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Member Feedback

Do you need help with a project or issue and want to see if any of our readers have the answer? Has a colleague done something wonderful that deserves an attaboy or attagirl? Or are you just frustrated and want to vent? Here is your chance to (anonymously if you wish) say thanks, ask for assistance, vent your frustrations, express your opinion or let us know how you feel.

- We congratulate the HA of the City of Fort Myers for its receipt of \$321,960 in VASH funds. The presentation was



Armando Fana, HUD Miami field office director, presents a check representing VASH funds to Marcus Goodson, HACFM executive director.



made during the Southwest Coast Homeless Workshop on July 11.

- Congratulations to the Broward County HA on its receipt of \$895,000 in Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The funds will be used to help chronically homeless military veterans and their families find a permanent place to call home.

If you would like to contribute to Sounding Off, please email your comments to Susan Trainor, FAHROgram editor, editor.trainor@gmail.com.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued from page 1

The above accomplishments could not have been achieved without the comprehensive teamwork that is FAHRO. We are clearly moving this member organization in the right direction, and I anticipate more good works under the leadership of incoming President Maria Burger and the new FAHRO board of directors. Being president of FAHRO has been one of the highlights of my professional career in public housing. The care the FAHRO staff provides to the president cannot be overstated; it creates an atmosphere of professionalism and a road map for success.

One of my goals was to create a FAHRO where we spoke with one voice when we spoke as FAHRO. I think in some small way we have been able to speak with that one voice on housing issues, which I believe has had a greater impact in Washington. Although I must admit, when I am alone with myself, I question whether we are making a difference in Washington given the ridiculous and unreasonable funding levels we now face. Nonetheless, FAHRO will continue to lead the charge and fight the good fight. Don't forget we were the first public housing member organization to draft and send a letter to Congress and HUD requesting regulatory relief in both

the public housing and Section 8 programs as a result of historically low and insufficient funding levels for these programs.

We must continue to promote all the good we do at FAHRO to the remaining nonmember housing agencies in Florida. We have made strides by recruiting eight nonmembers back to FAHRO, but there are others that need to feel the embrace that only we as members can provide.

If you would indulge me for the last time, I would like to thank the following people who made my term as president memorable and who supported me without fail: the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers board of commissioners and staff, Lee County Housing Authority board of commissioners and staff, Cheryl LaBelle, my administrative assistant and right arm, the FAHRO staff and board of directors and finally, my wife, Von, and daughter, Kristen, who support me through it all. Many thanks to all of these and to the many other people who are too numerous to name.

With warmest regards,

Marcus D. Goodson

Bill Russell Selected to 32nd Leadership Florida Class



William (Bill) Russell III, executive director of the Sarasota Housing Authority, has been selected to participate in the 32nd Leadership Florida class (2013-2014). Leadership Florida is a highly respected and trusted leadership organization celebrating 31 years of educating, engaging and inspiring Florida's leaders. Russell was chosen along with 54 other leaders from throughout Florida to participate in the eight-month-long educational program.


The program consists of a series of five two- and three-day sessions held in cities throughout the state, the culmination of which is the equivalent of a sixth session where participants join fellow Leadership Florida members at the annual meeting.

Training Sessions Address Issues Critical to Florida

The Leadership Florida training sessions include programming on issues critical to Florida; leadership skills assessment and training; and relevant information on Florida's history, demography, diversities, challenges and opportunities.

"It is an honor to be one of the 55 Floridians selected for Leadership Florida's 32nd class," Russell says. "I expect to discover valuable information about Florida; enhance leadership skills; and foster lasting connections with fellow leaders from a variety of professions, philosophies and communities throughout the state that will benefit our organization and our community for years to come."



Applicants for Leadership Florida must be senior-level leaders with significant career and community achievements who have expressed a sincere concern about the future of Florida and have made a personal commitment to help shape it. 

Attention Members! Keep FAHRO Up-to-Date!

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Thank you!



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GHA Resident Gets a Taste of Her Hoped-for Career in the Law

by Sandra Bentil, Saxon, Gilmore, Carraway & Gibbons PA

Though providing affordable housing comes with a host of challenges, stories of success abound.

Alisha Clayton, a resident at a Gainesville Housing Authority (GHA) property, is a shining example of the important role affordable housing plays in providing safe homes for families. According to GHA's vision statement, the agency hopes to provide a foundation for achieving self-sufficiency and improving its residents' quality of life, a goal that Alisha is well on her way to achieving.

Alisha is the 2013 Alachua County Boys and Girls Club Youth of the Year and holds numerous other accolades, both in academic and extracurricular activities. She lives with her mother and siblings in public housing and has managed to accomplish quite a bit, despite several life challenges. She is a straight-A student in the 9th grade at P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School (the laboratory school associated with the University of Florida).

Alisha got involved with the Boys and Girls Club in her neighborhood. After a club official spoke at a GHA board meeting about Alisha being selected as the Alachua County Youth of the Year, and her dream to one day own a law firm, attorney Ricardo Gilmore (legal counsel for GHA) extended an invitation for her to spend a day at his Tampa-based law firm Saxon, Gilmore, Carraway & Gibbons PA.

"Oftentimes Alisha gets thrown off from achieving her goals because she sees herself being at a disadvantage due to her race. During this experience I wanted Alisha to not only gain more interest in becoming an attorney but also for her to see the ability to accomplish what she desires in spite of being a minority," says Fremon Williams, program director of the Alachua County Boys and Girls Club.

Alisha, her mother and sister met with Gilmore and his staff, who almost exclusively work with various Florida housing authorities. They also spoke with several other attorneys, including the firm's managing partner, Bernice Saxon.

"She is very well spoken, energetic and enthusiastic, all of which will contribute to her future success in whatever she undertakes," says Saxon, who engaged Alisha in a conversation about her interest in the law.

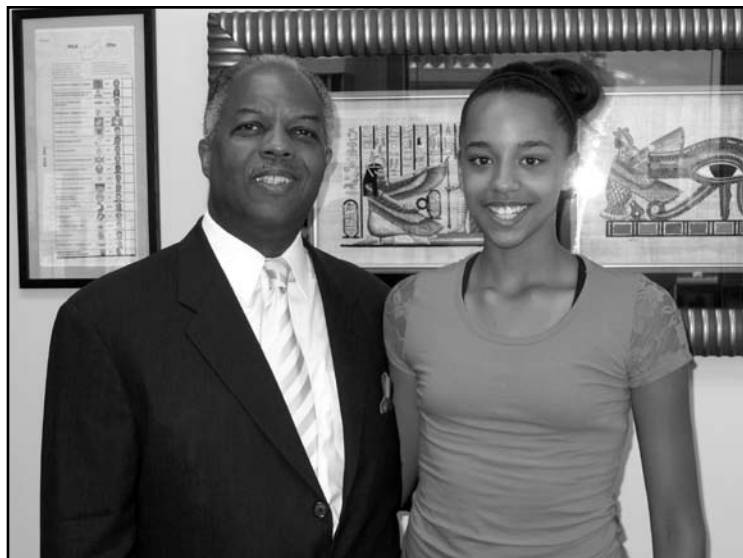
After being treated to lunch, the family was escorted to the George E. Edgecomb Courthouse by attorney Suzanne DeCoppain. There, Alisha had the opportunity to visit a courtroom and witness a trial for the first time.

"She was very intrigued; she had specific questions about the felony trial, which shows she is already forming an analytical mind, and was very eager and enthusiastic to learn," DeCoppain says.

As the firm's newest lawyer, DeCoppain said that having the chance to provide this experience to a young person hoping to join the legal field was a privilege.

Along with speaking to lawyers who specialize in different areas, Alicia said sitting in on the trial was her favorite part of the visit.

"Now that I have been to court, I feel like that's for me, like I'm supposed to be there. If I keep working hard, I will get there. That will be me."



Ricardo Gilmore and Alisha Clayton

When asked if she could sum up her experience in one word, she immediately said, "Incredible!"

"It is so nice to see an accomplished young person with such clear career goals. I have no doubt in my mind that we will one day have to make room on the Saxon, Gilmore, Carraway & Gibbons PA sign for a Clayton," says Gilmore.

"GHA is hoping that more businesses will take the time to mentor our children and encourage them in their career goals. Our youth need to know that their dreams are obtainable ... so dare to dream it can one day be your reality," says GHA Executive Director Pam Davis. "GHA salutes Ms. Alisha Clayton, one of our young, great future leaders of America. We are so proud of you!" 🌸

E.D.'s CORNER continued from page 1

Perhaps some of those people cross over to become personal friends, but if we are truly honest, we know we would lose contact with most of the people in our business sphere if we were to change careers.

So, why is this important? Simply stated, in the context of our business relationships, our entire existence is, in fact, our jobs. If you agree with that assertion, I'd like to recommend to you some important questions I regularly ask myself: What does the job I do say about me as a person? Am I providing the best service? Does my involvement in each situation evoke trust and confidence from others? Shouldn't it?

We all have bad days. I trust that is all it was for that waitress, who unquestionably did not deserve the poor treatment she received because of her mistake. I know it was "just a movie," but we can hope, however, that a real-life waitress in her position would have reflected on her work and whether she was doing all she could to be the very best at her job, with mistakes being the exception and not the rule. As my grandmother used to say, "Anything worth doing is worth doing right. Do it with pride!" 🌸

Tampa Housing Authority Is Minority Nonprofit of the Year

During its recent annual Let's Do Business Florida Summit, the Florida Minority Community Reinvestment Coalition (FMCRC) named the Tampa Housing Authority as the 2013 Minority Nonprofit of the Year. The event, sponsored by Hyundai, recognized the top five entities vying to gain recognition for their respective organizations: the Center for Affordable Home Ownership - Tampa Housing Authority, the Council for Filipino American Organizations of Central Florida (Orlando), Miami Dade Affordable Housing Foundation, The Need to Feed Inc. (Hollywood) and Paragon Foundation of Palm Beach County (West Palm Beach).


As the overall winner, the Tampa Housing Authority's Center for Affordable Homeownership received a fully loaded 2013 Hyundai Sonata GLS. The vehicle, donated by Zafar Brooks, director of diversity and community affairs for Hyundai Motor USA, will be wrapped with advertising stating that THA is the FMCRC's 2013 Nonprofit of the Year.

THA President/CEO Jerome Ryans says, "Detra Smith, center manager, and David Iloanya, director of real estate development, have done a yeoman's job of turning that department around by providing award-winning services to this community."

The Center for Affordable Homeownership extends and sustains homeownership opportunities to all interested/eligible residents in the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County. It



Detra Smith, THA homeownership center manager, is all smiles behind the wheel of the agency's new Hyundai Sonata. Joining her are David Iloanya, THA director of real estate development; Al Pina, FMCRC chair; and Zafar Brooks, director of diversity and community affairs, Hyundai Motor USA.

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Winter Haven Housing Authority Receives NAHRO Merit Award

The Winter Haven Housing Authority is the recipient of the prestigious National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) Award of Merit for the opening of its education facility, Journey Learning Center, at Lake Deer Apartments.

“NAHRO members have been leading the way with innovative solutions to address resident services, management and operations; affordable housing preservation and sustainable development; and economic revitalization in their communities,” says NAHRO President Betsey Martens. “They have stepped up, taken advantage of opportunities to find new and creative ways to address local housing needs, and we are proud to recognize their achievements.”

At the learning center, honor students from Polk State College’s Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School, as part of the school’s community service and learning in action initiative, mentor K-8th grade public housing youth two days a week in the areas of reading, English, math and science. In addition to youth tutoring, the housing authority is hoping to expand its tutoring options for adult residents and better prepare them for the ultimate goal of self-sufficiency.

“While the future of housing authorities and community development agencies has never been more uncertain with the



High school honor students mentor young housing authority residents at WHA’s Journey Learning Center.

sequester and continuing budget shortfalls, these awards showcase those agencies and authorities who overcame the adversities and flourished,” says NAHRO CEO Saul N. Ramirez, Jr. “This year’s award winners have proven themselves to not only be collaborators, forward thinkers and at times, creative geniuses, but they are also economic drivers and change agents in their community.”

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Pinellas County Housing Authority Provides Training, Receives NAHRO Merit Awards

Pinellas County Housing Authority (PCHA) has been chosen the winner of two prestigious National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) Awards of Merit for its innovative administrative work.

The awards recognize outstanding achievement in housing and community development programs throughout the nation. PCHA received awards for its Educational Contractors Workshops and its Peer to Peer Training Program.

PCHA determined that many contractors find the housing authority bidding procedures overwhelming due to the amount of paperwork and the bonding requirements. In an effort to better inform the local contracting community on the various types of solicitations and their differing requirements, PCHA held educational workshops for contractors providing various types of services. Two

types of workshops were presented: 1) a general how-to workshop titled "How to Do Business With PCHA"; and 2) a workshop aimed to simplify contractors' understanding of the requirements relating to the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts.

As HUD regulations change and PHA policies are revised, training is key to maintaining efficient and effective operations in the Housing Choice Voucher program. Continuous learning opportunities are necessary to reinforce regulatory requirements and agency policies and procedures to maintain high performance. In a climate of significant funding decreases, it is more important than ever to use innovative, cost-saving training techniques to continuously improve and maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of HCV program operations without significantly impacting the budget. PHA implemented its Peer to Peer Training Program to meet these needs. 🌴

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Mission Statement

FAHRO is committed to the professional development of the people who provide public and assisted housing in Florida by offering a network for increased communication and education. We will continue to support legislation for the improvement and development of affordable housing and economic opportunities.

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