

THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

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



Ingredients await assembly during a live cooking demo at the July 24 "Dinner in the Garden".
Photo by Emily Cozic - JMU Dining

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Interested in subscribing? Questions?
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Increasing Self-Sufficiency



We talk a lot about self-sufficiency at HRHA. It shows up in annual plans, agency goals, and the day to day work of our staff. Common definitions of "self-sufficiency" point to a person or organization's ability to 'survive' or maintain themselves without outside help or aid. But that total independence does not only feel counter to a healthy community, it doesn't account for the varied experiences and abilities of the families we serve.

In the context of the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, HUD defines self-sufficiency as, "a household's ability to maintain financial, housing, and personal/family stability." This means that we can collaborate with a family to increase their self-sufficiency whether they are on a fixed income, a single parent household, learning English, or any other scenario. It also means we work to expand self-sufficiency to include not only economic well-being, but stability around health, education, family, and more.

Our agency continues to expand our work in partnering with families to increase their self-sufficiency, through programs like FSS and agency wide changes with Moving to Work.

From Housing Assistance to Home Ownership

All participants who choose to enroll in the Family Self-Sufficiency program (FSS) are invited to establish goals when they sign the 5-year contract. Many participants aim to take the many steps needed to prepare for home ownership. This involves working on their credit, budgeting, securing a higher paying job, and learning about the home buying process.

In July, FSS participant Amber closed on her home and moved out of Franklin Heights. Amber joined FSS when she moved into Franklin Heights in 2019 and successfully worked through the program to secure a higher paying job. Amber shares her reflection about moving from housing assistance to home ownership.

"I was on the waiting list for what seemed to be a very long time. When I finally got a call I was so relieved due to being a single mother of two children and struggling with a stressful low wage job and life expenses. When I moved to the Franklin Heights neighborhood I found the most amazing neighbors, to what now feels like family. I joined the FSS program after a couple weeks of being in my apartment and I was beyond grateful for the wonderful people in the FSS community.



Amber and her two daughters at their new home. August 2021.
Photo used with permission

I loved the interaction, the encouragement, and being able to discuss my dreams. I got great advice and help with things I wanted out of life that I had no clue how to do myself or where to start. My FSS caseworker Everett made things so clear, easy and understanding. He was so helpful in helping me get my goals, dreams written down and kept me motivated to try my best with check ins each month. I went to school for medical assistance. I got an amazing job in the Healthcare industry. My children have grown and learned from this experience as well, watching me keep going on my goals. We have graduated from the FSS Program and we just moved into our new home. We have a new and bright outlook on life, and I give a great thanks to this community for their support."

MtW Final Plan Open for 45-Day Public Comment Period

HRHA's Moving to Work (MtW) final proposed plan will be available for public review and comment beginning August 18, 2021 through October 4, 2021. Copies may be obtained during office hours at HRHA's administrative offices located at 286 Kelley Street, 143 Reservoir Street, Commerce Village in Harrisonburg and on our website:
www.harrisonburghrha.com/mtw

Executive Director's Corner



This summer, HRHA staff has been extremely busy with collaborating with our residents and community stakeholders on developing our MTW plan, installation of a new security camera system for Franklin Heights and Lineweaver Apartments, application for funds to renovate Lineweaver Annex, and updating our annual plan and strategic goals.

Along with leasing up and housing new participants, staff have reinitiated inspections and preventive maintenance activities and completed a process to procure a new software system. Staff also coordinated a successful community dinner at the Kelley Street garden and are looking to schedule future events which link our residents with resources and provide us an opportunity to celebrate their successes.

I am appreciative of everyone's contributions and hard work to make for a successful Summer.

In service,

- Michael Wong

Staff Highlight: Zoe

HRHA manages a variety of programs, grants, and initiatives. We serve hundreds of families through housing vouchers, programs like Family Self-Sufficiency, and city-wide campaigns. Through 2021, we plan to highlight members of the HRHA team who make this work possible.

1. When did you start at HRHA and what brought you to the Housing Authority?

I started working at HRHA in October 2019. I was looking for an employment opportunity similar to my previous work experience; working with a diverse and vulnerable population to help them find solutions to their everyday challenges.

2. What is your role with HRHA?

I am the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Coordinator. My role as an FSS coordinator is to coach program participants, conduct needs assessments, provide referrals to services and training, and help participants stay on track to achieve their goals.



3. What project or partnership have you been most proud of during your time with HRHA?

The Christmas program has been my most proud project. In the last decade, the Harrisonburg community has provided gifts for families receiving housing assistance during the Christmas holiday. Seeing the gratitude and joy it brings to the families makes me proud to be a part of this project.

4. What do you love to do outside of work?

In my spare time, I enjoy spending time and playing with my big puppy, reading, and listening to music and podcasts. I also enjoy traveling and exploring new places.

5. Are there any upcoming projects or partnerships that you are excited about?

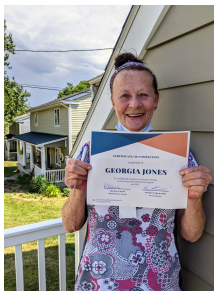
I am excited about the new changes in the FSS program through Moving to Work (MtW). I think that the new Goal Rewards Program in FSS will further motivate participants to achieve their goals.

6. What do you wish more people in our community knew about affordable housing, our families, or the voucher program?

I wish people would learn more about affordable housing and the voucher program to eliminate misconceptions about families dependency or work ethic. Programs like FSS provide voucher recipients with the resources, knowledge, and coaching they need to be self-sufficient and become less dependent on welfare assistance.

Expanding Self-Sufficiency

While a number of residents move to homeownership each year, self-sufficiency for others centers around maintaining financial, housing, and personal/family stability. As HRHA houses based on greatest need, many of our residents and participants face significant financial, physical, mental, health, family, and other challenges. Supporting the self-sufficiency of our residents and participants starts with affordable and secure housing. With that base, a variety of community partnerships and programs help residents and participants find stability in their lives.



FSS graduate Georgia spent 5 years in the program prepping for retirement by increasing her income, opening a bank account, and securing her own vehicle through Way to Go, July 2021.



The Kelley Street Garden aims to support resident's self-sufficiency through fresh food access and ownership. The garden also provides space for strengthening community connections. July 2021.



Since 2007, HRHA has contracted with VAIL to help connect residents at Lineweaver with local supportive services. This assistance is crucial in helping residents maintain their housing.



Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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Waiting List & Applications

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Website



www.harrisonburgrha.com

Facebook



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

HRHA Board of Commissioners

HRHA is governed by a seven-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.

Meeting location/access will be posted prior to meetings and in line with local health guidelines.

+ Michael Wong, (Not a commissioner)

Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer

+ Dany Fleming - Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Christine Fasching Maphis - Vice Chair

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Jody Johannessen

Term Expires: November 29, 2022

+ Kevin Coffman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2023

+ Luciano Benjamin - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2024

+ Gil Colman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2021

+ Shonda Green - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2024

Back to School Kits

A huge thank you to Target, Emily S.L. & the members of 'Be a Blessing', Judith F, Kim H, and others who helped support our Back to School Kit effort this year. The need was great, but we were still able to assemble and provide over 40 kits for families and were able to direct families to other agencies and partners providing kits this year.

Thank you for your support!



FSS
Participant
Cora with
School Kits.
August 2021