limited programming for residents.

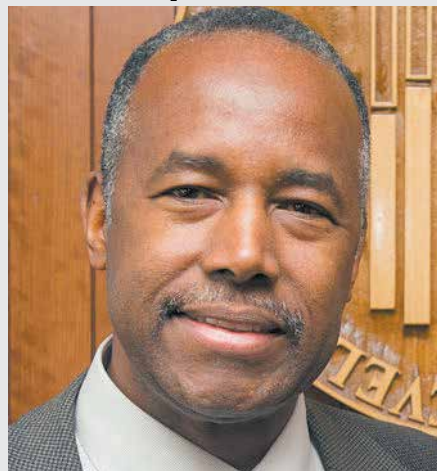
We are now looking at very tough, very unpopular choices to try and preserve the housing we have now. We will definitely need to build affordable and market-rate housing on our properties to generate revenue. We must continue to use the RAD program to convert properties to Section 8, as we did with Ocean Bay-Bayside, to protect as much housing as possible for our residents while reducing the burden on the Housing Authority so we can focus our resources on other developments that can't be converted.

We need your help. Now is the time for the entire NYCHA community to band together and fight for the funding and support public housing residents need and deserve. Please support your elected officials, your community-based organizations, your resident association leadership, and the Authority as we continue to lobby for funding for NYCHA. More than ever, your partnership is critical—for your future, and the next generation of NYCHA residents.

**Shola Olatoye**  
Chair and CEO

## Statement from NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye on Dr. Ben Carson's appointment as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development:

**"NYCHA WILL CONTINUE** to work to make safe, decent housing a reality for all families as we face critical challenges. We will work with Secretary Carson to fortify federal housing infrastructure, foster new partnerships, and improve the living conditions of public housing residents. The stakes for our 400,000 residents are high, and they demand we protect the resources we have to serve the families and seniors who rely upon public housing."



## NYCHA BOARD MEETINGS

**NYCHA'S BOARD MEETINGS**, open to the public, take place on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. in the NYCHA 12th floor conference room at 250 Broadway. People who wish to speak during the public comment period must pre-register at least 45 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to begin and can only comment about items on that meeting's agenda. Each speaker's time is limited to three minutes. The public comment period concludes either when all speakers are finished or after the 30 minutes allotted by law for public comment, whichever comes first.

Copies of the calendar for the upcoming board meeting are available on NYCHA's website or can be picked up at the Office of the Corporate Secretary, 250 Broadway, 12th floor, after 3 p.m. on the Monday before the meeting. Copies of the dispositions of prior meetings are available on NYCHA's website or can be picked up from the Office of the Corporate Secretary no earlier than 3 p.m. on the Thursday after the board meeting. Any person requiring reasonable accommodation in order to participate in the meeting should contact the Office of the Corporate Secretary at **212-306-6088** no later than five business days prior to the meeting. For additional information regarding the calendar of meetings, dispositions, dates, and times, please call **212-306-6088**.

For those unable to attend the board meetings, please visit <http://on.nyc.gov/boardmeetings> at the time of the meeting to watch live. You may also watch past board meetings by visiting NYCHAnnel, NYCHA's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/c/nycha>.

### Upcoming Meetings:

April 26, 2017  
May 24, 2017  
June 28, 2017

July 26, 2017  
September 27, 2017  
October 25, 2017

November 29, 2017  
December 20, 2017

\* Note: There will be no board meeting in August. The May and December board meetings are scheduled for the second-to-last Wednesday.

## The NYCHA JOURNAL

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[www.nyc.gov/nycha](http://www.nyc.gov/nycha)



# NYCHA Chair Meets with Electeds to Discuss Federal Budget Cuts



From left to right: State Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, and City Council Member Ritchie Torres.

**E**LECTED OFFICIALS REPRESENTING New York at the federal, state, and city level met with Chair Shola Olatoye to discuss how to advocate for public housing in the face of the most significant federal budget cuts NYCHA has ever faced. Attendees included Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, State Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and City Council Member Ritchie Torres, plus representatives from the offices of Congressman Hakeem Jeffries, Congresswoman Grace Meng, Congressman Jose Serrano, Congressman Adriano Espaillat,

State Senator Jeffrey Klein, the City Council, and the Mayor. Chair Olatoye explained that the outlook for NYCHA is ominous, but could have been even worse had the *NextGeneration NYCHA* strategic plan not been launched in 2015. "Federal cuts will directly impact half a million New Yorkers who call NYCHA home. They will mean slower repairs, less maintenance to our aging buildings, and fewer services for our residents," the Chair said. "This is not business as usual. It is a serious situation and we need all of our allies to stand with us. Some tough choices have to be made and we need everyone's support."

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## NEXTGEN NYCHA CUSTOMER SERVICE: We're Getting It Done!

**Initiative:** "Get It Done"

**Mission:** Between August and December 2016, close out all the work orders related to painting, floor tiles, carpentry, and plumbing at NYCHA that were opened before 2016. Launch projects that promote residents' health and safety and beautify their developments. Budget: \$50 million

### Accomplishments:

- Completed 34,011 work orders for painting, floor tiles, carpentry, and plumbing. Half of these were more than a year old.
- Paved the basements at Patterson and Marcy Houses to eliminate a breeding ground for pests.
- Completed full-scale pest extermination at Patterson, Mitchel, and Bronx River Houses. At Patterson Houses, there's been a 40 percent decrease in pest-related complaints.
- Installed 150 self-service kiosks at property management offices and CCC walk-in centers so residents can complete the annual recertification, apply for a transfer, pay their rent, and more.
- Replaced or repaired roofs and roof tanks at Tompkins and Melrose Houses.
- Replaced or repaired 273 common area doors at 16 developments.
- Upgraded the grounds at Howard Houses, including the entranceway, lobby and elevator floors, and fencing.
- Makeovers of six property management offices.
- Pruned trees at 85 developments.
- Public space painting, grounds repairs, and mailbox replacement are in progress at several developments.

"They're definitely getting it done. According to my neighbor, the workers who painted her apartment were really cooperative and courteous. They came on time, did a wonderful job, and even helped put things back. My neighbor was really happy about that. And the painting of public spaces (the hallways and stairwells) was really necessary. I put out a flyer saying: 'NYCHA is doing a good job sprucing things up – let's do our part in maintaining it!'"

—Margaret Brewer  
Howard Houses resident



Before

Before and after photos of the repaved walkway at Howard Houses.

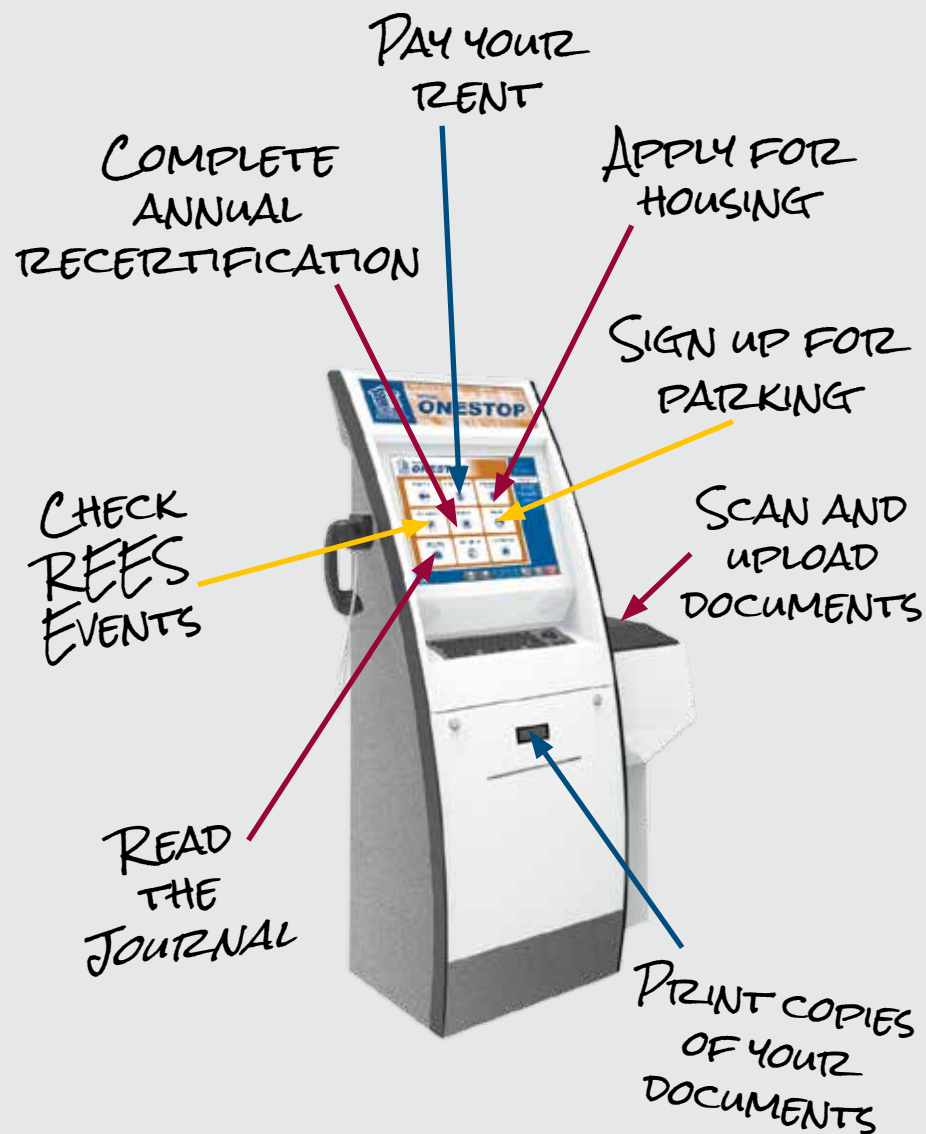


After



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## Brownsville Art Matters



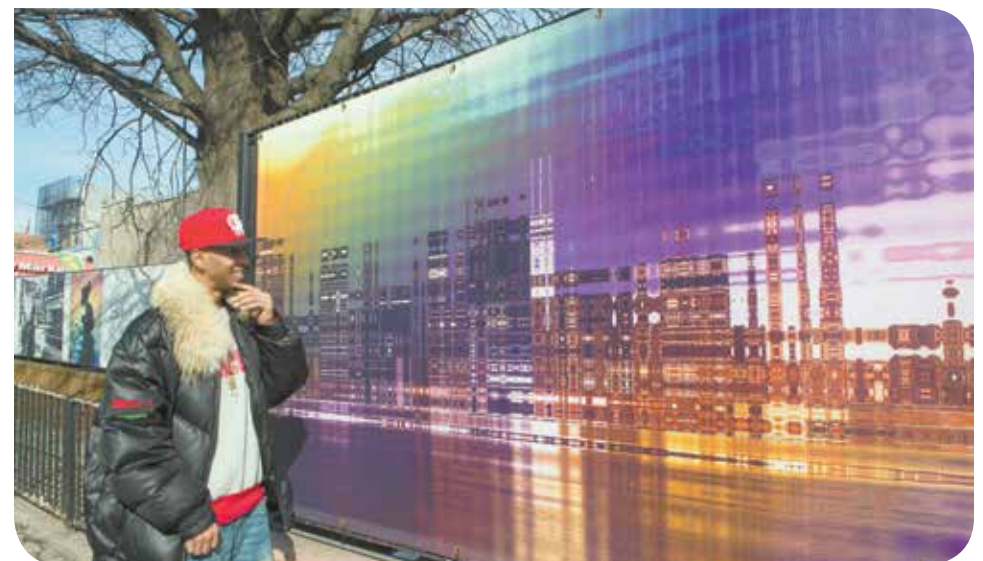
**EVERY DAY, LANGSTON** Hughes Apartments residents and community members are treated to a stunning outdoor art exhibit called "Brownsville Matters," which celebrates the culture and identity of Brownsville through Technicolor paintings and captivating photos, showing beauty that's often overlooked in the neighborhood.

ArtBridge, a non-profit organization that taps emerging artists to help transform urban spaces, put out a call for

artists with a connection to Brownsville. From that call, curators from the Brooklyn Arts Council and the Brooklyn Museum narrowed down the submissions to a number that were voted on by Brownsville residents at a community meeting.

The resulting display includes work by 11 Brooklyn artists: Maria Belford, Ebony Bolt, Cheryl Bowers, Laurent Chevalier, Dominique Davenport, Sophia Dawson, Jazmine Hayes, Kisha Johnson, Tristan Lamour, Christine Stoddard, and Malcolm Williams.

Brownsville Matters is a partnership between ArtBridge, NYCHA, Brownsville Community Justice Center, and the Municipal Art Society of New York and partially supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The exhibition is on display until January 25, 2018, so there's plenty of time to go check out some beauty in Brownsville. For more information about the exhibition, visit <http://art-bridge.org/project/brownsvillematters>.



Langston Hughes Apartments residents and community members don't have to travel far to admire beautiful art; it's right in their neighborhood.

# Workshop Highlights the Ease of Online Annual Recertification

**NYCHA AND VISION** Urbana, a community-based organization on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, hosted an online recertification workshop at the Primitive Christian Church (La Iglesia Primitiva) on February 16. Spearheaded by Reverend Dr. Marc Rivera, pastor of Primitive Christian Church and member of NYCHA's Faith Leaders Advisory Committee, the event provided an opportunity for community organizations to learn how simple NYCHA's online annual recertifi-

cation process is for both residents and employees to complete. Before the online system was created, residents spent hours filling out up to 30 pages of annual recertification documents every year. With the online system, the process is much faster. The event featured remarks from Reverend Rivera and NYCHA Chair & CEO Shola Olatoye. City Council Member Margaret Chin and NYCHA employees helped seniors complete their annual recertification online and by paper. One of



Reverend Marc Rivera helps one of his parishioners at the February 16 online annual recertification event.

## A Conversation with Reverend Dr. Marc Rivera, Pastor of Primitive Christian Church

**REVEREND DR. MARC RIVERA** is the Pastor of Primitive Christian Church (La Iglesia Cristiana Primitiva), which has served the Lower East Side community for 60 years. Reverend Rivera recently joined NYCHA Chair Shola Olatoye's new Faith Leaders Steering Committee. Though born in Puerto Rico, he has lived on the Lower East Side most of his life, including in Smith Houses with his family for about six years. He once worked on Wall Street at IBM, but left to join the church full time, and has been a member for 40 years. Many members of his congregation reside in NYCHA developments.

**What is your role as a member of the committee?**  
Although I am Latino and the constituency that I represent is mainly Latino, my concern is not only for Latinos, it's also to make sure that the poor, disenfranchised, and marginalized are served to the best of our ability. Social justice issues—housing, immigration, poverty, education, care of seniors—have always been a priority for this church. I also want to help the public perception of NYCHA, which always tends to the negative. How can we address that and bring the truth to the congregation? I speak to a group of people every Sunday; how can I let them know that whatever you're hearing in the media may not be true.

**Why did you become involved with the Faith Leaders Committee?**  
This group of clergy leaders wants to

bring in the voices of our communities to open discussions about NYCHA—and hopefully we'll be able to move NYCHA forward. No one has the pulse of the community more, in my opinion, than the faith community—not just churches, but synagogues, temples, and mosques. We interact with our communities on a daily basis; we hear their concerns, worries, and their celebrations. Now, that doesn't mean that we're going to change the agenda or the goals or the direction of NYCHA, but we'll certainly bring a fresh insight to the conversation, which I think is key. And we're able to bring information back to our constituencies.

**What did you think of the first meeting?**  
For me it was a breath of fresh air because I was expecting a cold, bureaucratic, agenda-driven discussion, and yet it turned out to be a dialogue, a conversation. I sensed genuine concern for the tenants of NYCHA and how NYCHA is perceived through the media. What I saw in the first meeting was open and genuine discussion of the reality of NYCHA. I think this type of communication is critical. I don't always like the truth, but it helps provide context and then you'll be able to know how to move forward. That's why I think the communications piece is critical, and it has to be a dialogue, not one way down with those in power speaking down. People move better with the truth, the public can see through smoke and mirrors.

NYCHA's Digital Vans was also at the event to provide computers and assistance. Organizations in attendance included Grand Street Settlement, Henry Street Settlement, Good Old Lower East Side, and LES Power Partnership. Attendees also heard about NYCHA's other digital

initiatives, including the MyNYCHA app, the NYCHA Self-Service Portal, and the new self-service kiosks in every property management office—where residents can pay their rent, complete their online recertification, and even browse job opportunities.



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# A Human Rights Hero Who Calls Butler Houses Home

**He helped convict the dictator who imprisoned and tortured him**

**SOULEYMANE GUENGUENG** was an accountant in his homeland of Chad who was imprisoned unjustly by the president, Hissène Habré. He spent more than two years in jail, suffering torture and abuse. After his release in 1990, Mr. Guengueng gathered testimony from other survivors and the



Souleymane Guengueng with his family in their Butler Houses home.



relatives of victims over the course of many years. This evidence helped bring the ruthless dictator to justice: Mr. Habré was sentenced to life in prison in 2016 for the murder and inhuman treatment of about 40,000 people. Mr. Guengueng immigrated to the United States a decade ago.

***The records you collected on the abuse and murder of more than 700 people were used to convict former dictator Hissène Habré of these horrible crimes. Do you feel like a hero?***

I hear others say I'm a hero, but I don't believe it. I'm just a citizen. I couldn't accept that treatment as a person or citizen. According to my faith in God, we are all born heroes. God gave me the mission to come out of this alive and be a voice for others, and that's why I'm here. Whatever the obstacles, it's impossible to contain the march of people trying to fight for truth. God gave them the strength to fight against it, and no one can defeat that.

***Mr. Habré's conviction was a long time***



Souleymane Guengueng with the book he wrote describing the abuse and murder of more than 700 people, which helped bring Chadian dictator Hissène Habré to justice.

***coming. What gave you the strength to keep fighting for justice?***

My father taught me to be strong, to never be afraid. I am the type of person who wants to help and empower everyone. When I was in prison, in darkness, people were suffering and would die in my arms. It was that pain and suffering that motivated me to overcome my own pain and stay strong to tell the world what happened. I brought back evidence to the families of the people who didn't know what happened, because they deserved closure, they had a right to know the truth and have it put out there.

***How did it feel to leave your homeland and immigrate to America?***

It was an obligation to leave Chad and continue this fight. My family and I needed to be safe. It was hard—I was without my family, my wife and children, for many years. And when my family arrived, it was hard for us to afford an apartment, a



place to live. We rented an apartment in Jamaica, Queens, but it was very expensive, \$2,000 a month. We were evicted because we couldn't afford it. We had to live in a shelter for three years—six people in one room. In March 2016, we got this apartment [at Butler Houses], and it's a blessing. It was like coming to paradise, for my whole family. It was so incredible, so much better.

I still continue to help people, survivors of torture and immigrants from French-speaking African countries. I'm like a mentor, helping them adjust to life in America. I'm excited to continue helping people.

***Any words of wisdom that you live by?***

You can mold your life as a baker makes bread. You can always change it and mold it to how you want it, good or bad, big or small, however you like. Also, we must learn from experience and get the most out of the bad that happens to us.

## NEW RESIDENT BOARD MEMBERS ADD THEIR VOICES TO NYCHA LEADERSHIP

**MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO**

recently appointed Jacqueline Arroyo and Jacqueline Young and reappointed Victor A. González to serve as resident members of the NYCHA Board of Directors.

Resident members attend monthly board meetings along with Chair Shola Olatoye, General Manager Michael Kelly, other appointed board members, and NYCHA leadership. At these meetings, they vote on contracts, resolutions, policies, rules and regulations, and other administrative matters. They also serve as representatives of the Authority at events, including press conferences and Family Days.

"The voices of NYCHA community members are central to our mission and inform all of our work. These individu-



**Victor A. González**

als bring years of service as community leaders and their personal experiences to help us improve quality of life for all our residents," said Chair Olatoye. "Now more than ever, resident input is critical as we continue to implement

*NextGeneration NYCHA*, our long-term strategic plan to create safe, clean, and connected public housing."

**Victor A. González** is serving his third term on the NYCHA board. A public housing resident for more than 50 years, Mr. González lives in Wise Towers and was the former president of the resident association. He has worked extensively with advocacy groups, organizing workshop meet-



**Jacqueline Young**

ings for residents and supporting activities that impact Wise Towers' residents and the surrounding community. As a NYCHA board member, Mr. González has worked to streamline maintenance requests for apartment repairs and improve family

services for formerly homeless residents and senior citizens.

**Jacqueline Young**, a 30-year public housing resident currently residing at Lenox Road Houses, raised two daughters as a single mother. She served as president of the resident association from December 2014 until January 2017. Ms. Young has worked on behalf of formerly homeless and low-income individuals



**Jacqueline Arroyo**

for the past 20 years at three not-for-profit agencies and is currently the Low-Income Housing Compliance Manager at Comunilife, a community-based health and housing service provider.

**Jacqueline Arroyo**, a resident of Louis Armstrong Houses, regularly attends meetings and town halls on initiatives like the Rental Assis-

tance Demonstration and *NextGeneration NYCHA*. While raising two children, Arroyo pursued a career in City service, working for 15 years for two City agencies. She is currently employed in the New York City Department of Education as a supervisor in the Office of the Auditor General, and has also worked at high schools in the South Bronx, Williamsburg, and Lower Manhattan.



# #NYCHAWomenWork



**IN CELEBRATION OF** Women's History month, NYCHA launched #nychawomenwork, a photo campaign to celebrate the Authority's female employees. Employees were asked to send in photos with signs that answered the question, "Why do you do what you do at NYCHA?" There were many great answers, including from LaGuardia Houses Caretakers Celine DeHoyos, a NYCHA employee since 2008 and a resident of Gompers Houses, and Sylvia Carattini, a NYCHA employee since 2000 and a resident of Johnson Houses (top left). DeHoyos wrote, "I love my work every day" and Carattini wrote, "Keeping NYCHA clean and free of garbage, preparing apartments for rentals, and a love for NYCHA."

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# NOTICE

## New York City Housing Authority Significant Amendment to the Agency Plan for FY 2017

**T**HE PUBLIC IS advised that the *Significant Amendment to the FY 2017 Agency Annual Plan* will be available for public inspection at NYCHA's principal office, located at 250 Broadway, New York, NY, starting March 17, 2017, between the hours of 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please call **212-306-3701** to make an appointment to review the *Significant Amendment to the FY 2017 Agency Annual Plan* and supporting documents. The *Significant Amendment to the FY 2017 Agency Annual Plan* will also be available at the following locations:

- On NYCHA's webpage, <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/about/annual-plan-financial-information.page>
- At the management office of each NYCHA public housing development during regular business hours.
- At the community centers/borough offices listed below during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Manhattanville Senior Center**  
530 West 133rd Street  
New York, New York

**Taft Senior Center**  
1365 5th Avenue  
New York, New York

**Sedgwick Community Center**  
1553 University Avenue  
Bronx, New York

**Soundview Community Center**  
1674 Seward Avenue  
Bronx, New York

**Queens Community Operations  
Borough Office**  
70-30 Parsons Boulevard  
Flushing, New York

**Staten Island Community Operations  
Borough Office**  
126 Lamport Avenue  
Staten Island, New York

**Brownsville Senior Center**  
528 Mother Gaston Boulevard  
Brooklyn, New York

## Public Comment

The public is invited to comment on the *Significant Amendment to the FY 2017 Agency Annual Plan* at a public hearing to be held on **May 2, 2017**, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at:

**Borough of Manhattan Community College**  
199 Chambers Street  
New York, New York 10007

*The location listed above is both handicapped accessible and can be reached using public transportation. For transportation information, go to <http://tripplanner.mta.info> or call the MTA/NYC Transit Travel Information Line at **718-330-1234**.*

Written comments regarding the *Significant Amendment to the FY 2017 Agency Annual Plan* are encouraged. To be considered, **submissions must be received via United States Postal Service mail or fax no later than May 2, 2017**. Faxed submissions will be accepted at **212-306-7905**. Comments may be sent to the following address and may also be emailed to [annualplancomments@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:annualplancomments@nycha.nyc.gov).

**Public Housing Agency Plan Comments**  
Church Street Station  
P.O. Box 3422  
New York, New York 10008-3422

Bill de Blasio, Mayor

Shola Olatoye, Chair and Chief Executive Officer



# Behind the Scenes: CHECKING OUT SANDY RECOVERY WORK AT OCEAN BAY-OCEANSIDE



On March 22, NYCHA staff gave NY1 a tour of Ocean Bay-Oceanside in the Rockaways to show how much progress has been made on Sandy recovery work at the development. Ocean Bay-Oceanside, home to more than 400 families, was hard hit by Superstorm Sandy and is one of more than 30 developments the Authority plans to build back stronger as part of its Sandy Recovery to Resiliency Program.

The tour included a visit to one of the development's roofs; roofs of all seven buildings that make up Ocean Bay-Oceanside were replaced and now have steel dunnage that will hold stand-by generators to provide full back-up power. The generators will arrive in June for

installation. In addition to new roofs, the development is receiving new electrical, mechanical, and plumbing systems that were damaged in the storm, new site lighting, flood proofing, upgraded playgrounds, as well as a full renovation of its senior center. NYCHA expects to complete the project at Ocean Bay-Oceanside by the end of the year.

Recovery work at Ocean Bay-Oceanside is funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In 2015, NYCHA received almost \$3 billion in FEMA funding—the largest single FEMA grant to be awarded in history.

For updates about NYCHA's Sandy Recovery to Resiliency work, visit [on.nyc.gov/nycha-sandy](http://on.nyc.gov/nycha-sandy).

## FARM IN A BOX (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

*Journal* spoke with Philpott to learn more about his farm and the importance of local foods.

### Why are hydroponic farms and local foods important?

Having more local food can help make a change to the food system we currently use. One thing we need to change is bringing produce from California and Florida and other faraway places to our stores. Buying locally grown vegetables and fruit will diminish our already high carbon footprint and grow more jobs in urban agriculture. One of the best things about hydroponic systems is their minimal

environmental impact: They can be indoors like my farm and grow crops all year-round, even if the season outside is not right for it.

### What have you learned being an entrepreneur with Square Roots?

We learn so much about sales, profit, customers, marketing, and working in hydroponic systems, but the thing that will stick with me the most is to sell my story, not just the produce I am selling.

### What are your goals with your farm?

I want to bring more awareness around this idea of local food, urban farming, and agriculture. It's not just knowing

# Green City Force Wins National Award for NYCHA Urban Farms Projects

**"A model for success that can be replicated across the country"**

**G**REEN CITY FORCE (GCF) transforms underused areas at NYCHA developments into lush green spaces full of fruit and vegetables, bringing beauty, enhancing the environment, and improving residents' health.

Last year, GCF Urban Farm Corps Members built and maintained three new farms at NYCHA at Bay View, Howard, and Wagner Houses while also helping to maintain the farm at Red Hook Houses. For their urban farming efforts, GCF was named 2017 Project of the Year by The Corps Network at its annual conference in Washington, DC, in February.

The Corps Network supports over 130 service and conservation corps

programs offering job training and academic programs to young people across the nation. GCF works with NYCHA residents ages 18 to 24 on full-time service projects and provides them with education on sustainability and green technologies, a stipend, free transportation, assistance with job and college placement, and more.

New York Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, who presented the award, said, "As our nation—and our planet—work to counteract and slow climate change, we need more young people pursuing jobs in renewable energy and environmental sustainability. I believe Green City Force provides a model for success—that can and should be replicated around the country."

Urban Farms at NYCHA is part of Building Healthy Communities, a program to improve health outcomes in 12 neighborhoods in New York City.



A Green City Force Corps Member waters vegetables at Bay View Houses Farm in Brooklyn.



Paul's farm is located in one of these 320-square-foot shipping containers located in a parking lot near Marcy Houses in Brooklyn.

where the food comes from but who is growing your food and how it's grown. I plan on starting memberships to my farm. All members will have weekly harvests to pick up or have delivered to their doors. No matter which they choose, the

produce will go from my hands to theirs. They will know the farmer that put his time and love into their fresh produce. I would also like to work with a culinary school to help students get a full understanding of the food they're making.



# Cut the Carbon

## NYCHA's energy reduction efforts will make NYC cleaner, greener & create jobs

**NYCHA DOESN'T SHY** away from challenges—and the NYC Carbon Challenge is no exception. The Authority announced in February that it pledges to reduce its buildings' greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent over the next 10 years as part of the City's Carbon Challenge. This is about the same as taking 70,000 cars off the road for a year, improving air quality for all New Yorkers. NYCHA is the largest organization to participate in the Challenge, joining 20 of the City's top residential property managers, owners, and developers.

"As the nation's largest housing authority and residential landlord, we

can have a major impact on curbing the effects of climate change, which affects us all," remarked Chair and CEO Shola Olatoye. "We are doing our part to not only meet the City's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals but to also protect both health and quality of life for this and the next generation of New Yorkers."

This work—which will create Section 3 jobs—is already underway. NYCHA is investing \$300 million to upgrade heating, hot water, interior and exterior lighting, and ventilation systems in buildings across the City. For example, NYCHA is modernizing heating systems so that they respond to indoor temperatures instead of only outdoor temperatures—a key way to eliminate overheating, cut energy usage, and meet the carbon reduction goal.

"Since the release of NYCHA's *Sustainability Agenda* last April, we have been working closely with sister agencies and industry leaders to launch an ambitious energy-efficiency program," said Bomee Jung, NYCHA's Vice President of Energy and Sustainability. "These upgrades provide brighter lighting and more comfortable and reliable heating, and also help lessen the future impacts of climate change."

Learn more at [www.nyc.gov/carbonchallenges](http://www.nyc.gov/carbonchallenges).



A recently installed wireless energy module, which automatically monitors the heat in apartments and provides residents with consistent, comfortable temperatures.



## NYC Parks 2017 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Double Dutch Tournament

### Come join us for a FREE Double Dutch Tournament

Participants are welcome to register as a team or unattached for this competition. Divisions include beginners, intermediate and advanced. Teams and individuals will be judged in the categories of compulsory, speed and freestyle, singles, and doubles.

For individuals without a team, pairings will be chosen at 10:30 a.m.



### April 29, 2017

Check in begins at 9:30 a.m.  
Competition begins at 11:00 a.m.

Sorrentino Recreation Center  
18-48 Cornaga Ave.  
Far Rockaway, New York 11691  
(718) 471 - 4818

For more information and to register, please contact Stanley Brown or Monet Davis at (718) 471 - 4818.

Contact (212) 360-1430 or [accessibility@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibility@parks.nyc.gov) for more information regarding accessibility. Requests for special accommodations should be made by April 26, 2017.

# Turning a Rainy Day into a Gorgeous Garden

## Rainwater collection supports landscaping as it protects sewer systems

**T**HE BRONX'S EDENWALD Houses is getting a little greener, thanks to a \$10.6 million project to improve drainage there. As part of its "Green Infrastructure Program," the City's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is building a system to divert rainwater from the sewer system and the nearby Hutchinson River, so it can be absorbed into the ground. Elements of this new system include rain gardens on the grounds that allow water to be absorbed, rain collection systems on rooftops, and special pavement in courtyards, pedestrian areas, and parking lots.

"We want all our communities to withstand the challenges of climate change," NYCHA General Manager Michael Kelly said about the project. "Working hand-in-hand with partner agencies like DEP, we are adding 'green' components to our developments that will improve quality of life for residents and the surrounding community."

The new system will capture about 10 million gallons of stormwater each year, reducing sewer backups, easing pressure on the sewer system during heavy rain, and decreasing sewer overflows into the Hutchinson River. This rainwater will



An illustration of pavement and a rain garden at Edenwald Houses that allow water to be absorbed into the ground.

also irrigate landscaping (supporting the growth of healthier plants that beautify the grounds, provide more shade in the summer, and enhance air quality). The improvements are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

"The addition of these new sustain-

able drainage systems is a smart and environmentally sound investment," said State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie. "These upgrades protect New York City's waterways, particularly the Hutchinson River, and create more welcoming urban spaces."



# Wheels Keep Turning

## From Citi Bike cyclist to bike share champion

**W**HEN OMAR ARIAS, 22, first heard about Citi Bike's discounted membership for NYCHA residents, he knew it was a great deal he didn't want to pass up. NYCHA residents 16 years and older can join Citi Bike for just \$5 a month and get unlimited rides all year. What he didn't know was that his enthusiasm would lead to a new role with Citi Bike: Community Champion.

"When I signed up, I also got my friend to sign up, too," said Arias, who's lived in King Towers his entire life. "We used the bikes last summer to travel through Central Park, to go check out new places to eat and to hang out. It became our transportation option because we didn't want to pay for the subway anymore."

Community Champions are NYCHA residents who help with outreach at NYCHA developments on the benefits of joining Citi Bike. Omar and three other young residents from Marcy and Amsterdam Houses were the first group of Champions. In return for their work, they received free Citi Bike memberships and incentives for each new bike share member they enrolled.

Citi Bike worked with community-based organization Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation to hire, train, and manage the first group of Champions. Restoration received part of a

national grant from Better Bike Share Partnership to increase bike share membership among people of color and in low-income communities.

"We partnered with Citi Bike and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to change the perception of bike riding and bike sharing and improve health among low-income people in Brooklyn," said Tracey Cappers, Executive Vice President of Programs/Organizational Development at Restoration. "The best people to sell the effort to the community are people from the community, people who are a part of the neighborhoods we are trying to reach."

As a Champion, Omar attended resident association meetings and handed out free day passes, talked about Citi Bike at a Family Day in East Harlem and a block party on the Lower East Side, and led a community bike ride. He also spoke at a press conference about Citi Bike with City Council members.

"Bike sharing is easy and fun; you can get exercise; you can travel around the City and sight-see, and it's a more independent transportation option because you don't have to wait for a bus or a train to come, you can just hop on and ride. If you think about the MTA fare and the cost of a gym membership, this is a way more affordable option. This is something I believe in," he said.

"Citi Bike is deeply committed to serving all New Yorkers," said Anne Krassner, Citi Bike's education and outreach manager. "We are excited to build on the Champion program this year and use the expertise of NYCHA residents to recruit more of their neighbors to this affordable, healthy way to get around."

This year, Citi and Motivate, operators of the Citi Bike program, will be recruiting citywide for Public Housing Champions. If you are interested, call **347-916-0719** or email **marketing@citibikenyc.com**. NYCHA residents interested in purchasing a Citi Bike membership for \$5 a month can visit **www.citibikenyc.com/pricing/nycha**.



Omar Arias out exploring the City on Citi Bike.

## STOP HATE CRIMES

**HATE CRIMES** are escalating in New York. The City and the State are jointly offering a \$20,000 reward for any information leading to an arrest and conviction for a hate crime. To report bias or a discrimination complaint, call the tip hotline at **888-392-3644**, or NYPD Crime Stoppers at **1-800-577-TIPS**, or text "HATE" to 81336.

# Ready for the Limelight

## This year's Lee Strasberg Scholarship winners are cool, confident, and talented.



From left to right: Avondre Beverley, Deidra Ephraim, and Tyanna Patten.

**THEY SAID** they were nervous, but when this year's winners of the 34th Annual Lee Strasberg NYCHA Scholarship Competition for Actors and Actresses took to the stage, they commanded the room and transported the audience to other worlds. Each winner will receive a full scholarship to the Lee Strasberg Theater Institute's prestigious 12-week "method acting" program. Some of the Institute's graduates include John Leguizamo, Al Pacino, Sidney Poitier, Jesse L. Martin, James Baldwin, and Scarlett Johansson.

### ADULT CATEGORY: Deidra Ephraim, 36

*Seth Low Houses*  
Stay-at-home mother of three children  
Performance: "Sabotage," a monologue she wrote, and "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys  
**Favorite Actors:** Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, and Whoopi Goldberg  
"I'm stunned and shocked. This is a big step. I'm trying to take this to the highest

level. I put my dreams on hold 10 years ago because I got married, had children, lost my mother, and got divorced. This is growth; I'm not who I was 10 years ago and I am loving this journey."

### TEEN CATEGORY: Tyanna Patten, 13

*Marcy Houses*  
Seventh grader  
**Performance:** A monologue she wrote, Adele's "Someone Like You," and a dance  
**Favorite Actor:** Leonardo DiCaprio  
"It felt very good to win, but even if I didn't win I knew I did the best I could. All the people who auditioned were really great."

### YOUTH CATEGORY: Avondre Beverley, 11

*Riis Houses*  
Sixth grader  
Performed a monologue from "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"  
**Favorite Actor:** Samuel L. Jackson  
"Winning the scholarship was very surprising and exciting!"

### EXCERPT FROM SABOTAGE:

"I thought after being divorced for four years I was ready for a relationship. Something new and real! I told myself this time things are gonna be so different. After dating only three months and he asked me to be his lady, things started to change for me. I started thinking all kinds of thoughts, checking his phone whenever he left the room! Maybe I wasn't ready for a relationship."  
—Deidra M. Ephraim



# Meet Your Zone Coordinators

**NYCHA REES ZONE** Coordinators are your personal guides to achieving your economic dreams. They partner with resident leaders and local organizations to connect residents to jobs and job training, adult education, financial empowerment, and business development services close to home. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, you can find your Zone Coordinators at the REES office at 787 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, they're out and about in their zones visiting residents and partner programs.

Here's what you should know about Brooklyn Zone Coordinators Rayford Hooks, Kisha Jackson, Evelyn Melendez, and Micah Owino.



**Rayford Hooks, Brownsville and East New York/Zone 7** (Brownsville, Cypress Hills, Howard, Linden, Pink, Tilden, Van Dyke, and Woodson Houses, Hughes Apartments, Saratoga Village, and more.)

**He's been a NYCHA employee for 15 years and a Zone Coordinator for three years.**

Rayford has worked at senior centers, coordinated tree planting for the Million Trees Initiative on NYCHA properties, and helped homeless veterans transition to independent living in the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program.

**He lives and works on the border of East New York/Brownsville:** "I work within my own community. I see residents at BJ's, at the laundry, at the post office—I know I have a responsibility and impact not only the NYCHA community but also my neighbors."

**Zone partners include:** Jobs-Plus, NPower, Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, Brooklyn Public Library, Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizen's Council, CUNY's Green Maintenance for Buildings Program, SUNY's Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center, Workforce1, Brownsville Partnership-Community Solutions, and Central Brooklyn Economic Corporation.

**His favorite partner:** "Green City Force. Eighteen to 24 is a critical age. Some people haven't finished school, are out of school, out of work, have become parents, or have challenges at home. I like that GCF is geared toward building up the individual and exposes young people to things they'd never heard of before. They are given the resources to sustain, such as a stipend, a uniform, personal development, certifications, education, and they're AmeriCorps members. I've seen young people's lives personally transform because of GCF."

**What he loves about his job:** "I'm happy to be the person that can build a

bridge, to be a wonderful connector. As a Zone Coordinator you have the opportunity to fill in missing pieces for residents and put opportunities in front of them, to have conversations that will shape their decision making."



**Kisha Jackson, Downtown Brooklyn/Zone 6** (Albany, Farragut, Gowanus, Kingsborough, Red Hook East, and Red Hook West Houses, Atlantic Terminal, Warren Street, Wyckoff Gardens, and more.)

**She's been a Zone Coordinator for three years, though she's worked for NYCHA for 21 years.** You may recognize her as a former community center director at Atlantic Terminal, Farragut, Independence, and Ingersoll. She also grew up in Ingersoll Houses, and both her parents were born and raised in Whitman Houses.

**Zone partners include:** The HOPE Program, Brooklyn Workforce Innovations, Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, Public Housing Communities, Project Home, Impact Brooklyn, Brooklyn Navy Yard, and SUNY's Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center.

**Resident success story:** "I connected a young man to REES for training and employment opportunities but he wasn't successful. As a REES staff member, I re-introduced him to opportunities and this time he was successful and is now a full-time NYCHA employee."

**She loves working with the Hope Program because** "They are an employment training program for opportunities in the retail area and have strong outcomes in the workforce development industry. Their employer-driven approach helps build more sustainable lives and communities by training people for stable jobs with room for advancement. From the time a student enrolls in the program there are high expectations in a very professional environment."

**She wants residents to remember:** "Sometimes you may get discouraged, but we're here to connect you to opportunities and help you become more self-sufficient."



**Evelyn Melendez, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Williamsburg, and Bushwick/Zone 5** (Armstrong, Brevoort, Bushwick, Cooper Park, Hylan, Lafayette, Marcy, Tompkins, and Williamsburg Houses, Borinquen Plaza, Hope Gardens, Independence Towers, Palmetto Gardens, Stuyvesant Gardens, Williams Plaza, and more.)

**She's got a long history as a NYCHA employee.** Evelyn was a community center director for 14 years prior to becoming a Zone Coordinator in 2013. No matter the position, her job has always been to "assist residents, families, and communities!"

**...and as a NYCHA resident.** She lived in LaGuardia Houses for nine years. Her daughter, Evelyn Santos, currently lives at LaGuardia and was featured in the August/September 2016 issue of *The NYCHA Journal* for her in-home child care services.

**Zone partners include:** Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, Brooklyn Cooperative, St. Nicks Alliance, Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, and Jobs-Plus.

**Her favorite partner organization:** "St. Nick's Alliance, because they meet residents at their level of need. They support residents to accomplish what they want to do, even if there are barriers, to provide residents with what they need to accomplish their goals, such as Metro-Cards and child care. They're passionate, family-oriented, and really want to help each individual."

**The best thing about her job?** "I love that I'm able to change people's lives. I interact with different organizations and find out about services they have for the residents at no cost. I really enjoy what I do. If I impact one person, that's great because it trickles down to another person and that's the ripple effect."



**Micah Owino, East Brooklyn and Coney Island/Zone 8** (Coney Island Houses, Haber Houses, Marlboro Houses, O'Dwyer Gardens, Surfside Gardens, and more.)

**He's a new Zone Coordinator with the newest zone.** Micah joined REES almost a year and a half ago to launch the zone. Prior to NYCHA he worked for the City's Human Resources Administration, where he helped launch pop-up IDNYC locations to make the ID card more accessible to neighborhoods across the City.

**This zone works unofficially with numerous partners:** The HOPE Program, St. Nicks Alliance, Chase, Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, and Workforce1 on Coney Island. "Essentially, we've been utilizing borough-wide and citywide partners for services."

**Favorite program:** NPower, "an organization that serves 17-to 24-year-olds and promotes youth who are into technology and are trying to break into that industry. There were two residents who got into the program and were super excited. We tracked the trajectory, and with this program they can jump right into careers in technology. I look forward to working with them on a larger scale in the future."

**From NextGeneration NYCHA to NextGen Careers:** "We need to expand our partnerships to the future—let's talk about next generation careers for youth as well. Technology is the future."

**Success story:** O'Dwyer Gardens resident Nsowaa Stewart participated in the NYCHA Resident Training Academy and started her own MWBE business; she now consults and contracts for grants. "I think her story is one of the reasons why we do this work."

**What he loves about being a Zone Coordinator:** "I see myself as closing communication gaps, as the conduit for getting information out to residents, stakeholders, and elected officials, and I really enjoy that piece."



# STEAM is FUNdamental

**A** GROUP OF FOURTH graders from Todt Hill are learning how to build their own skate park. Although it's a scale model, the kids learn the concepts needed to construct a full-size version themselves, thanks to their after school program which uses a STEAM curriculum: **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **A**rchitecture/arts, and **M**ath. By studying objects found in their communities, such as buildings, bridges, and parks, students learn how these disciplines are part of their everyday lives.

The program is run by the Salvadori Center, a non-profit organization that has taught STEAM in New York City for the past 40 years. A grant from the Pinkerton Foundation is funding three 12-week after school programs for third to eighth graders on Staten Island at JCC Cornerstone (serving Richmond Terrace), UAU South Beach Cornerstone (serving South Beach residents), and JCC Cornerstone (serving Todt Hill). The Salvadori Center hopes to expand the program to more NYCHA sites in the future.

At all three centers, the children are working on skate parks, exploring concepts such as shape and form, force and energy, inclines, and the construction materials used to build skate parks. For their final project, they will design a three-dimensional scale model of a

skate park. Last fall, the kids built six-foot models of bridges using Popsicle sticks and paper clips.

"This isn't about reading a textbook or listening to a teacher lecture; students learn by doing. They build projects with their hands, discuss ideas, and develop creative solutions to tough problems," Kenneth Jones, Executive Director of the Salvadori Center, said. "NYCHA students are great! They are engaged and interested. And our studies show that the program is making a positive impact on the students' self confidence in their ability to be successful with math and science as well as their interest in pursuing STEAM careers."

And what do the new skate park experts have to say about the program?

Makaylah Campbell, 10, from Todt Hill: "I love science and math. This program wants me to learn even more. My favorite part with skate parks is that we will get to build one ourselves. I would love to do this program every day if I could, because it inspires me so much."

U'lanii McDonald, 9, from Todt Hill: "This program I think is really special. Some people in this world don't get this program so I make sure to get here every time. I also like that I get to work with other people to either help them or explain what they have to do. With



Todt Hill students explore the components of a skate ramp with Salvadori Educator Emiliano Maghallighen, known to the kids as "Mr. M."

the skate park, I like to see how much force at different angles you can have on a skate ramp. I like this program because it teaches us a lot of things about engineering."

Jessie Zhang, 10, Todt Hill: "The best thing about this class is that you can build stuff. Last time, we built a bridge out of paper, Popsicle sticks, and a hot glue gun."

## With Resident Input, Reimagining Green Space at Wald Houses

**AT A COMMUNITY DESIGN TEAM MEETING** on February 22, Active Design Fellow Emmanuel Oni (left) and Community Organizing Fellow/Lillian Wald Houses resident Destiny Mata (middle) discuss ideas for uses of a space on Avenue D in the Lower East Side. The Community Design Team is a part of the project *Opening The Edge*, a partnership between the Design Trust for Public Space and NYCHA to work with residents on the design of a lively new green space at Lillian Wald Houses. Design Trust is a non-profit committed to how design can impact public spaces in NYC.



# Improving Resident Association Elections

**A**S WE BEGIN to grapple with the most dire budget cuts in the history of the Authority, it is more important than ever that NYCHA residents and resident associations take an active role in helping to make and keep NYCHA safe, clean, and connected. As we begin to grapple with the most dire budget cuts in the history of the Authority, it is more important than ever that residents take an active role in helping to make and keep NYCHA safe, clean, and connected.

NYCHA resident associations are democratically elected organizations that work to improve quality of life in your housing development and the broader community. Resident associations are encouraged by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and can advise housing authorities on matters ranging from maintenance to resident services.

Developments generally have an association led by a five-member Executive Board featuring a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and sergeant-at-arms. Additionally, residents are represented at one of nine regional RA organizations across the five boroughs and at the Citywide Council of RA presidents. Collectively, these resident organizations serve as a powerful voice for residents.

## What's new?

Based on feedback from listening sessions with RA members, NYCHA crafted a number of new reforms to better support RA leadership.

### • Online trainings:

Resident associations are required to hold elections at least once every three years, based on their bylaws. RAs that have not held elections in the past three years will not maintain recognition from NYCHA. NYCHA is launching online trainings for current RA boards this spring to help RAs meet all of their requirements and develop the tools necessary to manage elections. The trainings will help RAs meet all of their requirements and develop the tools necessary to manage elections.

### • New tenant participation funds process:

NYCHA has decentralized control of the funds and is piloting the use of a credit card to access the funds with 50 RAs. For many years, these funds (provided by HUD to support RA activities) were complicated to access and difficult to use.

### • New Resident Associations:

NYCHA created an awareness campaign to identify and encourage new leadership at developments without an active association. Currently, 250 of NYCHA's 326 developments have resident associations. More than 50 new resident associations have formed since May 2015.

The Authority plans to sponsor a NYCHA election day across the City this fall, when every NYCHA development that needs to hold an election sends residents to the polls to elect new leadership. Establishing or joining a resident association is one of the most effective ways to contribute to your community. To find out how you can join, email [resident.engagement@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:resident.engagement@nycha.nyc.gov) to learn more about how to get started.



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## NYCHA CHAIR ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP TO PRESERVE PUBLIC HOUSING (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Rental Assistance Demonstration) have been a lifeline for many PHAs, including New York City, as a long-term, public-private solution to address unmet capital needs and to preserve affordable units.

Even with the success of RAD and other financial tools, we're going to need more from Washington. The quality and condition of our housing stock has dramatically declined, impacting the health and well-being of public housing residents across the country, from rural and Indian housing in Wisconsin to WWII-era housing in North Carolina. We know poor housing conditions contribute to poor health outcomes, especially among vulnerable populations, such as children, seniors, and the disabled. This is simply unacceptable. Housing, like medicine, should "do no harm."

That's why I'm proud to announce a new collaboration between the New York City Housing Authority and NAHRO. In bringing together a diverse coalition across sectors, such as labor, construction, business,

and health, and with PHAs from across the country, we hope to send a powerful message to Capitol Hill and the administration: Public housing infrastructure is crucial to the health of 2.6 million Americans. Our efforts will be focused on 1) investing in capital and health investments while pushing hard against any and all attempts to gut public housing with capital and operations cuts; and 2) collaborating with new and unlikely voices to target and move legislation and opportunities for targeted investments, such as a potential infrastructure bill.

Perhaps in our favor is a Secretary with a career in medicine. There is no one better positioned than Secretary Carson to not only understand the health impacts of deteriorating housing but to actually do something about it.

Margaret Mead said never doubt the ability of a small, thoughtful group to bring about change. Well, we represent a combined 2.6 million Americans, so I expect big things!



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# Bronx Residents CAN!

**MELROSE HOUSES RESIDENT**  
Darlene Jones has many financial goals, but developing a clear path towards achieving them while managing her day-to-day financial responsibilities was a challenge. By signing up for Residents CAN! (Creating Assets and Networking), Ms. Jones is now on her way to creating an emergency fund, buying a car, and traveling in the near future.

Residents CAN! is part of Urban Upbound's Financial Fitness Program, a partner of NYCHA's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES). Launched last November for Bronx residents at Jackson Houses, Melrose Houses, and Morrisania Air Rights, the program expanded to Davidson Houses, Highbridge Gardens, and Parkside Houses in March 2017. Residents learn budgeting techniques, how to improve their credit, and manage debt; open savings accounts; and establish savings plans.

"We've had residents realize they could be saving hundreds of dollars a month once they enroll in the program," said Dan Ping He, Community Engagement Manager at Urban Upbound. "We work with residents on all different

tracks with different financial goals: One resident saved \$400 in a month; another has been saving \$50 a week since enrolling in the program. There are small, but important, gains happening here."

Financial coaches tailor the program to meet each resident's specific needs. For instance, there's a crisis track for residents with immediate needs such as SNAP (food stamps) or help with debt collection; a financial stability track for residents who may be seeking additional employment or who want to open a savings account; and a financial security track for residents who are interested in investing, retirement plans, or owning a home.

"My counselor has me write down all my expenses for the month so I can see how I'm overspending," Ms. Jones said. "It's helpful, encouraging, and motivating and keeps you consistent. I have recommended the program to other residents. I think if we can get people to start thinking differently about money then they can see a different future for themselves."

Through Residents CAN! Ms. Jones opened a savings account with EARN, a Residents CAN! partner. If she saves \$20 a month for six months, EARN deposits an extra \$10 in her account. This is Ms.

Jones' favorite benefit of the program: "I'm excited that someone is giving me money just to save in my own account."

"We're really excited about this program and its flexibility to meet people where they are," said Tischelle George, Assistant Director of REES'

**"I think this program can be influential within our neighborhood. When you help people have a better life by showing them how to take care of themselves and their families, in doing so you uplift the community, and as a whole we all grow."**

*Norman McGill, Highbridge Gardens Resident Association President*

Asset Building and Financial Literacy unit. "We've been referring residents to one-on-one financial counseling at the City's Financial Empowerment

Centers, but this is another way to reach residents. Urban Upbound counselors are on the ground helping people with financial matters at their developments. They can also have appointments over the phone and using text messaging."

Residents CAN! works heavily in partnership with resident associations. Norman McGill, president of the resident association at Highbridge Gardens, thinks the program is an excellent service to residents and the community. "This program is beneficial for the knowledge – most people fail for lack of knowledge," Mr. McGill said. "There are residents who have bad credit and don't know that there are ways to fix your credit or residents who have problems maintaining or getting ahead with their finances. I think this program can be influential within our neighborhood. When you help people have a better life by showing them how to take care of themselves and their families, in doing so you uplift the community, and as a whole we all grow."

Bronx residents living in Melrose Houses, Jackson Houses, Morrisania Air Rights, Highbridge Gardens, Parkside Houses, and Davidson Houses who are interested in signing up for Residents CAN! should contact Dan Ping He from Urban Upbound at **718-541-4116** or **danping@urbanupbound.org**.



Text Message // 7:42 PM

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