



CMHA Celebrates 75 Years of Public Housing Achievements



Left: Olde Cedar Estates, CMHA's first housing site, was constructed and occupied by residents in 1937 in Cleveland, Ohio.

Right: Today, many residents occupy its newer high-rise property.

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority's genesis can be traced back to the Great Depression. Overcrowding and deterioration of properties forced many families across the nation to live in makeshift shelters and slum conditions. In Cleveland, City Councilman Ernest Bohn worked hard to establish a decent housing replacement for the unsafe and unsanitary shanties where low-income families lived.

In 1933 the State of Ohio chartered the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority as an advisory and coordinating entity to improve housing for low-income families and to eliminate slums. As a result, CMHA became the first housing authority chartered in the United States.

With the passage of the U.S. Housing Act in 1937, CMHA was granted authority to plan, construct, and manage federally subsidized housing facilities. That same year, tenants began to occupy Olde Cedar Estates, CMHA's first housing development. As CMHA (the "C" now stands for Cuyahoga County) celebrates 75 years, it continues its mission to be the leader in providing safe, quality and affordable housing for individuals and families of Cuyahoga County.

One of the ten largest public housing authorities in the nation, CMHA has come a long way since Olde Cedar Estates. CMHA pioneered projects including high-rise buildings for the elderly, scattered-site housing throughout the city, and the use of defensible space design concepts to modernize family units.

Today, CMHA owns and manages 60 public housing sites and administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP). HCVP is a CMHA rent subsidy program that provides eligible low-income persons alternative housing through thousands of private landlords. In addition, the Authority maintains an accredited police department and a social services department that develops programs to enhance the quality of life of its nearly 17,000 residents and 14,000 HCVP participants.

As CMHA celebrates 75 years of public housing achievements, the Authority can be proud of its unique and progressive offerings, including:

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CMHA residents, staff and construction workers are all smiles after completing their new KABOOM playground last summer.

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Construction is all complete on CMHA's newest children's playground.

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A diverse selection of housing choices

From its riverfront high rises and restored apartment dwellings, to modernized family townhouses and homes, CMHA offers residents a wide array of housing selections tailored to individual or family needs.

The agency's 19 senior citizen properties are the perfect choice for independent senior living for those 62 years of age and older.

The newly developed Doris V. Jones Place at Riverside Park Estates boasts a state-of-the-art energy-efficient building with 28 senior citizen units and 62 family units. It also has scenic balconies, a welcoming community room and a full kitchen.

Tremont Pointe is a newly revitalized mixed income community featuring 95 public housing units, 33 tax credit units, 62 market rate units and 24 new homes for sale.

Homeownership programs and opportunities

CMHA's Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program (HCVHP) offers eligible families the chance to move from renting to owning a home. Prospective participants are screened for eligibility and go through a credit check. Those who qualify for the program must then fill out a lengthy application and attend a 16-week pre-purchase counseling session. Applicants secure their own mortgage financing and find their own home. But CMHA is there every step of the way to provide guidance and safeguards for participants, including protections against loan fraud.



Many CMHA residents gain skills and are employed through CMHA's innovative programs.

Supportive services for residents

Helping families and individuals achieve economic self-sufficiency is an important goal for CMHA. Residents may need access to supportive services to develop certain life skills and the essential tools for success. The Authority has forged partnerships with community agencies and non-profit organizations equipped to meet the full range of needs of CMHA residents in the areas of health, education and social service. Such necessary services include:

- Job skills and entrepreneurship training
- Family supportive and referral services
- Youth education and recreation services
- Senior socialization and supportive services
- Health and wellness services, including a primary clinic
- Substance abuse treatment
- Child care

CMHA operates the Carl B. Stokes Social Services Mall as a "one-stop shopping" resource for supportive services.

Building a sustainable CMHA

In today's environment of shrinking natural resources and soaring energy costs, it is important for everyone to change their patterns of consumption to conserve precious resources. This pattern of conservation, known as sustainability, is intended to ensure that future generations are able to meet their energy needs.

CMHA has launched two major sustainability projects and continues to search for additional opportunities for staff and residents to reduce their consumption of energy and natural resources. CMHA has upgraded and replaced plumbing fixtures, windows, roofs, lighting, and heating and cooling systems with new state-of-the-art water conserving and energy efficient equipment. The result---CMHA took a huge step toward reducing its consumption of water, electricity, and natural gas.

Second, the Authority started a mixed paper and corrugated cardboard recycling pilot at six of its administrative offices. The recycling and other initiatives will move CMHA further towards its commitment to the ideals of sustainability: reuse, recycle, respect, reduce, and rethink.

CMHA residents enjoy utilizing the new award-winning Judge Sara J. Harper Library.



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Workforce and job skills development

In 2006, CMHA launched YouthBuild, part of a national community and workforce development program devoted to inspiring low-income young adults to rebuild their communities and their lives with a commitment to work, education, responsibility, and family. The program focuses on education, leadership, financial literacy, life skills, and workforce development. Additionally, CMHA collaborated with Towards Employment to implement a simulation work program. The program was titled “Rhythm Rack” and the theme focused around customer service.

Generation Success: Teens Achieving Greatness

Formerly known as “Do the Right Thing,” the Generation Success youth employment and leadership program has been a part of CMHA for more than 16 years. Students participating in the program are able to experience success and gain a sense of responsibility by working in an office environment, while also attending workshops and field trips. A Leadership Academy has recently been developed to provide further enrichment. The academy was modeled after successful youth programs around the country. In the spring of 2008, GSTAG students produced “Real Talk,” a special Call & Post publication, featuring CMHA student journalists.

Progressive Action Council

Established in 1989, the Progressive Action Council (PAC) is one of the Housing Authority’s most important and committed partners. The PAC is recognized by CMHA as the Authority-wide residents’ organization. The residents of CMHA elect delegates to PAC, which in turn, serves as their resource for information, as well as an advocate when residents want to voice opinions regarding their homes at CMHA.

Health Fairs

The CMHA Health Fairs and Annual Fun and Fitness Day involve residents and employees of all ages in celebrating health through education, games and entertainment.

Water Parks

The Woodhill Homes Estate Water Splash Park is a unique and dramatic enhancement to the outdoor recreation area, serving more than 450 children over the age of 13. The water park has been replicated at three other CMHA properties with the assistance of local foundations and public support.

Judge Sara Harper Children’s Library

Since its founding in the early 1990’s, The Sara J. Harper Library, located at the Outhwaite Homes Estates, has been the home of a unique collection of Afrocentric books and educational games to prepare our young leaders for the successes of tomorrow.

The library continues to grow, having received generous donations of new children’s books to augment and update the current collection. In addition, the library has also received a generous donation of computers, which allows CMHA children to have greater access to technology and the internet.

Congressman Louis Stokes Museum

In 2007 CMHA opened its new Louis Stokes Museum in honor of the retired, 15 consecutive term Congressman from Ohio. The museum is a fitting tribute to the Congressman, who, along with his brother and former Cleveland Mayor Carl, was raised in CMHA’s Outhwaite Homes. The Louis Stokes Museum houses Stokes memorabilia, video interviews, miscellaneous video footage, awards and a written history about Stokes and his rise to prominence. The museum is located at Outhwaite Homes. *Continued on page 5*

The award-winning Lonnie Burten Learning Garden program helps CMHA’s youth learn about agriculture and commerce.



Latin dancers, Jose Ramirez and Company, entertained the Spanish American Festival audience.



CMHA Holds First Annual Spanish American Festival

CMHA held its first annual Spanish American Heritage Festival this summer at the Riverside Park Community Center. The goal of this event was to increase cultural awareness.

Over 200 people attended the festivities that began at 4 p.m. and went on into the night. With 12 vendors, from all over the Cleveland area, and numerous beneficial resources in Spanish and English, the event was a massive success for the community residents. The festival included historical displays, information on the rich heritage of Spanish Americans and a parade of flags led by the resident children. Latin dancers Jose Ramirez and Company, singers, and musicians entertained the crowd. A wonderful array of culinary cuisine was also provided.

"This event was a nice idea so that people could get to know more about the Spanish culture. I'm impressed with the display of countries, traditions and customs plus the dancers, music, and food were all outstanding," said Mayra Torres, a CMHA resident.

Speakers included Michael Burns, a CMHA Self-Sufficiency Coordinator, Carolyn Gaiter, Director of CMHA Asset Management, Andres Gonzalez, CMHA Chief of Police, George Phillips, CMHA Chief Executive Officer and Safety Director, and a special heartfelt speech from Judge Jazmin Torres-Lugo.

Judge Torres-Lugo shared her inspiring story with the audience, where she specifically addressed the youth and said that if they strive to do their best, they will achieve greatness in life. "If we unite, the city, state, and nation can be a wonderful place to live. God bless you all," concluded Judge Torres-Lugo.

"How can we bring the Spanish Community together? And what can we do together to celebrate Spanish American Heritage month?" These questions along with a lot of heart and soul from Burns, created and molded this event into something bigger and better than anyone expected. "We hope to do this again next year and the year after that to continue the momentum and excitement that was generated by the community." 🏠

Garden Valley Plan

CMHA's Garden Valley demolition and construction project is well underway. Demolition is set to be completed in January 2009. The start of site preparation and construction is scheduled to begin in April 2009. Financing for Phase I should be completed in April 2009 and CMHA will again apply for a federal HOPE VI grant in 2009.

The proposed new development includes: 81 new housing units; a new Anton Grdina School (K-8); and relocated basketball courts and play area.

Public officials including Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson (pictured 4th from right) CMHA Board members, staff, residents and others attended the Garden Valley Demolition Ceremony this past summer.





Children from CMHA's King Kennedy property are all smiles and proud of their accomplishments after clinching the championship trophy.

Developing Youth Is A Major Part Of The Game

In a joint effort between CMHA and the Cleveland Baseball Federation, a Youth Baseball League was recently revitalized to provide an excellent outlet to channel our young people's minds and energy while teaching responsibility and team building tools.

The teams were comprised of 85 boys and girls, ages 9-15. They reside at CMHA's King Kennedy, Wilson Family, Lakeview, and Addison Townhouse properties. Youth also represented the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center.

"This program provided some positive, constructive competition for our residents. The kids really gained a sense of pride and belonging with their teams," said Shaun Reed, CMHA Housing Operations Administrator and volunteer coach. "Sports can teach self esteem, values and life lessons, which are important when growing up."

The resident league is a seven-week single elimination format, with play-offs and a championship at the end of the season. The two teams with the best records competed in the final championship.

This year King Kennedy ended with the championship prize and was recognized at the sit-down banquet, held this summer at the newly renovated Lakeview Community Center. More than 150 family members and players attended the event.

"After 16 years of working with youth and sports, I've never been more proud than I was witnessing the pride, commitment, dedication and determination these young people exhibited," said Tony Jeffries, who recruited, managed, and implemented the youth league. "They were true practitioners of the concept of teamwork and the virtue of unity."

CMHA provides equipment and transportation to the league's children. This program helps to build character and teach critical skills in life to disadvantaged youth residing in Cuyahoga County.

"We are proud to collaborate with CMHA on this partnership and are absolutely committed to enhancing the community by supporting kids who need this type of outlet to succeed in the future," said John Carter, Executive Director of the Cleveland Baseball Federation. 🏠

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Awards for innovative programs and services

Over the years, CMHA has received recognition for its innovative programs and initiatives. In 2008, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) honored CMHA with Awards of Excellence for groundbreaking programs and initiatives including: its Energy Conservation and Performance project, the Lonnie Burten Learning Garden, and the Tremont Point Community construction project.

The following projects received NAHRO Awards of Merit: the Sara J. Harper Children's Library, the Lakeview Terrace Community Center renovation project, the Doris V. Jones Place at Riverside Park Estates construction project, the Landlord/Community Partners Conference, the Landlord Briefings program and the Landlord Tax Delinquency program. 🏠


HCVP Offers Training for Landlords

In today's economic environment, more and more property owners are becoming first-time landlords. Many single-family homes are transitioning from owner-occupied to rental properties, and community codes and expectations are changing. Now more than ever, owners of rental property owe it to themselves and their tenants to become better educated about this business, and the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) is here to help.

"This is an opportunity to take some of the surprises out of rental management and maintenance," said Priscilla Pointer-Hicks, Director of the HCVP. "Landlords are our partners, and good partners keep each other informed of industry and community developments."

Owners new to the HCVP are now required to participate in a free, 2-hour briefing before signing a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract. The class provides extensive information and access to a wide range of community resources. The result is a better understanding of the HCVP rules, community expectations, municipal requirements, best practices for rental property owners, and marketing tips.

The HCVP will also offer three new off-site workshops in 2009 for landlords under current HAP contracts. These free 2-hour brown-bag workshops will bring together HCVP staff, rental industry experts and community officials to fully address some of the most frequently asked questions about landlord responsibilities, both inside and outside of the Program.

Quarterly briefing and off-site workshop schedules are posted at www.cmha.net. Go to the HCVP tab and choose Landlord Training or call (216) 426-2808 for more information. 

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CMHA Mission

The mission of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority is to be the leader in providing safe, quality and affordable housing for individuals and families of Cuyahoga County.

CMHA serves Cuyahoga County, excluding Chagrin Falls Township, through two federally assisted housing programs; Low-Income Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program.

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