

# SERCulator

April 2026

Official publication of  
**SERC-NAHRO**  
Southeastern Regional Council



**SERC-NAHRO MLK  
Basketball Tournament  
& Cheer Competition**

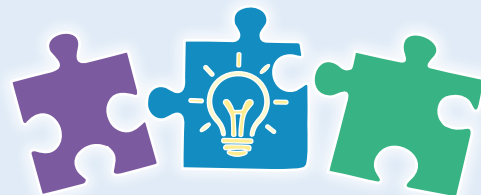
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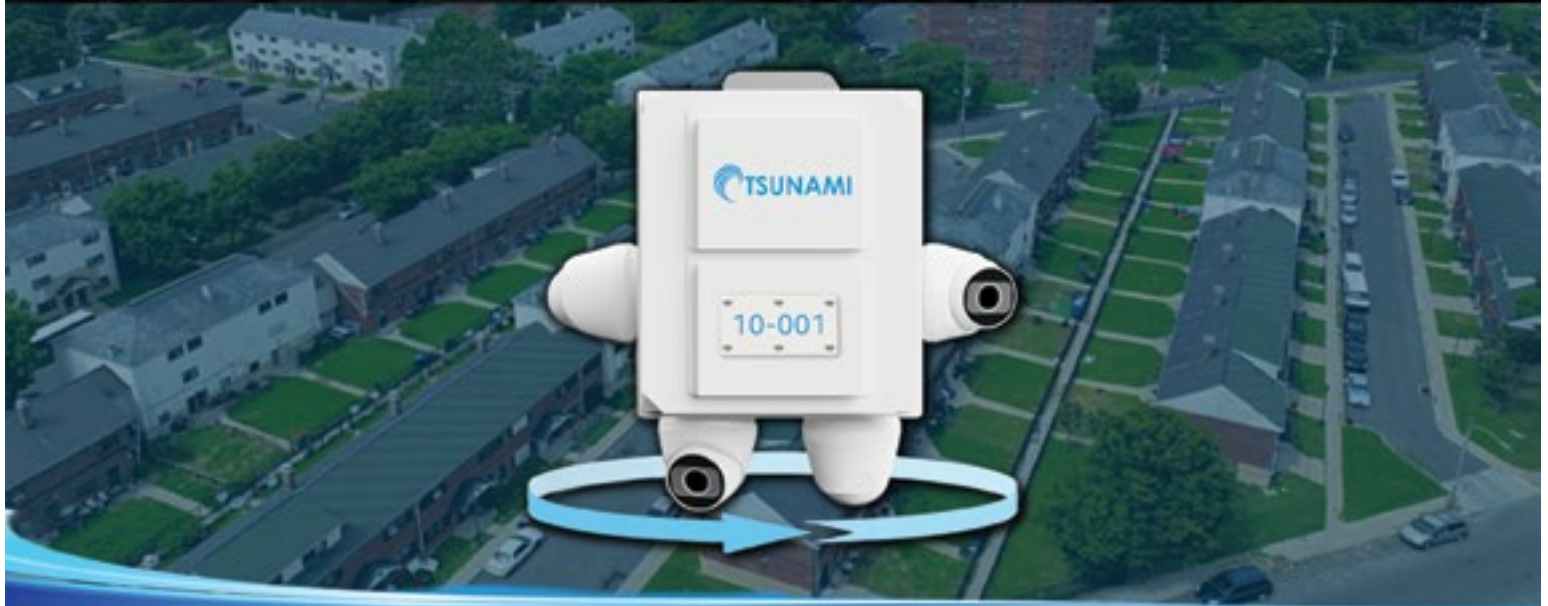


**Building Together**  
**Presidents Message**

to Fellow Housers pg 3



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**On the Cover**

As Housers, we are always working to build together. Knowing we are stronger together than on our own, as Housers we are always working to build each other up and create a brighter future for the residents we serve.

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The SERCulator is the official quarterly publication of the Southeastern Regional Council of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (SERC-NAHRO).

Comments, suggestions, articles, features and photographs are solicited in interest of the members of SERC-NAHRO. Although all submissions are subject to approval and editing, every effort will be made to publish submissions based on available space. Photos cannot be returned.

**Send Submissions Via:**  
**SERCulator.com | 800.506.8064**



**EDITORIAL STAFF**

**BrooksJeffrey.com | 800.506.8064**

Account Executives & Copywriting  
Jodie Elizabeth Jeffrey & Katie Bibbee  
Art Director, Dedrah Wallk  
Graphic Design/Production, Michael Mormile  
Photography, Katie Bibbee

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS**

**Alabama - AAHRA.org**

Beverly Barber (Chair), ED  
Opp Housing Authority  
Whitney Ball, Occupancy Specialist  
Floral Housing Authority  
Doris Richardson, ED  
Evergreen Housing Authority

**Florida - FAHRO.org**

Gail Sansbury, ED  
Fort Walton Beach Housing Authority

**Georgia - GAHRA.org**

Clara Graham, ED  
Douglas Housing Authority  
Valerie Sneed, Office Manager  
Tifton Housing Authority

**Mississippi - MAHRO.org**

Sarah Lyons, Director of Finance  
Biloxi Housing Authority

**North Carolina - CCHRCO**

Anna McRae, CEO CARE Inc/Special Projects Manager  
Monroe Housing Authority  
CarolinasCouncil.org

**Virginia - VAHCDO.org**

Angela Fountain, VP of Communications and Public Relations  
Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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# President's Message

Michael Wong | SERC-NAHRO President



## Fellow Housers,

Today, I stand before you not just as President, but as a proud member of an association built on vision, resilience, and purpose. Each of us carries a title, but above all, we share one identity: **Builders.**

Builders are not defined merely by bricks and mortar. They are defined by mindset. A builder sees possibilities where others see obstacles. A builder strengthens foundations before seeking heights. A builder understands that true success is not achieved alone, but together.

As Housers, we are builders of character—choosing integrity over convenience and courage over comfort.

---

**We are builders of relationships — fostering respect, collaboration, and unity within our organizations, and communities we serve. We are builders of excellence — striving daily to improve, innovate, and uplift each other.**

---

Together, let us build with vision. Let us build with unity. Let us build with

purpose. Because when Housers build together, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

Thank you, and let us continue building—side by side.

**Michael Wong,**  
*SERC-NAHRO President*

## Join Us for The 2026 SERC-NAHRO Annual Conference

6001 Destination Parkway, Orlando, FL 32819 | Sun-Tues, June 28-30, 2026



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Check SERC-NAHRO website for registration & more: [serc-nahro.org/events/](https://serc-nahro.org/events/)

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Articles • Awards • Announcements • New/Retiring Staff • Partnerships • Resident Services

**Submit NEWS for your state's BITS & PIECES section of the next issue of SERCulator**

**How to Submit:**

Visit [SERCulator.com](http://SERCulator.com) and click the link: "Submit STATE Bits & Pieces News".

There, you can upload photos, documents and text for your State's Bits & Pieces News.

**July Issue  
Materials Deadline:**

**MAY  
25  
2026**

For Full Details, Visit [SERCulator.com](http://SERCulator.com)



# SERC-NAHRO 2026



## PASSPORT



to a New World of Housing



**GET YOUR PASSPORTS READY,**  
*SERC Annual 2026 is Requesting  
Permission to Land!*

Validate your passport and claim your seat at the terminal: Your presence at SERC-NAHRO 2026 Annual Conference is your visa to a new era of innovation. Let's explore the frontier of affordability, sustainability, and building better communities together.

### EVENT:

SERC-NAHRO 2026 Annual Conference:  
"Passport to a New World of Housing"

### DATE OF ARRIVAL:

June 28, 2026

### DATE OF DEPARTURE:

July 1, 2026

### DESTINATION:

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# 2026 SERC MLK BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

The Housing Authority of the City of Bessemer hosted the 32nd SERC-NAHRO MLK Basketball and Cheer Tournament from January 16 to January 18, 2026.

Basketball Teams and Cheer Squads representing housing authorities from across the SERC region participated in the tournament over the long holiday weekend.

The weekend included a welcome pep rally, basketball games, a skills competition, a dance and cheer competition, a baseball museum tour, along with plenty of food, prizes, and fun!

The weekend closed with a Mardi Gras Sneaker Ball banquet, where all participants were able to dress up and celebrate the accomplishments of the weekend with food, fun, and dancing.

For over 30 years, the SERC MLK Basketball program has given youth residing within affordable housing the opportunity to travel to a new place and connect with their peers. Empowering these young athletes

with the opportunity to see a world beyond what they may have felt possible.

The Housing Authority of the City of Bessemer would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all the teams, parents, coaches, supporters, sponsors, and HACB staff who worked tirelessly to make the weekend a success.

Information on the upcoming 2027 SERC-NAHRO MLK Basketball and Cheer Tournament will be shared with the SERC membership as soon as it is available.



Bessemer Housing Authority, AL vs. Laurel Housing Authority, MS



Bessemer Housing Authority, AL Player preparing to take his shot



Past Potentate Erick Kennedy and Noble Muhammad Walker (Malik Shriner Temple, 270) Volunteer at Team Sign In



Birmingham District 12 Boys team in 12 and Under Tournament strategize with their Coach.



Goldsboro Housing Authority, NC Cheer Team



8 AND UNDER CHEERLEADING:  
Columbus Housing Authority, MS



9 AND UP CHEERLEADING:  
Goldsboro Housing Authority, NC

# 2026 SERC MLK BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT



Alexander McKelvey, Minister; Chester W. Porter, Bessemer City Council D2; Cortney Coleman, ED (Bessemer HA, AL); Tomeka Robinson, Director of Resident Engagement (Bessemer HA, AL); Jeremiah Castille, Keynote Speaker; Tom Wachs, ED (Eufaula HA, AL)



Teams proudly representing the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District



Tournament participants enjoying the Sneaker ball



Opp Housing Authority, AL Cheer Team



Tournament participants enjoying the Sneaker ball



Mathew McClammey, ED (Opelika HA) and Opelika Housing Authority Team



Courtney Coleman, Executive Director (Bessemer, AL)



## CONGRATULATIONS

2026 SERC MLK Basketball & Cheer Tournament Champions!



12 AND UNDER BASKETBALL:  
Alexander City Housing Authority, AL



15 AND UNDER BASKETBALL:  
Alexander City Housing Authority, AL



18 AND UNDER BASKETBALL:  
Goldsboro Housing Authority, NC



## PHADA and Rutgers Announce 2026 Class of Executive Director Education Program (EDEP) Graduates

PHADA and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, are pleased to announce the 2026 graduating class of the Executive Director Education Program (EDEP). PHADA and Rutgers congratulate the graduates on this extraordinary achievement and wish them continued success in their careers as housing professionals.

The 2026 graduates were celebrated at a luncheon during PHADA's 2026 Commissioners' Conference in Tampa, FL, on January 6. The video of the Class of 2026 Graduation speaker, Oscar Durán, Executive Director, Municipal Housing Agency of Council Bluffs (IA), can be viewed at [YouTube.com/watch?v=l0FqGpd4qCg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0FqGpd4qCg).

### 2026 EDEP Graduates

- **Clarisse Adams**, *Executive Director, Okolona Housing Authority*
- **Melissa Berrien**, *Director of Resident Services, Rochester Housing Authority*
- **Teresa Bethea**, *Executive Director, Maxton Housing Authority*
- **Amanda Bone**, *Executive Director, Montgomery County Housing Authority*
- **Vicki Bonilla**, *Executive Director, EL Campo Housing Authority*
- **Catherine Bowler**, *Executive Director, Laconia Housing Authority*
- **Lisa Y. Brown**, *Assistant Executive Director, Housing Authority City of Alton*
- **Sybil Bullock**, *Chief Housing Officer, Hampton Redevelopment and Housing Authority*
- **Jose Capeles**, *Interim Director of Asset Management/Policy and Program Planning and Implementation Manager, Grand Rapids Housing Commission*
- **Brian Carter**, *Deputy Director, Shelbyville Housing Authority*
- **LaTonya Coley-Mckenly**, *Executive Director, Deerfield Beach Housing Authority*
- **Lanesha Combs**, *Vice President of Housing Operations, Fort Worth Housing Solutions*
- **Sierra Daniels**, *Executive Director, Housing Authority City of Mt. Vernon*
- **Shenae Draughn**, *President, Elm City Communities/New Haven Housing Authority*
- **Oscar Durán**, *Executive Director, Municipal Housing Agency of Council Bluffs*
- **Zackary Dye**, *Executive Director, Athens Metropolitan Housing Authority*
- **Joyce Edwards**, *CEO, Ripley Housing*
- **Datanis Elias**, *Deputy Director of Occupancy and Admissions, Lawrence Housing Authority*
- **LaMont R. English**, *Chief Executive Officer, Youngstown Metropolitan Housing Authority*
- **Lesley Foxx**, *CEO/Executive Director, Saginaw Housing Commission*
- **Robert Greathree**, *Executive Director, Columbus Housing Authority*
- **Robert Francis Hayes**, *Ph.D., Executive Director, Housing Authority of Corbin*
- **LaTrinda Peoples Hoyett**, *Executive Director, Tarrant Housing Authority*
- **Steven W. Hoyt**, *Property Manager, Bessemer Housing Authority*
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- **Bryan D. Lewis Sr.**, *Deputy Director, Crestview Housing Authority*

- **Thomas G. Mackin, Esq.,** *Chief Administrative and Legal Officer, Lucas Metropolitan Housing*
- **Chloe Mansfield,** *Finance Manager, Ozark Housing Community*
- **Melody McClurg,** *Executive Director, Jefferson Metropolitan Housing Authority*
- **Frank Miller,** *Director of Affordable Housing, Oklahoma City Housing Authority*
- **Emily Murphy,** *Executive Director, Sunbury Housing Authority*
- **Curtis Myers Jr.,** *Deputy Director, Housing Authority of the City of Elizabeth*
- **Eboni Nugin,** *Executive Director, River Rouge Housing Commission*
- **Sharita Oates,** *Interim CEO, Housing Authority of the City of Goldsboro*
- **Stacy Ollendick,** *Senior Programs Coordinator, Charles City Housing & Redevelopment Authority*
- **Charles Parks,** *Assistant Director, Housing Choice Voucher Program, Oklahoma City Housing Authority*
- **Maggie Perez,** *Executive Director, Florence Housing Authority*
- **John Ritter,** *Executive Director, Bethlehem Housing Authority*
- **Lysandra M. Shaw,** *Executive Director, Newport News Redevelopment & Housing Authority*
- **Rosemary Steele,** *Executive Director, Thomasville Housing Authority*
- **Tamica Sutton,** *Executive Director, Mount Clemens Housing Commission*
- **Kristen Sutton-Blatchley,** *Director of Operations and Finance, Hocking Metropolitan Housing Authority*
- **Kimberly Taylor,** *Chief Operations Officer, Ripley Housing Authority*

- **Danielle Thomas,** *Senior Vice President/Chief Operating Officer, St. Petersburg Housing Authority*
- **Omar Tompkins,** *Executive Director, Russellville Housing Authority*
- **Cynthia Valles,** *CFO, Housing Authority of the City of Odessa*
- **Nikki Vazquez,** *Executive Director, Jamestown Housing Authority*
- **Cecil Williams,** *Executive Director, Crestview Housing Authority*
- **Richard Wymer,** *Executive Director, Columbiana Metropolitan Housing Authority*
- **Zena Zahran,** *Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Washington, Georgia*

The PHADA-Rutgers University Executive Director Education Program (EDEP) provides a comprehensive approach to professional development for housing authority executive directors and has helped participants from around the country stay current with industry standards and gain new insight into the profession for more than a decade.

Classes reinforce the technical, managerial, and strategic competencies required of a successful executive director, blending theoretical concepts with practical problem-solving techniques. The program examines critical functions that serve to define the executive director's position and provides a structured environment in which mid-career professionals can hone their management skills and enhance their knowledge. Participants complete the rigorous 10-course curriculum over a period of 18 months.

To learn more about the EDEP Program, visit [PHADA.org/Conferences/Executive-Director-Education-Program-EDEP](http://PHADA.org/Conferences/Executive-Director-Education-Program-EDEP).



## About PHADA

PHADA's 1,900 member housing agencies represent over 1.9 million low-income housing units throughout the United States. Our members manage small, medium, large, rural, and urban housing authorities that run programs including public housing, housing choice vouchers, Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), and a variety of other innovative public-private partnerships. The association provides its members with important information, professional development, and advocacy to help them administer adequate, safe housing for those in need across America. PHADA also works closely with members of Congress in efforts to develop sensible and effective public housing statutes and obtain adequate funding for low-income housing programs, in addition to advocating before the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on a variety of regulations governing public housing nationwide.



## About Rutgers

The Center for Government Services (CGS), a unit of the Division of Continuing Studies at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, has been providing timely and relevant training for state and local officials for more than 60 years. With a mission to improve the knowledge, competency, and professionalism of state and local government officials and employees, CGS (with its partner the Center for Executive Leadership in Government) trains more than 8,000 individuals each year through 22 programs that include more than 850 individual courses, seminars, and conferences.



## Celebrating 90 Years of Impact

- Housing Authority of the Birmingham District

Since its establishment in 1937, the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD) has been a cornerstone of affordable housing and community empowerment in Birmingham.

For 90 years, HABD has remained true to its mission of providing high-quality, affordable housing, fostering vibrant communities, and serving as a catalyst for opportunity for residents across the city.



*Officials and community partners gather during a celebration marking 90 years of service.*

Over the years, HABD has championed numerous initiatives to revitalize neighborhoods and improve living environments. Most recent notable efforts include the grand opening of more than 200 new affordable homes at Edgemoor in Southtown and innovative redevelopment projects such as Cooper Green Homes. These efforts reflect a sustained commitment to quality, inclusivity, and long-term community well-being.

HABD recognizes that housing is only the beginning of opportunity. Its Workforce Development programs help residents build skills, connect with employers, and pursue sustainable careers. From youth training initiatives funded through federal grants to apprenticeship programs and employment fairs, HABD equips residents with tools to achieve economic self-sufficiency and thrive in Birmingham's workforce.

As HABD celebrates 90 years of service, the agency continues to engage stakeholders, partners, and residents in shaping the future of housing and opportunity in Birmingham. For more information on the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District, please visit their website at [HABD.org](http://HABD.org).

## Honoring Partnerships Through Fellowship

- Auburn Housing Authority

**On July 10, 2025, the Auburn Housing Authority proudly hosted its first-ever Partner Appreciation Luncheon.**

The event served as a meaningful opportunity to recognize and thank the valued partners who support our mission and the residents we serve.

The luncheon brought together community partners whose ongoing collaboration plays a vital role in connecting families to essential resources, supporting community events, and providing consistent encouragement across our programs. Their commitment and partnership make a lasting impact on the lives of Auburn Housing Authority residents.

Strong partnerships are the foundation of our work at Auburn Housing Authority. When we come together with organizations that share our commitment to service, we are better

equipped to create opportunities, strengthen families, and build a stronger community.

Auburn Housing Authority extends sincere appreciation to all who attended and contributed to the success of this event. Special thanks to Youth for Christ for graciously allowing us to use their facility.

As we look ahead, Auburn Housing Authority welcomes both current and future partners to continue building meaningful connections with us. Together, we can expand resources, strengthen programs, and create lasting impact for the residents and families we serve—because we truly are better together.

For more information on Auburn Housing Authority, please visit their website at [AuburnHousingAuth.org](http://AuburnHousingAuth.org).



### 2026 AAHRA Spring Workshop

Mon.-Wed., April 13-15, 2026  
Hyatt Regency; Birmingham, AL

### 86th AAHRA Annual Conference

Mon.-Wed., September 14-16, 2026  
Edgewater Beach Resort; Panama City Beach, FL





## HYPE Summer Program Proves a Game-Changer for Students

- Alexander City Housing Authority

198 Students, 2,428 Books, and One Powerful Success Story.



The Helping Young People Excel (HYPE) summer program made a lasting impact this year, serving as a compelling reminder of how vital summer learning is to student success.

Held across six sites and in partnership with local organizations, the HYPE program offered a dynamic blend of academic support and enrichment activities designed to help students retain and build on their learning over the summer break. With 198 participants and an impressive 2,428 books read collectively, the program exceeded expectations—not just in numbers, but in life-changing outcomes.

This summer, the HYPE program operated across six vibrant sites—Spring Hill Youth and Adult Services, Laurel Heights Youth and Adult Services, Lake Martin Trailblazers, Woody Woodpecker #1 and #2 Learning Centers, and Harbor Learning Academy—serving a total of 198 students. Participants demonstrated remarkable engagement and academic progress, completing 447 math choice boards, lessons, and activities, along with 376 reading choice boards and activities. In addition, students successfully completed 1,255 i-Ready reading lessons and 1,393 i-Ready math lessons, reflecting both their commitment and the program’s strong academic focus.

These achievements reflect not only the dedication of students and staff but also the power of collaboration between schools and community organizations. Special thanks go to Courtney Layfield and United Way for their generous gifts of books, which encouraged students to continue reading beyond the classroom.

The HYPE program—now celebrating the successful completion of its fourth summer—has proven that with the right support, summer can be a season of progress, not pause. The program is proudly led by Kenyatta Simmons and Chris Adkins.

### Program Highlights:

- Number of Sites: 6
- Spring Hill Youth and Adult Services
- Laurel Heights Youth and Adult Services
- Lake Martin Trailblazers



- Woody Woodpecker #1 Learning Center
- Woody Woodpecker #2 Learning Center
- Harbor Learning Academy
- Number of Participants: 198
- Total Books Read: 2,428
- Math Choice Boards, Lessons & Activities Completed: 447
- Reading Choice Boards, Lessons & Activities Completed: 376
- i-Ready Reading Lessons Completed: 1,255
- i-Ready Math Lessons Completed: 1,393

Congratulations, Alexander City Housing Authority, on this outstanding initiative. For more information on the HYPE Program, please visit the ACHA website at [AlexCityHousing.org](http://AlexCityHousing.org).

## Building Brighter Futures

- Eufaula Housing Authority

The Eufaula Housing Authority is proud to share the graduation of some of their YouthBuild students. A graduation ceremony was held on February 12th to celebrate these students' accomplishments.



Each graduate completed OSHA-10 and earned a NCCER (National Construction Certificate). Additionally, all graduates completed life skills training and community service requirements and are well on their way to completing their GED.

The Eufaula Housing Authority would like to extend a special thanks to Dustin Rivenbark, Associate Pastor of South Point Church, for delivering their graduation message. EHA staff members involved with the program include Melanie Little, Corey Jones, Brittany Danzey, Stephanie Davis, and Bobby Morris. Tom Wachs serves as the agency’s Executive Director.



*Tom Wachs, Executive Director, celebrates with a YouthBuild graduate during the Feb. 12th graduation ceremony.*

Congratulations to Eufaula Housing Authority and each and every one of your YouthBuild graduates. For more information on EHA, please visit their website at [EufaulaHousing.com](http://EufaulaHousing.com).



# Breaking Ground on the Future of Affordable Housing

## 200 Affordable Units Coming to Pearl City

**Boca Raton Housing (BRHA) and the City of Boca Raton, along with Atlantic Pacific Companies (A|P) in partnership with Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC), First Horizon Community Investment Group, and Citi Community Capital, celebrated the groundbreaking of The Residences at Martin Manor on Monday, August 25.**

This redevelopment of Dixie Manor is located in the historically African American community of Pearl City and will be completed in two phases totalling 200 units. Phase 1 will include 95 units consisting of: 36 one-bedroom, 39 two-bedroom, 18 three-bedroom, and 2 four-bedroom units. Households that previously lived at Dixie Manor will have the opportunity to return if they choose. Phase 2 will add 105 units. The property is home to a 4,800-square-foot community center with after-school and summer programs operated by BRHA as well as a clubhouse, fitness center, multipurpose room, and business center. There will also be an outdoor playground and general recreation space.

“The City of Boca Raton is proud to partner in several ways to facilitate the groundbreaking of a new and improved community that reflects the legacy of pioneering leader Lois Martin,” said the mayor of Boca Raton, Scott Singer.



*Rendering of Martin Manor.*

Under the leadership of CEO/Executive Director Ashley Whidby, the agency has recommitted its efforts to provide excellent affordable housing options to the residents they serve. Whidby has served as CEO/Executive Director since 2023, first joining BRHA in 2015.

Under her leadership, the Boca Raton Housing Authority is a designated high performer and was selected as a Moving to Work agency in 2024. Whidby serves on the FAHRO Board of Directors, Moving to Work Collaborative Board of Directors (Nominations Committee Chair), Palm Beach County Commission on Affordable Housing, SERC Emerging Leaders Committee, and Youth Empowered to Prosper Board of Directors.

“This redevelopment reflects more than just new construction, it symbolizes our unwavering commitment to the families we serve and to the historical legacy of Pearl City. We’re honored to bring forward a modern, service-rich community that truly supports our residents’ potential for long-term success.” shared Whidby.

Funding for the property consists of \$7.1 million from FHFC, \$640,000 from the City

of Boca Raton, equity from First Horizon Community Investment Group, and permanent and construction loan financing from Citi Community Capital.

“We are proud to put our balance sheet to work and help communities thrive across the country. We are grateful for the opportunity to help redevelop The Residences at Martin Manor and provide safe, clean, and affordable housing to the future residents,” said Citi Community Capital Director Adam Hurwitz.

The Residences at Martin Manor are expected to be completed in Fall 2026, and all of the units are affordable to households earning 22% to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

“The Residences at Martin Manor are a testament to what’s possible when vision, commitment, and collaboration come together,” said Dan Wilson, A|P Executive Vice President. “We are proud to work alongside our partners, residents, and community stakeholders to help bring their vision to life. Together, we are creating a high-quality residential community that honors its heritage, ensures long-term affordability, and offers residents a beautiful home where their families can thrive for generations to come.”



Boca Raton Housing Authority  
 Boca Raton, FL  
 HCV: 729 Vouchers  
 Affordable Housing: 51 units  
 Ashley Whidby, CEO/ED  
[BocaHousing.org](http://BocaHousing.org)



## Celebrating the Holidays Through Collaboration

- Sarasota Housing Authority

The Children of the Sarasota Housing Authority (SHA) were able to have an extra special Christmas with the help of the Sarasota Police Department's annual Shop with a Cop event.

SHA paired 125 children with SPD officers to come together to shop for holiday gifts.

"For almost 15 years, our collaboration with the Sarasota Housing Authority on the Shop with a Cop program has been a powerful reminder of why we serve," said Sarasota Police Chief Rex Troche in a news release.

Sarasota Housing Authority raises more than \$19,000 for this event through its

501(c)(3) affiliate, Sarasota Housing Funding Corp. This year's event will be made possible through donations by Communities Unified, Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Target, First Horizon Foundation, and other private donors. Donations provide Target gift cards that officers and civilian employees use at checkout for each of the young shoppers.

"This special event showcases SHA's commitment to providing positive, uplifting experiences for our youth while promoting mutual respect with our Sarasota police partners," said Sarasota Housing Authority CEO William Russell



in the release. "Many of our kids who have participated in past events reminisce about what a positive experience it was to shop with and get to know SPD officers."

This annual event always helps make the holidays even more special. For more information on the Sarasota Housing Authority, please visit their website at [SarasotaHousing.org](http://SarasotaHousing.org).

## Largest Family Self-Sufficiency Grant Awarded in Florida for 2026

- Tampa Housing Authority

The Tampa Housing Authority (THA) is proud to announce it has been awarded \$980,720 in Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For the last several years, the agency has consistently secured the largest FSS award granted to any housing authority in the state of Florida, underscoring THA's leadership in workforce development and resident empowerment.

"This significant investment from HUD is a testament to the life-changing outcomes we are seeing within our communities," says Jerome D. Ryans, THA President and CEO. "We are profoundly grateful for HUD's continued partnership and recognition of our efforts. This funding is crucial; it provides the fuel for our families to break cycles of poverty and move toward true economic independence.

It allows us to scale our mission, ensuring that every participating resident has the

resources to turn their professional and personal aspirations into reality."

The success of the program is rooted in the dedicated support system provided by THA's FSS coordinators, who work one-on-one with residents to navigate barriers to employment and education.

"I am incredibly proud of our FSS team, whose tireless dedication is the heartbeat of this program," says Margaret Jones, Assisted Housing Director at THA. "Our coordinators do more than manage cases; they build relationships and provide the dependable support our families need to thrive. This award belongs to the team that walks alongside our residents every day, proving that with the right guidance and collective commitment, financial self-sufficiency is an achievable goal for every family we serve," adds Jones.

THA's FSS program is set to continue its track record of excellence, consistently graduating families who move on to realize significant savings through their escrow accounts. This 2026 funding will allow THA to expand its reach and continue fostering a culture of opportunity across the families assisted by the agency.

Congratulations, Tampa Housing Authority, on this outstanding grant award. For more information on THA or their FSS Program, please visit their website at [TampaHA.org](http://TampaHA.org).



## Celebrating a Career of Dedicated Service

- Tallahassee Housing Authority

Brenda Williams, the Executive Director of the Tallahassee Housing Authority (THA), announced her upcoming retirement, planned for later in September 2026. Brenda has faithfully served the agency for the last 13 years.

During her time with the agency, Williams has overseen the Orange Avenue redevelopment project, which enhanced the affordable housing options within the city.

Throughout her time with THA, Williams' leadership has helped shape the agency into the high performer it is today. Join us in congratulating Brenda on her upcoming retirement and plans for the future.

For more information regarding Tallahassee Housing Authority, please visit their website at [TallHA.org](http://TallHA.org).





**BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM**  
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF SAVANNAH CELEBRATING LEADERSHIP, LEGACY

NEW ON **WJCL 22** abc

## Celebrating Black History Month

- The Housing Authority of Savannah

The Housing Authority of Savannah (HAS) hosted a Black History Program in celebration of Black History Month on Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026.

Centered on intergenerational connection, the program featured 21 youth participants alongside eight seniors, bringing Black history to life through storytelling, recognition, and a celebratory finale.

“We are intentional about creating moments where our children can see themselves reflected in greatness,” said Evette Hester, executive director of the Housing Authority of Savannah. “By honoring our elders and uplifting our youth in the same space, we affirm that legacy is not only remembered—it is passed forward.”

A special segment, “Our Trailblazing Children”—a Housing Authority of Savannah Recognition Moment—will spotlight the first class of IGNITE Scholars, who received on-stage recognition and a commemorative photo opportunity for their commitment to academic excellence, leadership development, and personal growth through HAS programming.

The program also recognized several community leaders as Living Legends—individuals whose leadership has helped shape Savannah’s history:

- **Edna Branch Jackson**, Savannah’s first African American woman mayor and longtime public servant
- **Sheriff Richard “Ricky” Coleman**, the first African American sheriff of Chatham County
- **Judge Tammy Stokes**, the first African American woman to serve as chief judge in Chatham County
- **Otis Johnson**, former mayor and pioneering educator; the first African American graduate of Armstrong College and Savannah’s second African American mayor
- **Estella Shabazz**, community leader and the first African American woman civil engineer hired by the City of Savannah
- **Colonel John A. White, 101**, the featured honoree—Georgia’s first sworn African American police officer, a member of the Original Nine, a Congressional Gold Medal recipient, a veteran of the 51st Defense Battalion, and a former personal bodyguard to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during his visits to Savannah

Congratulations HAS on your excellent celebration of Black History Month. To learn more about the Housing Authority of Savannah, please visit their website at SavannahPHA.com.

## Investing in Resident Education

- Gainesville Housing

Three Gainesville Housing (GH) students have been accepted to Lanier Tech through the agency’s BRIDGE program.

The BRIDGE Program (Building Resources to Inspire Development and Growth for Empowerment program) is sponsored by the Resident Services Department at the Gainesville Housing Authority.

The students who have been admitted and their programs include:

- **Justin Rodriquez** (Midtown Villages at Melrose) – Electrical Training
- **David Arteaga** (Midtown Villages at Melrose) – Automotive Collision Repair
- **Mindy Brush** (Midtown Villages at Summit) – Cosmetology

Additionally, Rodriquez and Arteaga will have their tuition paid in full through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).



*Mindy Brush, Program Graduate*

When asked about the program, Mindy Brush shared, “I’m starting over; I want to finish what I started and have the life skills.”

Congratulations, Justin, David, Mindy, and the entire GH Team. For more information on Gainesville Housing or their BRIDGE Program, please visit their website at GainesvilleHousing.org.

## Changing of the Guard

- Augusta Housing Authority

After a career of dedicated service, Jake L. Oglesby has retired as Executive Director of Augusta Housing Authority. No stranger to members of SERC-NAHRO or GAHRA, Jake’s career has been filled with service not only to his agency but also to Housers from across the SERC region.

Stepping into the role of Executive Director is Augusta Housing Authority’s own Douglas Freeman. Doug has served the agency for a number of years in a variety of roles, learning how to continue to run the agency effectively and efficiently.

Congratulations to both Jake and Doug on their new adventures! For more information on Augusta Housing Authority, please visit their website at AugustaPHA.org.





## Celebrating 75 Years of Service

- The Housing Authority of the City of Tallapoosa

In 2025, the Housing Authority of the City of Tallapoosa proudly marks its 75th anniversary—a milestone that reflects decades of commitment, resilience, and community-building. Since its establishment in 1950, the Housing Authority has stood as a cornerstone of affordable housing and neighborhood development in Tallapoosa and throughout Haralson County. Its mission has remained steadfast: to provide safe, quality, and affordable housing while supporting the well-being and growth of the families it serves.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Russell Nast, the Housing Authority continues to make a significant impact by offering a wide range of services aimed at improving the quality of life for individuals and families. Over the years, the Housing Authority has played a key role in ensuring that Tallapoosa remains accessible for all its residents.

“The 75th anniversary of the Tallapoosa Housing Authority is a tremendous milestone,” said Elizabeth Langley, Marketing Director for the Greater Haralson Chamber. “For three-quarters of a century, they have been a vital partner in providing affordable housing and



promoting community growth. We are incredibly proud to celebrate their ongoing efforts and dedication to improving the lives of so many in our area.”

As the Housing Authority celebrates this remarkable anniversary, it also looks ahead with optimism and purpose. The need for affordable housing remains as important as ever, and the authority continues to explore new opportunities to expand, modernize, and innovate. Its commitment to serving the people of Tallapoosa and Haralson County remains unwavering. With 75 years of progress behind it, the Housing Authority of the City of Tallapoosa stands ready to continue its mission—building stronger communities,

supporting families, and ensuring that every resident has a place to call home.

This anniversary is not just a celebration of an organization—it is a celebration of the people who have shaped it. Board members, staff, residents, community partners, and local leaders have all contributed to the Housing Authority’s enduring success. Their dedication has helped transform the authority into a trusted institution and a beacon of stability for the region.

As Tallapoosa reflects on the past and looks toward the future, the Housing Authority’s 75th anniversary serves as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when a community invests in its people, its neighborhoods, and its shared future.

## New Leadership Brings Renewed Vision

- Washington Housing Authority

**Kerry L. Smith has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the Washington Housing Authority (WHA).**

Kerry brings over 8 years of affordable housing experience to the agency. Prior to his appointment at WHA, Kerry served the Dublin Housing Authority. While

at the Dublin HA, Kerry served the agency as the Director of Resident Services, Director of Youth Services, and as a Program Coordinator.

No strangers to members of SERC-NAHRO, Kerry is currently serving as the Chair of the SERC Member Services Committee. Kerry is also a graduate of the SERC Emerging Leaders Program.

Congratulations Kerry on your new position, looking forward to seeing all of the excellent work in Washington Housing Authority’s future!





## Street Named in Honor of Abraham Williams

- Bowling Green Housing Authority

**A Bowling Green roadway has a new name to honor a pillar of the community.**

A street unveiling ceremony to officially rename White Court to Abraham Avenue was held at the Housing Authority of Bowling Green. Elected officials, family and friends, staff, and

the community shared memories of Williams before the reveal of the new Abraham Avenue sign.

Williams retired in July 2024 after serving 29 years as executive director. He suddenly passed away in October 2024. His legacy will continue to impact the lives of countless people in the south-central Kentucky community.

Current Housing Authority executive director Katie Miller says the staff gathered to find ways to honor Williams.

“After he passed, we had a moment. We just kinda gathered ourselves, and we wanted to honor him. The staff threw out some ideas, and the idea came up to rename the street that runs between our offices in honor of him,” Miller said.

Miller says Williams’ impact will continue to be felt for generations throughout the nation through his efforts.

“The subdivision that’s next to our learning center here is going to be named Williams Estates in honor of Mr. Williams. That was just another small way to honor him. Homeownership was a big thing for him. And this has the ability to put up to 40 families in homes,” said Miller.

What a beautiful tribute to a life of dedicated service! For more information on the Housing Authority of Bowling Green, please visit their website at [HABG.org](http://HABG.org).

## Capital Fund Recapture Activity Highlights Obligation Enforcement

- Kentucky Housing Association

**In February 2026, several Kentucky Public Housing Authorities received notification from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that they were in noncompliance with Section 9(j) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 and 24 CFR § 905.306 of the Capital Fund Rule.**

HUD determined that one agency failed to obligate at least 90% of a Capital Fund grant by its Obligation End Date (OED) of February 16, 2025. Although HUD’s Line of Credit Control System (LOCCS) initially reflected 100% obligation, a subsequent review by HUD’s Office of Capital Improvements (OCI) concluded that the grant did not reach the 90% obligation threshold until February 18, 2025—after the OED.

Under federal regulation, PHAs incur a 1/12 recapture penalty for each month a grant remains below 90% obligated

after the OED. The penalty is applied to the following year’s Capital Fund grant. In one instance, the agency’s subsequent Capital Fund award was reduced by approximately \$6,786, lowering the grant from \$81,434 to \$74,648.

HUD regulations define “obligation” differently depending on the Budget Line Item (BLI) category:

- BLI 1406 (Operations) – Obligated when funds are drawn down in LOCCS
- BLI 1410 (Administrative Costs) – Obligated when incorporated into a HUD-approved 5-Year Action Plan
- BLI 1480 (General Capital Activity) – Obligated when a binding contract is fully executed

The agency has the option to appeal the determination within two weeks if it can demonstrate that HUD misapplied statutory or regulatory requirements, or if binding

documentation supports that the 90% threshold was met by the OED.

This enforcement action reflects continued federal oversight of Capital Fund obligation deadlines and underscores the importance of closely monitoring execution dates, contract signatures, drawdowns, and reporting accuracy in LOCCS. For small PHAs managing limited administrative capacity, procurement timelines and construction delays can significantly impact compliance with obligation benchmarks.

Kentucky agencies are encouraged to regularly reconcile contract execution dates and LOCCS reporting to ensure alignment with federal obligation standards.





## Celebrating a Career of Service

- Lexington-Fayette Urban County HA

**Austin Simms has announced his upcoming retirement, reflecting back on more than 50 years of service to the agency.**

Mr. Simms joined the agency in 1973 and became executive director in 1977. During his tenure, Mr. Simms guided the agency to being recognized nationally for being the first Public Housing Agency (PHA) in the country to rid its housing portfolio of the stigmatizing red brick barrack-style buildings. The LHA was one of the first PHAs in the country to provide central air conditioning in all of its units.

“Austin Simms has been a wonderful partner to our local government, as we have worked together over the years to build affordable housing, a goal we share,” Mayor Linda Gorton said. “These days, a lot of people make a lot of noise about affordable housing without ever building the first unit. By fighting for federal funding and through strong partnerships with local government and others, Austin Simms has put a roof over the heads of thousands of families during his long career. Congratulations, Austin, and thank you.”

**Mr. Simms’ other major accomplishments include the following:**

- The award of two HOPE VI grants from the Department of Housing & Urban Development
- Spearheaded the collaboration with Fayette County Public Schools to construct William Wells Brown Elementary School located in the center of the Bluegrass HOPE VI area in the East End.
- The creation of two homeownership developments –
  - The Arbors Subdivision created 95 homes on land formerly occupied by the Charlotte Court public housing site (1998 HOPE VI grant).
  - Equestrian View Subdivision created 102 homes in the Bluegrass HOPE VI area. (2005 HOPE VI grant)
- Mr. Simms has served as president of the Kentucky Housing Association, president of the Southeastern Regional Council (SERC) of the National



Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), and honored as a NAHRO Fellow.

- Mr. Simms encouraged LHA’s application for HUD’s Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration Program and received MTW designation in 2011. Lexington is one of the 39 initial PHAs from across the United States to receive the MTW designation.

“My hope is that those we have served have some appreciation of the hard work it has taken to have erased some of the stereotypes concerning affordable housing and offering to them housing that is indistinguishable from the private market,” said Mr. Simms.

He expressed, “I have mixed emotions relinquishing a position I have held for so long and dearly love.”

Mr. Simms’ retirement will be effective July 31, 2026. The LHA Board of Commissioners has named Andrea Wilson, LHA Deputy Director/Chief Operating Officer, to succeed Mr. Simms as executive director. Ms. Wilson has served 32 years at the LHA in a variety of roles. Ms. Wilson will assume the role of executive director effective August 1, 2026. Mr. Simms added, “Ms. Wilson’s appointment is the result of my focus on succession planning, and I think the Board has made the right decision.”

Congratulations, Mr. Simms, on your career of dedicated service, and to Ms. Wilson on your upcoming appointment. For more information on the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Housing Authority, please visit their website at [LexHA.org](http://LexHA.org).

## New Leadership Brings Renewed Vision

- Housing Authority of Bardstown

**In late 2025, Traci Johnson took over leadership of the Housing Authority of Bardstown. Since then she’s been eagerly learning the ropes around the office and the management of more than 350 properties under the agency’s oversight.**

Johnson studied broadcasting at Western Kentucky University, then went on to get a master’s in human resources from Webster University. As she’s found during her month-plus on the job, being able to work with people comes in handy.



Much like the regular housing market, renting through the Housing Authority can be a challenge for people. There’s always a wait list, Johnson said, and sometimes people can get impatient while they wait. But the rewards are great.

“It just feels so good when you get someone moved in who’s on the list,” she said.

“People get emotional. We want to make the people happy.”

Another area Johnson’s human resources skills come into play is managing the personalities of the renters. Sometimes people living in close proximity to each other don’t get along for one reason or another, and it’s key to get people to either live in peace with their neighbors or, failing that, move somewhere else where, hopefully, they can get along.

“They’re our customers — we want to make sure they get what they need,” Johnson said.

Congratulations, Ms. Johnson, on your appointment; looking forward to seeing your continued success! For more information on the Housing Authority of Bardstown, please visit their website at [HABardstown.com](http://HABardstown.com)



## Small Agency, Making Big Impact

### Transforming Lives Through Creative Partnerships

**Sometimes, as a smaller agency, it can feel overwhelming to attempt to take on the additional resident services our residents need with the limited time, staff, and financial resources.**

The Okolona Housing Authority is on a mission to prove it's not a matter of agency size, but with a little creativity and emphasis on agency partnerships, agencies of any size can create a big impact within the lives of their residents.

Partnerships help make so much more possible. In late 2025, through a partnership with Renasant, the agency received a donation of \$15,000 to North Mississippi Housing Development Corporation, their nonprofit entity. The donation will help empower families in rural areas in Chickasaw County by creating opportunities for homeownership and promoting sustainable housing development.

The partnership is a natural fit, as Renasant is committed to serving the residents in its communities, and helping to provide a path to affordable homeownership is a vital service for the communities we serve.

"Homeownership has been directly linked to so many advantages, including a growth in the owner's net worth, family & financial stability, a positive educational impact on children, and even a greater sense of community belonging, among other things. When people have a sense of ownership, stability, and belonging, it positively affects the trajectory of their future. This commitment is a win-win for all involved," said Pam Hadley.

In reflection of the donation, Clarisse Adams, OHA Executive Director, shared, "As we move forward in our efforts to create quality homes and strengthen communities, we are truly grateful for community partners like Renasant, whose commitment helps make our vision a reality."

Additionally, to make the most of the agency's ROSS Program, they lean heavily on their partners to offer impactful and well-attended events for program participants. Some of their recent events hosted by their ROSS program include:

#### **OHA Spring Health Fair**

Held in partnership with Access Health, the event provided free health screenings, free blood pressure checks, free HIV testing, education on dental health and behavioral health, and lunch to attendees.

#### **Mothers' Matter: A Luncheon for Mental Wellness**

Held in partnership with CharKayla French, LCSW-Progressive Health of Houston, MS, and Naomi Fulton-MS State Extension Office Chickasaw County, the event focused on family dynamics and mental health. At the event, Ms. CharKayla French presented information highlighting the effects of positive mental health on parenting, and Ms. Naomi Fulton spoke on the effects of healthy eating.

#### **Budgeting 101- Money Matters**

Held in partnership with Mrs. Pam Hadley, Renasant Bank, the event focused on budgeting tips, checking vs non-checking accounts, managing your checking account, and credit vs debit.

#### **HUD Strong Families' Initiative Event/OHA Community Day**

Held in partnership with NE MS Healthy Start Program, Carlton Witherspoon, MS State Ext Office-Healthy Cooking Matters, and Naomi Fulton. The event included plenty of family fun as well as giveaways of diapers, wipes, and healthy parenting literature. Additionally, Ms. Naomi gifted healthy recipes and cooking utensils for families.

#### **Computer 101**

Held in partnership with the MS State Extension office and Ms. Lori Maztec, this event helped residents become more familiar with their devices. The event covered phone and device power tips for emergencies and Windows computer basics (computer vocabulary, parts of a computer, operating modes, things to consider when purchasing a computer, and describing different types of computers).

Regardless of agency size, all of our residents have similar needs and concerns. Thank you, Okolona Housing Authority, for seeing the need for these services within your community and coming up with creative solutions and partnerships to make these opportunities accessible.

#### **Okolona Housing Authority**

Okolona Housing Authority

Okolona, MS

PH: 67 Units

Clarisse Adams, Executive Director



### Celebrating the Festive Season

- Picayune Housing Authority

The holiday season is always extra special at Picayune Housing Authority. Each year the agency hosts resident events to celebrate the season as well as participates in citywide events to foster a stronger sense of community within their town.

This year, agency staff participated in the Christmas on the Rails event hosted by the city of Picayune. The agency sponsored the train ride, allowing children to have a little extra fun while attending the event.

Additionally, the agency held their holiday meet and greet. It was an opportunity for residents to get a little face time with Santa before Christmas to lock in those holiday wishes. The Grinch even made an

appearance and posed for pictures with residents and event Santa himself.

Residents were treated to snacks and gift bags, and some residents received \$25 holiday gift cards to help make a little holiday magic.

Attendees were also entered into a drawing for 8 extra special gift bags put together by the agency. Residents of all ages were able to come together and enjoy the holiday season together.

*Pictured Above: Asst. Chief of Picayune Police James Bolton; Cathy Lord; Leon Smith; George Fabian; Jason Acker; and Gloria Byrd of Picayune Housing Authority.*



### Honoring Breast Cancer Awareness Month

- Laurel Housing Authority

Each year, the Laurel Housing Authority is proud to participate in Breast Cancer Awareness Month both within their communities and in the city as a whole.



*Individuals standing together in pink to support a meaningful cause.*

Agency staff proudly participated in the first annual Inspired to Care Breast Cancer Awareness Walk hosted by Laurel High School HOSA. Staff dressed up and went out in their best pink outfits. The walk was a time of love and support, honoring survivors, those currently battling the disease, and those we have lost.

Additionally, the agency partnered with Queens with a Divine Purpose to participate in their annual event to raise awareness and funding for breast cancer research. Through their participation, LHA invited residents from across their properties to attend the event dressed in their Kentucky Derby best, from fancy hats to dapper jackets. Everyone embraced the event's theme with style and spirit while supporting the cause.

To learn more about the Laurel Housing Authority, please visit their website at LaurelHA.net.



2026 MAHRO Annual Conference

Monday, August 17, 2026

Beau Rivage Resort & Casino; Biloxi, MS



## Changing the Game for Agency Youth

- The Housing Authority of the City of High Point

The Housing Authority of the City of High Point's Big Chair Chess Club hosted its first youth chess tournament on August 21st, bringing strategy, mentorship, and life lessons to the forefront.

The program serves youth ages 5 - 17, teaching the fundamentals of chess while creating strategic thinkers who engage in an intentional and rational thought process focused on analyzing critical factors that influence long-term success. This foresight includes anticipating potential problems, evaluating opportunities, and making informed decisions to achieve goals.

Under the mentorship of Eugene Brown, participants have embraced the club's central message to "Think before you move." That philosophy came to life during the tournament, which began with new players demonstrating basic gameplay before experienced youth competitors battled through exciting rounds. Each move reflected the discipline, patience, and strategic thinking cultivated through the program.

Mr. Brown shared insights into the three stages of chess that mirror life's journey: the opening game, where preparation is key; the middle game, where focus and persistence are tested; and the endgame, where every decision matters. Cuba Gooding Jr. portrays Mr. Brown's story in the film "Life of a King." The movie continues to inspire youth to think critically and move intentionally, both on and off the board.

The inaugural tournament was a resounding success. Samuel Irasubiza ranked as the first-place winner, with Belal Alis earning second place. Both players were honored for their impressive gameplay.



*Big Chair Chess Club Champions*

Congratulations to the Housing Authority of the City of High Point on this outstanding program. For more information on the agency, please visit their website at [HPHA.net](http://HPHA.net).

## Breaking Ground on a New Affordable Housing Option

- The Northwest Regional Housing Authority

On Thursday, Oct. 30th, the Northwestern Regional Housing Authority held a groundbreaking ceremony in Burnsville to celebrate the development of 26 new homes.

The Executive Director, Luke Fowler, said the neighborhood will focus on housing low-income seniors and disabled individuals.

"All of the housing that we produce is for low- to moderate-income families," Fowler said. "To help folks that need an



affordable place to live and can benefit from lowered utility bills and advantaged rents."

The project was already underway before Helene, but Fowler said the need is even greater now. "After the storm, the need for more housing is even more apparent. So we're able to take advantage of already having ownership of the site and plans, so we're happy to get going today," Fowler said.

The homes will range from 450 to 650 square feet, and the neighborhood will feature a community center.

Congressman Chuck Edwards was also there for the groundbreaking celebration.

"The availability of housing has been a problem for a while and more of a problem after Hurricane Helene," Edwards said. "I wanted to come celebrate and be a part of the kickoff of a remarkable facility that will provide homes for families."

The State Employees Credit Union presented the housing authority with a \$1 million check to help pay for the development. The state housing trust fund is also funding the project.

The agency hopes to have residents moved in by July of 2026.

Congratulations to the Northwest Regional Housing Authority on your new development. To keep up-to-date with this project or to learn more about the agency, please visit their website at [NWRHA.com](http://NWRHA.com).





# Warming Hearts Throughout the Winter Months

- Community Partnerships Bring Relief to Families

Residents of Newberry Housing (NHA) were showered with holiday cheer and generosity during a special senior luncheon and family dinner held on December 22, 2025.

More than 100 families and seniors signed up to receive gifts through the Families Helping Families holiday assistance program, administered by the Palmetto Project in partnership with WIS-News 10. In addition, a generous anonymous donor sponsored the delicious meals for both events, which were prepared by Blessed by the Best Catering.



Youth from NHA enjoy their meal as they eagerly await receiving their gifts.

NHA Resident Council also played a key role in the celebration. Each resident received a Newberry Housing cup and calendar, provided by the Resident Council, which includes President Sharon Mathis, Vice President Donald Cook, and Secretary John Gibbs.

“This event truly reflects the power of community,” said Jessica M. Holcomb, Executive Director.

**“Seeing our families and seniors come together to celebrate the holidays reminds us why partnerships and service are so important. We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time, resources, and hearts to make this day special.”**

The Newberry Housing Authority extends sincere gratitude to the many volunteers who served meals and supported the event, including Mr. Henry Counts and family and Mrs. Hope Graham. The success of the day would not have been possible without the tremendous assistance of Brandis Agnew and family, Sarah Eargle of First Steps of Newberry County, NHA staff, and the Newberry Thriving Families Community Action Team (a part of the Gallman Place Project).

Prior to the event, families were also given the opportunity to receive professional family portraits. These portraits were provided by NHA’s onsite therapist, Angie Hypes of Innovation Counseling Services, adding an extra touch of joy and lasting memories for participating families.

Additionally, in preparation for Winter Storm Gianna, the Newberry Community Action Team, a program of the Gallman Place Project in partnership with Newberry County First Steps, successfully served over 116 families during its recent Winter Coat

Drive, providing warmth and comfort just in time for dangerously cold weather.

Held at Bethlehem Gardens Apartments, the event distributed new and gently used coats, along with hats, scarves, gloves, new socks, and new underwear to local families in need. The distribution took place one day before Winter Storm Gianna, which brought snow and freezing temperatures to the area.

One recipient shared with volunteers that the new coat and socks were a blessing and arrived right on time, underscoring the immediate and meaningful impact of the effort.

“This event reminded us how powerful community support can be,” said the organizers. “Because of generous donations and dedicated volunteers, families were able to face the storm with warmth, dignity, and hope.”

Thanks to an outpouring of community generosity, surplus items from the drive were donated to Newberry Elementary School and the O’Neal Street Cold Weather Shelter, extending the impact of the event to additional children and individuals experiencing homelessness.

In addition to winter essentials, attendees enjoyed cocoa and cookies, helping to create a welcoming and caring environment for families during the cold season.



Newberry Housing Authority  
Newberry, SC

HCV: 239 Vouchers

PH: 315 Units

Mainstream: 40 Vouchers

HOME Program: 12 units

Jessica Holcomb, Executive Director  
NewberryHousing.org



## Growing a Fresh Food Forest

- Housing Authority of the City of Darlington

The Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) and the Housing Authority of the City of Darlington (DHA) received a grant from the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) to design and install a food forest on DHA land.

The site is a pecan grove with a tradition of community members foraging for pecans here. Building on this tradition, GIC designed a food forest where foraging is expanded to include blueberries, figs, pomegranates, plums, blackberries, and much more.

A food forest is a multilayered edible landscape designed to mimic and work with nature. Unlike an orchard, the trees and shrubs are woven into a complex garden design with layers such as canopy trees, small trees, shrubs, herbs, and ground covers all working together like a natural system. The food forest and community garden will be open to the public to enjoy.

A community planting day was organized by GIC and DHA for Arbor Day. Around 30 volunteers planted trees and shrubs and built raised garden beds.

Many hands made light work of 200 trees and shrubs planted in a little over 2 hours. A second planting day will take place in the spring to plant the herb and ground cover layers in the forest, as well as plant the raised beds with vegetables.

What an outstanding opportunity for DHA and its residents!

For more information on the Housing Authority of the City of Darlington, please visit their website at [DarlingtonHA.org](http://DarlingtonHA.org).



## Celebrating a Career of Dedicated Service

- Union Housing

Debbie Maness has retired from Union Housing after a career of dedicated service. Debbie has served the agency as Executive Director, leading Union Housing to execute their vision of affordable, quality housing and services, to ensure that each

resident has the opportunity to achieve family self-sufficiency and economic independence.

No stranger to CCHRCO, beyond her service to her agency, Debbie served as a CCHRCO board member and dedicated committee member.

Allen Whitener has stepped into the role of Interim Executive Director.

Join us in congratulating Debbie on her retirement! For more information on Union Housing, please visit their website at [UnionHousingSC.org](http://UnionHousingSC.org).



## New Leadership to Join Agency

- Columbia Housing

Columbia Housing is pleased to announce the selection of Jessica Anderson Preston as its new Chief Executive Officer.



Mrs. Preston brings 25 years of experience, having successfully led housing authorities in Rockville, Maryland, and Largo, Maryland.

Mrs. Preston brings 25 years of progressive experience to Columbia Housing. Her people-focused approach to leadership along with her housing development experience are qualities this agency needs as we continue to address the redevelopment of our housing portfolio.

The Board of Commissioners looks forward to partnering with Mrs. Preston to write the next chapter in Columbia Housing's rich 91-year history. We also would like to thank Mr. Barry Hall for his service to Columbia Housing, and wish him all the best in his future endeavors as he transitions to his next chapter. Shared by: James Chatfield, Chair of Columbia Housing's Board of Commissioners.

Congratulations, Mrs. Preston, on your appointment, and welcome to the SERC family! For more information on Columbia Housing, please visit their website at [ColumbiaHousingSC.org](http://ColumbiaHousingSC.org).





## Breaking Ground on New Affordable Housing Options

- Oak Ridge Housing Authority

Oak Ridge Housing Authority (ORHA) has broken ground on new affordable housing in the Scarboro community.

The project will be built on the 11-acre property behind the Scarboro Community Center and will provide over 100 low-income rental units.



The preservation and redevelopment projects are the beginning of a \$64 million development investment that will bring a total of 232 new or renovated affordable housing units across Oak Ridge.

ORHA and development partner Collaborative Housing Solutions have worked with the Scarboro Community to bring this project together, hosting multiple community meetings over the past 18 months to decide what the community wanted for this new development.

"We know that there's a rental need, but homeownership develops wealth for a family. And so, the community said that's important for that to be part of an overall master plan," said Maria Catron, Executive Director of the Oak Ridge Housing Authority. "I truly hope that this community and the city see what the housing authority means when we say we truly want to partner for the betterment and the quality of life for our neighbors."

Congratulations, ORHA, on this excellent accomplishment. For more information on this development or to learn more about Oak Ridge Housing Authority, please visit their website at ORHA.net.

## Celebrating a Career of Dedicated Service

- Kingsport Housing and Redevelopment Authority

After nearly 31 years of dedicated service to the Kingsport Housing and Redevelopment Authority (KHRA), Executive Director Terry Cunningham has announced his retirement effective at the end of June 2026.



Throughout his distinguished tenure, Terry has been a driving force behind transformative advancements in affordable housing access, neighborhood revitalization, and community partnerships.

With hope for the future, Terry shared, "My successor must be one committed to advancing KHRA's mission. We do work that makes you proud when you lay your head down at night, and I humbly issue the same instructions given to me when I started: Lead this team so that when you leave KHRA, it's better than you found it."

Please join us in celebrating Terry's career and his leadership of the Kingsport Housing & Redevelopment Authority.

For more information on the Kingsport Housing and Redevelopment Authority, please visit their website at KingsportHousing.org.



### 2026 TAHRA Spring Conference

Mon.-Wed., April 20-22, 2026

Embassy Suites; Murfreesboro, TN

### 2026 TAHRA/KHA Annual Conference

Sat.-Wed., September 12-16, 2026

Crowne Plaza Airport & Expo Ctr., Louisville, KY





## TAHRA Day on the Hill

- TAHRA

**On February 10th and 11th, 2026, TAHRA hosted the annual Day on the Hill in Nashville. The program was again successful with the attendees meeting with their local General Assembly members and/or staff to advocate for the positive impact made by Tennessee public housing and redevelopment authorities.**

We passed out our famous TAHRA mints to every assembly member's office along with a Position Paper explaining the value of public housing and redevelopment authorities in the development and preservation of affordable housing.

On Tuesday, February 10th, TAHRA representatives met with retiring General Assembly member Jeremy Faison (District 11), who talked about the need for affordable housing and his efforts to present legislation to help in that area. McCasland Podlesney and Megan Frazier of HB Strategies were again our main contact for all things at the Cordell Hull Legislative Building, including getting Representative Faison to take time out of a busy schedule to meet with us. Attendees were also able to attend a Senate Judiciary Committee meeting where TAHRA was recognized.

Thanks to Alex Brewer (Lawrenceburg HA), our specialist in designing and ordering the famous TAHRA mints, and Kristy Robinson (Martin HA) and her

associates for a great job in preparing the new Position Paper and getting them to the Cordell Hull Building.

The objective of the Day on the Hill is to inform Tennessee General Assembly members of the importance of public housing and redevelopment authorities in the development and preservation of affordable housing, especially for the most economically challenged populations, and administer programs to help people move into better economic and social positions.

Finally, the TAHRA Legislative Committee would like to thank all the attendees at the 2026 Day on the Hill. Without your presence and commitment, this effort would not be successful.

For more information on the TAHRA Legislative Committee and to learn how you can be involved, please reach out to Michael A. Miller, TAHRA Legislative Chair and Executive Director at Bolivar Housing Authority (BHAHHS@bellsouth.net).

## Tennessee Housing Trust Fund Grant Awarded

- Franklin Housing

**Franklin Housing (FHA) was awarded \$600,000 from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA). The award, funded through the Tennessee Housing Trust Fund (THTF), will support the rehabilitation of 16 affordable housing units at Natchez Street Apartments, located in Franklin.**

THTF grants are awarded to projects that develop or preserve rental housing for low- and very low-income households, the elderly, and individuals with special needs.

"We are proud to support affordable rental housing initiatives during a time where there are limited rental options for low-income families," said Ralph Perrey, executive director of THDA. "Partners like the Franklin Housing are the cornerstones of ensuring Tennesseans have housing options."

FHA acquired Natchez Street Apartments in 2021. The apartments were built in the early 1970s by a local family, who retained ownership until the sale to FHA. The project will include interior and exterior renovations such as



*Left to right: Susan Minor (COO), Franklin Mayor Ken Moore, Derwin Jackson (president, CEO), Lindsay Mayfield Green (director of Grants & Administration) and Andrea Hudgins (THDA Outreach coordinator).*

painting, new appliances, doors, windows, flooring, and other necessary repairs.

"Affordable housing is critical to the Franklin community," said Derwin Jackson, president and CEO of the FHA.

"Franklin Housing appreciates the partnership and support from THDA by providing funding for needed renovations to the apartments."

Funding for the THTF is generated from revenue earned by THDA's mortgage program and supports several initiatives, including a capacity-building program, the emergency repair program, the home modification and ramp program, the

rebuild and recover program, and the development gap subsidy program.

Congratulations, Franklin Housing, on your grant reward; we look forward to seeing the progress of this redevelopment! For more information on Franklin Housing, please visit their website at [FranklinHousingAuthority.com](http://FranklinHousingAuthority.com).





# Honoring the Past, Housing the Future

## Lexington Reserve Opens in Portsmouth



**Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority (PRHA) celebrated the completion of Lexington Reserve, the city’s newest affordable senior housing community.** The grand opening marked the final phase of the Lincoln Park redevelopment. The ceremony showcased Lexington Reserve’s modern apartment homes, accessible design, and community spaces that support wellness, social connection, and aging with dignity.

PRHA, The Richman Group—alongside Virginia Housing, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and the City of Portsmouth—celebrated the grand opening in early December. The event marked the official completion of the city’s newest affordable rental community for seniors 62 and better, as well as the final phase of the transformation of the former Lincoln Park public housing community.

Originally constructed in the 1950s, Lincoln Park was one of Portsmouth’s largest public housing communities and served as a cornerstone neighborhood for generations of families who continue to shape the city today.

Community members, local officials, and development partners gathered for a ribbon-cutting and guided tours of the new senior community. The event highlighted the years of collaboration and resident partnership that shaped Lexington Reserve from concept through construction.

Lexington Reserve was developed through a community-informed planning process. Former Lincoln Park residents participated in naming sessions, planning charrettes, and other workshops that influenced the design of amenities, services, and community spaces.

“Across the country, nearly one-third of seniors are spending more than they can afford on housing, and that number is growing,” said Alisa Winston, Executive Director of the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

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**“That’s why what we do matters so deeply. Every time we create safe, modern, affordable homes, we are giving people not just a place to live, but a better life.”**

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“This is more than just a ribbon-cutting. It is a moment that speaks to who we are as a community and what we value,” said Mayor Shannon Glover

while delivering opening remarks, referring to Lexington Reserve as “a brand new, affordable senior living community that represents both progress and purpose for the City of Portsmouth.”

“This development was built with the community—not just for it,” said Andre Blakley, President of TRG Community Development. “From the earliest resident charrettes to the final programming decisions, the voices of Lincoln Park families guided every step. For The Richman Group, supporting a development that brings residents’ vision for their community to life is exactly the kind of work we take pride in.”

Attendees also heard from several city and state leaders who emphasized the importance of resident engagement and the long-term positive impact this development will have on Portsmouth’s senior population.



Portsmouth Redevelopment and  
Housing Authority  
Portsmouth, VA  
HCV: 2,026 Vouchers  
PH: 1,117 Units  
Alisa Winston, Executive Director  
PRHA.org



## Giving a Local Icon a Second Act

- Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority

**One day before the Court Square Theater planned to shut its doors for good after losing funding and attendance declining, an effort is being made to rescue the venue by the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA).**

“We received a tremendous outpouring of community members interested in keeping the theater going,” Michael Wong, executive director of the HRHA, said.

The HRHA, which owns the portion of the building that houses the theater, met with members of the local arts community on how to keep the theater operating in the short term.

“The theatre has been a tremendous community asset,” Wong said. “Our goal was to continue it as a community theater.”

In turn, the Housing Authority established a community donation portal to cover the operational costs of the

theater as well as to allow scheduled performances and programming for the first quarter of 2026 to continue as originally planned.

In addition, the funds raised will allow the HRHA to hold community outreach meetings to shape the future of Court Square Theater for years to come.

“It takes a tremendous amount of financial support to make a community theater work,” Wong said. “We hope that through that process we will be able to identify and cultivate that support to sustain the theatre in the future.”

If you’re interested in supporting the effort, you can go to the HRHA’s website to donate at [HarrisonburgRHA.com](http://HarrisonburgRHA.com).

All proceeds will go toward the HRHA’s fundraising to save the venue.

## The First Steps Towards Revitalization

- Beyond Housing

**A newly released report reveals that most remaining buildings on the historic campus of the former Virginia Intermont College are in good enough condition for renovation and reuse for such purposes as housing, new businesses, and the arts.**

In addition, the report estimated that Bristol could gain some \$40 million in historic tax credits by preserving the buildings for reuse compared to roughly \$5 million in other tax incentives associated with new construction at the site.

The findings were prepared with support from Beyond Housing, the housing redevelopment authority in Bristol, which is directing a neighborhood revitalization program called Choice Neighborhoods, which encompasses the VI campus.

The assessment highlights the campus’s enduring significance as a landmark for women’s education and underscores its value as a rare example of women’s heritage in the region.

The Virginia Intermont Campus, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, stands as a vital part of Bristol’s legacy and offers a unique opportunity for sustainable and historically respectful community renewal, according to Lisa Porter, executive director and chief executive officer for Beyond Housing.

This area contains great potential for both the expansion of affordable housing options as well as the preservation of a historically significant landmark. To stay up-to-date on the potential of this redevelopment project, please visit Beyond Housing’s website at [BeyondHsg.com](http://BeyondHsg.com).



2026 VAHCDO Annual Conference

Sun.-Tues., April 19-21, 2026

Marriott Oceanfront Resort; Virginia Beach, VA





## Opening a Door into Affordable Housing

- Wheeling Housing Authority

The Wheeling Housing Authority was chosen to be spotlighted by their local paper, as part of a series to help shine a spotlight on across their region to introduce readers to the decision-makers, the front-line workers, and the service providers who do their best daily to make their neighborhoods the best they can be. Through this series of articles, leaders within the community shared not just what makes their fields of expertise tick, but what they see in the future.

Executive Director Joyce Wolen has been with the agency for 27 years and has always called the Ohio Valley home. Joyce shared her personal story of how she came into housing and housing leadership and spoke more on the goals of the agency.

“Our goal is to provide safe, affordable, and decent housing—that’s in our mission statement,” Wolen said. “With that, we provide the opportunity for people who can’t rent on the private market by themselves without help, because as we know, most people don’t make enough money to afford rent, utilities, food, shoes for the kids ... that kind of stuff. So we provide the assistance that they need so they can live, basically, a productive life.”

Understanding the necessity of a strong team, Wolen shared the importance of having an educated team of professionals to keep up with regulations.

Wolen also helped dispel some commonly heard myths regarding affordable housing, sharing, “We collect rent, and I don’t know that people realize that. Most of the people on our program pay rent. There’s a very small percentage that pays the minimum—currently set at \$50 a month. HUD supplements that.”

Wolen also helped explain the Housing Choice Voucher Program and how the agency partners with local landlords to deploy those vouchers. Additionally, she shared more on the application and waitlist progress. Making sure to share that there is always a need for additional affordable housing options.

In closing, Wolen shared, “Housing Authorities can do a whole lot to help address the things that are needed so that people have a chance. We give people a chance.”

Thank you Joyce for sharing more about the vital work you and your team do within your community. For more information on Wheeling Housing Authority, please visit their website at [WheelingWV-PHA.org](http://WheelingWV-PHA.org).

## New Vouchers Bring New Opportunities

- Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that it’s investing \$37,605 in the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority as part of HUD’s Foster Youth to Independence program as well as First Lady Melania Trump’s “Be Best” initiative, which looks to advocate for child welfare.

The funding will be distributed to Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority in the form of vouchers to help pay for housing for foster youths who are aging out of the foster care system.

Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority Executive Director Christal Croso shared that the organization was happy to learn that these vouchers were on the way.

“Often [youths aging out of the foster care system] have limited support systems, so being able to provide them with stable housing is crucial to their success,” Croso said.

In total, 14 other organizations across the country will be receiving housing vouchers for foster youths around the country at a total value of \$1,851,590.

Congratulations, Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority, on receiving this funding.

For more information on the agency please visit their website at [FMHousing.com](http://FMHousing.com).



**Save the Date!**  
**2026 WVAHA Spring Workshop**  
Tuesday-Thursday, May 12-14, 2026  
Canaan Valley Resort; Canaan Valley, WV





## WV Participates in NAHRO's Hill Day

- WVAHA

This March, members of the West Virginia Association of Housing Agencies' (WVAHA) Legislative Committee traveled to Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of West Virginia's public housing communities, engaging directly with the staff of West Virginia's federal lawmakers on the issues that matter most to residents across the state.

Eight committee members participated in the visit, representing six housing agencies from communities throughout West Virginia. During their time on the Hill, they shared

firsthand insights on the challenges facing public housing programs, emphasized the critical need for sustained funding and policy support, and highlighted the vital role these programs play in providing safe, affordable housing for thousands of West Virginians.

Their presence ensured that the voices of local housing authorities and their residents were heard at the national level, reinforcing WVAHA's ongoing commitment to advocacy, collaboration, and strengthening communities across the Mountain State.

For more information or to learn how you can participate in the future, please reach out to WVAHA's Legislative Chair, Christal Crouso, at the Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority.

*Pictured at the top Left to Right: Belinda Harness, ED (Mingo County, WV); Christal Crouso, ED (Fairmont-Morgantown, WV); Tammy Miller, Deputy Director/Director of Finance (Wheeling, WV); Bonnie Hawley, ED (Point Pleasant, WV); Joyce Wolen, ED (Wheeling, WV); Darian Baisden, Housing Coordinator (Mingo County, WV); Palma Sizemore, HCV Specialist (Bluefield, WV); Mark Taylor, ED (Charleston-Kanawa, WV).*

## New WVAHA Logo

- WVAHA

**WVAHA has selected a new logo for our association!** Thank you to everyone who provided feedback on the logo selection survey. Our organization selected our new logo in early 2026 as part of our ongoing website redesign and development.

The logo takes the iconic shape of West Virginia and fills it with the beautiful mountains that help make our state a natural wonder. The colors of our logo were intentionally chosen to represent not only our state colors but also complement the natural beauty found throughout West Virginia.

Our new website is expected to launch this spring and will feature our new logo and overall branding. We are so excited to share this new resource with our membership!



## The health plan that cares about your coverage as much as you do.



Housing Benefits Plan (HBP) is a SERC-NAHRO sponsored plan offering medical, dental, vision, life, and disability benefits to housing authorities within the region.

For more information about HBP visit the website at [www.housingbp.com](http://www.housingbp.com) or contact Jessica Strange at 318-226-1411 option 5 or [hbp@callhsa.com](mailto:hbp@callhsa.com).

## REACH OUT TO US: YOUR OFFICERS



**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT**  
**James Cox (NC)**

Greensboro Housing Authority  
Chief Executive Officer  
GHA-NC.org  
jcox@gha-nc.org  
336.275.8501



**SECRETARY**  
**Shaunté Evans (SC)**

Spartanburg Housing  
Chief Executive Officer  
SpartanburgHousing.org  
sevans@spartanburghousing.org  
864.598.6000



**TREASURER**  
**Mike Sweet (AL)**

Chickasaw Housing Authority  
Executive Director  
ChickasawHA.com  
chick604@bellsouth.net  
251.457.6841



**VP OF HOUSING**  
**Shannon Young (FL)**

Seminole County Housing  
Authority - Executive Director  
SCHAFLA.org  
syoung@schafla.org  
407.365.3621



**PRESIDENT**  
**Michael Wong (VA)**

Harrisonburg Redevelopment  
& Housing Authority  
Chief Executive Officer  
HarrisonburgRHA.com  
wongway@harrisonburgrha.com  
540.434.7386

**VP PROFESSIONAL DEV.**  
**Felicia Jackson (MS)**

Laurel Housing Authority  
Assistant Executive Director  
LaurelHA.net  
laurel@laurelha.net  
601.425.4651



**VP MEMBER SERVICES**  
**Candice Drake (GA)**

Dawson Housing Authority  
Executive Director  
DawsonHousingGA.com  
dawsonha@windstream.net  
229.995.2675



**VP CR&D**  
**Maria Catron (TN)**

Oak Ridge Housing Authority  
Executive Director  
ORHA.net  
mcatron@orha.net  
865.482.1006



**VP COMMISSIONERS**  
**Johnny Johnson (MS)**

MS Region IV - Board of  
Commissioners Chair  
MRH4.com  
jbj.aphia@yahoo.com  
662.327.4121



## Dates to Remember

**JUN**  
**26-27**

**2026 SERC-NAHRO**  
**Executive Committee Meeting**

**NOV**  
**06-07**

**2026 SERC-NAHRO**  
**Executive Committee Meeting**

**JUN**  
**28-30**

**2026 SERC-NAHRO**  
**Annual Conference**

**NOV**  
**08-10**

**2026 SERC-NAHRO**  
**Fall Workshop**

## SERC-NAHRO Member Services Update

### Calling For Resolutions – 5/15/26 Deadline

The Resolutions Committee would like to announce the upcoming resolutions submission deadline. **The deadline is Friday, May 15, 2026.**

Information will be sent out to all State Representatives in January 2026.

If you have any questions, please contact Brenda Gay, Chair of Resolutions Committee at [b.gay@facha.net](mailto:b.gay@facha.net) or Shaunté Evans, Secretary of SERC-NAHRO at [sevans@spartanburghousing.org](mailto:sevans@spartanburghousing.org).



— Candice Drake | SERC Vice President, Member Services