

# THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

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



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## Starting 2026 with Financial Confidence

On January 14, HRHA hosted Financial Reset 2026: Money Management Toolkit, a virtual financial wellness workshop designed to help residents start the year with confidence and clarity. The session was led by Sarah Landram, Financial Wellness Program Manager from DuPont Community Credit Union (DCCU), who shared practical strategies for building strong financial habits, including budgeting basics, saving for emergencies, and setting short- and long-term financial goals.

The presentation emphasized the importance of understanding one’s current financial situation as the foundation for financial well-being, defined as the ability to meet obligations, feel secure about the future, and enjoy life. Residents learned how to turn dreams into actionable SMART goals, create spending plans, and track expenses to identify common “spending leaks.” Savings strategies such as automating transfers and using unexpected income wisely were also discussed, along with free financial wellness resources available through DCCU.

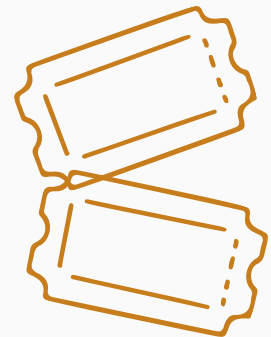
Participants were actively engaged throughout the session and expressed appreciation for the clear, supportive approach to money management. Many shared that the workshop helped them feel more confident and motivated to make small, consistent changes that support long-term financial stability in 2026 and beyond.

# Court Square Theater

In December 2025, Valley Arts Council announced that they would be ceasing operations of Court Square Theater effective December 31, 2025. As the owner of the theater, HRHA stepped in to work with interested community members, non-profits, and theater groups to find a path forward to keep the theater open and to continue to provide a performance space in downtown Harrisonburg.



In early January 2026, HRHA signed a year long lease with ACT ONE Theater Company who agreed to take on the management and operations of the theater space. Staff from ACT ONE are actively working to book performances throughout 2026 and to continue to make this space available to the community.



So far, HRHA has raised nearly \$8,000 to help offset operational costs such as utility expenses, maintenance and upkeep, and insurance payments. In February 2025, HRHA will host a series of community meetings to gather public input on the future of Court Square Theater. The theater has been in operation for over 20 years and has been a beloved downtown performance space, hosting local regional, and national performers. In the past, HRHA has redeveloped buildings like 41 Court Square and brought restaurants, museums, and theater spaces to downtown Harrisonburg.

# Community Resource Spotlight:



In our newsletters, we will highlight non-profits and service organizations that provide resources in our community and surrounding areas. In this issue, we speak with Rachel Gagliardi, Program Director of Gus Bus, an innovative after-school program organization focused on serving students in 5 schools throughout Harrisonburg.

## **What role does your organization play in addressing community needs?**

Gus Bus is an after-school program that brings learning directly into the community through mobile classrooms, eliminating common access barriers such as transportation, language, and cost. By meeting students where they are, Gus Bus fills a gap in after-school care for families who may not otherwise be able to access these programs. We host 1-hour sessions focused on literacy, math, science, and cross-curricular learning that reinforce classroom instruction in a fun and engaging way.

In addition to academic enrichment, Gus Bus offers targeted tutoring through its Elevators program and social-emotional learning through Planet Wellness, which was developed in response to school requests following the pandemic. Guided by the 5 CASEL framework, these programs provide students with structure, routine, and a safe space to build confidence, develop coping skills, and support their overall well-being.

## **Are there any misconceptions about the services Gus Bus provides?**

One common misconception is that Gus Bus is a mobile library. While students can check out books, our buses are actually classrooms. We provide structured academic lessons and skill-building activities, increased access to books, and more. Another important thing to know is that if families see the Gus Bus in their neighborhood, students are welcome to say “hi” and join us. Registration materials are available in up to 9 languages, and students receive permission slips and schedules on the bus. Schools help distribute recruitment materials, and our schedules are updated each semester on our website and social media.

## **What’s one thing you wish more people in the community knew about your organization? What is a key lesson that you’ve learned with Gus Bus?**

We want people to understand just how valuable out-of-school learning can be. We see firsthand how students benefit both academically and behaviorally when they have access to consistent, enriching after-school programming. Research supports this, and our daily experiences confirm it —after-school learning truly makes a difference.

One of the most important lessons we’ve learned is the value of being flexible and responsive. When something isn’t working, we’re willing to take risks, try new approaches, and adapt based on community needs. Staying dynamic allows us to serve families better and continue improving our programs.



# Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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## Website



[www.harrisonburgrha.com](http://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

- + Gil Colman - Commissioner  
Term Expires: November 29, 2029
- + Luciano Benjamin - Commissioner  
Term Expires: November 29, 2028
- + Amanda Morris - Commissioner  
Term Expires: November 29, 2027
- + Dr. Sam Nickels - Commissioner  
Term Expires: August 24, 2029
- + Anthony Hayes - Commissioner  
Term Expires: February 11, 2028
- + Amanda Leech - Commissioner  
Term Expires: October 13, 2028
- + Janet Awkard-Rogers - Commissioner  
Term Expires: April 25, 2027