

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

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



Boxes of Fresh Produce from Vine & Fig/Radical Roots, donated weekly by bike to residents at Lineweaver August 2020

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Interested in subscribing? Questions?
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Back to School



This year's back to school season has certainly proved challenging. Reconnecting with classmates is being done in new, digital ways. Student and teachers are having to become 'quick studies' on a variety of online tools and platforms. Online learning plans have working parents scrambling for childcare. It is a stressful and anxious time for many families. It is clear this school year will demand more from each of us.

We know many of these challenges will be with us through the rest of the year. But we are encouraged by the individuals, community, and government agencies responding to the ever-changing issues. Whether through food distribution, assistance with school supplies, or child care support, we see the ways our community continues to step up for one another.

In this issue we grab a snapshot of the current moment. For some of our residents, a chance to pursue further education of their own. For others, compounding challenges with childcare and work schedules. As we enter the final stretch of our 100 families campaign, many voucher holders are still searching for a place to rent. As an organization, we look to new opportunities as we continue pursuing becoming a Move to Work agency.

COVID19: "The push I needed"

Written by Angelica C., resident of Franklin Heights and Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Participant.

Why school? I've always wanted to go back to school, I just feel like being a mom had to come first and that means that school was on the back burner. I always felt like I had to work in order to provide a better life for my son but I was wrong. I can't do better for him if I don't do better for myself. With COVID-19 happening in the world, I felt like everything had slowed down. I went from working full time to only working two days a week. And I realized all the time I really did have. It reminded me of a conversation that I had with my grandma. She told me, "you are never too old to get an education" and that really stuck with me. With the world at a crawl and me with extra time, why couldn't I go back? So, instead of saying one day, I said today is the day.



Angelica C. 2020
Photo used with permission

I truly believe it takes five seconds to change something in your life. Count to five get up and do it don't think about anything else but that. COVID-19 gave me the push I needed. I was only working two days per week and playing video game to take up my other EXTRA time. Why not take that and learn something? I have no excuse now. I want to become an inspiration to my kids, my niece, and nephews.

I have decided to start with the Administrative Assistant Certificate Program through James Madison University. I love to work with people and also being on a computer. I'm not sure if this is where I will stay. But what I do know is that this is my first stepping stone and the sky is the limit. You will never know if you never try.

This year, more FSS participants than usual have signed up for classes, such as GED, certifications/technical training, healthcare certifications through Blue Ridge, and more. Having stable housing through the pandemic has been key in opening up these educational opportunities.

100 Families Housing Update

Families continue to search for stable, affordable housing, particularly as children require secure places to connect with virtual education. We continue working hard on our campaign to secure housing for 100 new families and individuals by September 30, 2020.



In the past few months we launched radio ads, held two additional landlord information sessions, connected with city leaders, and more. As of September 1, 2020, we have secured housing for 24 new families and have brought on 11 new landlords. We need your help! Have you reached out to your church or religious community about the need for landlords? Spoken with your neighbors? **Interested landlords and community members can check out our website for more information: www.harrisonburgrha.com/landlords**

Executive Director's Corner



Stable housing and the opportunity to access preschool and after school programs are critical for families to maximize their educational achievement and self-sufficiency. This important linkage is amplified during the COVID pandemic with the uncertainty of the upcoming school year and the limited availability of childcare. HRHA in partnership with the Harrisonburg Rockingham Boys and Girls Club is pleased to have secured 15 scholarships for teens and children aged 5-17 to support families residing in Franklin Heights and participants in the HCV Family Self-Sufficiency program.

To further support families becoming more self-sufficient, HRHA applied and was informed of its selection in the 1st Move to Work (MtW) cohort expansion, connected with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Being a MtW agency will allow the Authority to develop local policies that will promote program cost effectiveness, improve self-sufficiency outcomes of our participants, and increase housing choice.

This is an exciting opportunity and we look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from our residents and community partners as we develop our MtW plan.

- Michael Wong

HRHA Receives Grant to Build Garden

HRHA is thrilled to receive \$5,000 to support the development of a community garden that serves our families living in Harrison Heights. As part of Aramark's Building Community Initiative, HRHA worked with JMU Dining to request funds to support the development of a garden along Kelley Street. The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities approved the request late July and we are now working to coordinate next steps. While COVID has demanded flexibility, patience, and creative problem solving through this process, we are committed to breaking ground this year. We will be working with community partners and residents on establishing garden guidelines and a timeline.

If you are interested in supporting the garden and/or following along with our progress visit: www.harrisonburgha.com/garden or follow us on Facebook.

From a 400 Credit Score to Preparing for Home Ownership: 5 years in FSS

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is a 5-year program funded by HUD and coordinated by HRHA staff. Program participants work with one of our coordinators to establish goals around finance, education, work, and family at the start of the program. Participants sign a 5-year contract committing to work with us to reach their goals, increase their income, build savings, and become more self-sufficient.

The FSS program is one of our most successful programs. With their housing costs subsidized, individuals and families are better able to focus on other critical pieces of self-sufficiency. As participants increase their income in the program, a portion of their increased rent payment is put in a savings (escrow) account. This money becomes available to them upon program graduation. Every year graduates leave our program better equipped to support themselves and their families



Alina with her FSS Graduation Certificate - August 2020

This August, Alina Santos graduated from FSS. Alina started the program in 2015 without a job and with a substantial amount of debt. Through the five years, Alina worked with her FSS Coordinator to secure a job at Purdue and eventually Aarons, where she sees job growth opportunity. She worked on her financial literacy and management, paying off debts and raising her credit score from 400 to over 650. She began building an escrow (savings) as her income increased. She used some of her savings to buy a reliable car, saving the rest to have options for a down payment on a house down the road. She is currently working with our Homebuyer Assistance program and has completed the online homebuyer preparation course. Congratulations Alina!

Creative Avenues for Fresh Food Delivery



Volunteers with Vine & Fig (far left) with a weekly bike delivery of local produce for Lineweaver Residents. Members with Harrisonburg Baptist Church (left) prepare local cheese for delivery to Franklin Heights Residents. August 2020



Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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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 – Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

+ Costella Forney – Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Scott Gallagher – Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2020

+ Dany Fleming - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Michael Wong - Executive Director - Secretary/Treasurer

(Not a Commissioner)

Annual Plans Open for Public Review & Comment

The Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) announces that its proposed FY2021 Annual Plan, FY2021 Budget, Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, and Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policies for JR “Polly” Lineweaver, Lineweaver Annex, Franklin Heights and Commerce Village programs are available for public review and comment beginning August 19, 2020 through October 3, 2020. Copies may be obtained during office hours at the Authority’s administrative office, located at 286 Kelley Street, Harrisonburg, VA, as well as on our website:

www.harrisonburgrha.com/document-center

