

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

News, announcements, and more from the
Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority



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100 Families, 100 Days



Every month, individuals and families who have been approved for a housing voucher search online and contact landlords for a place to rent. Every month, many of these same people are simply unable to find a landlord who will accept their voucher. HRHA has long dreamed of launching a campaign to engage new landlords about partnering with our Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. Now funding through the 2020 CARES Act has allowed us to do just that.

HRHA launched the 100 Families in 100 Days Housing Campaign on June 15, 2020. Our goal is to work with local landlords and secure housing for 100 families by September 30, 2020. We are working diligently and offering new landlord incentives, reworked staffing, a refreshed landlord web page, expanded landlord portal, online information sessions and more to enhance the HRHA and local landlord collaboration. Our message is clear: We need landlords to partner with us to help secure housing for our most vulnerable individuals and families. Join us!

This issue will cover the need for landlord participation, as well as what some of the benefits are in partnering with HRHA. We also share, with gratitude, the perspectives of two HCV tenants on what a voucher has meant for them.

The Need for Landlords

Written by Madeline Hall, HRHA Intern Summer 2020
The George Washington University

Home is the center of life, and the past few months have reaffirmed this for so many as classes and jobs shift on-line, concerts and graduation ceremonies are watched on tv screens, and three meals a day occur at the same kitchen table. But what about those within our community that do not have a place to call home?



When you picture a homeless person or a Section 8/HCV tenant, who do you see? In Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, the majority of our voucher holders are older adults who need help living independently, parents with young kids, and those working who do not make enough to afford rent. To help our neighbors and enhance our community, we must re-imagine what those in need look like, overcome our stereotypes and biases, and help our neighbors.

Right now, HRHA has 808 vouchers leased, with federal funding for up to 933 vouchers. However, if we do not find landlords for these vouchers, HRHA risks losing funding. **We have people who are approved for the voucher program and are in need of assistance. We have federal funding, support from local organizations such as OCP and VAIL, and supportive staff at HRHA that assist our landlords and tenants every step of the way. But we still need landlords in order to succeed in our mission.** Landlords have a unique opportunity to open their hearts and give someone the key to unlocking a fresh start, thanks to their participation as a Housing Choice Voucher landlord. When you work with HRHA, you gain access to a steady pool of renters, which you screen just as you would any other tenant, and are guaranteed a portion of the rent is paid directly to you on-time, every month by HRHA. HRHA increases the ease of building positive, long-lasting relationships with tenants, and the portion of rent HRHA pays even increases when tenant income decreases, ensuring timely payments every month.

Are you ready to make a difference?

- Share our [100 Families 100 Days web page](#) on your personal or professional social media platform and talk about the need for affordable housing and participating landlords with colleagues, friends, and family.
- On [Facebook](#), tag @Harrisonburgrha so landlords can connect with us!

Why become a landlord with HRHA?

- + Bonus financial incentives:
 - \$250 for leasing a new unit, \$400 for an accessible, 1-bedroom (through Sept 30, 2020 while funding lasts)
- + Guaranteed HCV portion of monthly rent payment through HRHA's direct deposit
- + Access to steady stream of renters
- + Full control over lease requirements, screening, and rent increases
- + Access to a damages funding after tenant moves out when you lease with new voucher tenant (up to \$700, while funding lasts)

Get started today at www.harrisonburgrha.com/landlords

Executive Director's Corner



COVID-19 has further exposed the linkage between health and housing, and the importance of safe and stable housing for all. The ability to self-isolate is one of the most important tools we have available to fight the pandemic. The need for the most vulnerable residents in our community to obtain and access permanent housing is more critical than ever. The development and implementation of our landlord recruitment and retention program - 100 families, 100 days - is our response to helping to address this need.

Landlords big or small are crucial partners in providing affordable housing. In fact, our community's ability to address and solve our local housing challenges is directly related to the involvement of landlords. Our largest housing assistance program, the Housing Choice Voucher program, is built on private landlord participation. Currently, the most reported difficulty of program participants is finding and accessing housing.

We recognize landlords balance many risks & complexities. To assist landlords, HRHA has implemented a brand new landlord portal, updated our landlord web page, launched online zoom information sessions, and reorganized staff to create a primary contact for each landlord.

Our success in housing 100 additional families in 100 days is directly related to and dependent on increasing landlord participation. We extend our sincere appreciation and thanks to the landlords currently participating in the program and encourage other landlords to consider becoming involved to help address this need.

- Michael Wong

July/August 2020

What a Voucher Means for Me

A voucher holder is a single mom or dad with kids, a disabled veteran, someone's grandparents, an immigrant family, or an individual without family in the area. There is much we could say here about what a voucher means for these individuals and families. We could show you the numbers, outline the challenges they face, and describe the conversations in our offices. However, we'd instead invite you to hear perspectives from just two of our 800+ HCV tenants, both single mothers, on what a housing voucher has meant for them.

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My goal from day one has always been to be able to live a life free of any government assistance. **I am a single mom of 3 and even after working 40+ hours a week could still not be able to make ends meet with out the assistance of the program.** I also have been able to attend some college classes to better my career which in the long run has helped me to receive a better pay. Because of the program I was able to be a full time student, mom, and still be able to provide a roof over their heads. **Families that receive the voucher are families just like everyone else in our community. They just need a chance to provide a home for their families.** The program helps financially with the percentage of rent the family can't afford and does inspections of the property to make sure that it is safe, clean and maintained. - T. S.

~

To be honest, having a voucher allowed me to succeed as a single mother, juggle important family matters, and complete my current educational goals. I don't think it would have been possible without it! I am now getting closer in time where I can build my own home and graduate from this stepping stone. Having the support of my current landlord, who will also be my builder, is what made this possible. **Before being accepted as a tenant, I found it difficult to find housing once I revealed my voucher.** I quickly learned how difficult it would be to find housing as property owners expressed their fear in how poverty stricken people may negatively impact their homes. Although there is always a risk when signing a lease with a future tenant, I think it would be beneficial for community members to understand the pros associated with this Section 8 (HCV) voucher specific program. The grant is funded to those who are deserving based off of interviews, references, and thorough financial accountability. There is also an agreement with the local Housing Authority to pay rent on time, maintain the property, and keep it clean. Accountability continues over time with home visits to ensure the property is safe and not neglected.



Belinda with her daughter Ava.
Photo and story shared with permission.

Since I was able to advocate for myself in finding housing, I now want to be a voice of hope to other future tenants. I also want to be an encouraging voice to property owners as well. **After listening, I understand the stigmas and fears landlords may face when being asked to accept a voucher that is unfamiliar to them. That is why I have shared my experience...** What many do not realize is that this program empowers the landlord to have a more satisfying experience with their tenant. You can guarantee that the voucher payment will be paid on time and that the renter will be no different than any other community member. Many tenants in [HRHA's Family Self-Sufficiency program](#), like me, will have personal goals to meet and be offered continuous educational tools for the sake of caring for their home, parenting more effectively, reaching educational goals, and ultimately, finding a happy workplace that is financially stable and rewarding.

Thanks for taking the time to hear my experience. Hopefully more people will understand how beneficial this program is to us as individuals and to our beloved Shenandoah Valley. - Belinda M.



Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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+ *HRHA Lineweaver & Annex*

Phone: (540)-433-0788

Website



www.harrisonburgrha.com

Facebook



[@harrisonburgrha](https://www.facebook.com/harrisonburgrha)

HRHA Board of Commissioners

The Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority is governed by a five-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Harrisonburg City Council. The Board establishes the Authority's policies and procedures and appoints the Executive Director.

Board of Commissioner meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00PM, at the Authority's administrative office located at 286 Kelley St., Harrisonburg, VA.

+ John Hall – Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

+ Scott Gallagher – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2020

+ Costella Forney – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Dany Fleming - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ *Open Position - Commissioner*

What HCV Landlords are Saying:

“Having spoken to my tenants and gaining a glimpse into their lives, I see how important this program is to them to provide safe, comfortable housing for their families. It has enabled them to raise children that have the ability to further their education and break the assistance cycle.”

- HCV Landlord

“It has been a pleasure to work with them. They reply and update me in every step of the way, on the financial status of the tenant and everything else in a timely and professional manner.”

- Hasan H., HCV Landlord

[Landlords get started today at](http://www.harrisonburgrha.com/landlords)

www.harrisonburgrha.com/landlords

“It’s not a sacrifice on our part – getting added to the list actually makes the apartment easier to advertise, and we receive most of the rent directly from HRHA each month. So in many ways it feels like a more secure financial decision and a way of making a difference in the affordable housing crisis in our community at the same time.”

- Emily B., HCV Landlord