

# FAHROgram

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS

November/December 2015

## President's Message

### FAHRO Unity

It is truly an honor to begin my service as president of FAHRO for the 2015-2017 term. You have provided me with an excellent board of directors with whom to work. I am very appreciative of this group of leaders, given the large shoes we have to fill left by Maria Burger and her team, who so aptly led us during the last two years.

My theme for my term is *FAHRO Unity*. The purpose of this theme is to remind us that we must be unified in facing our challenges—unified as agencies of different sizes, from different regions, with different populations and different needs. We are all unified, however, by our mutual role of

“housers.” Only by understanding each other’s needs and uniting to see that these needs are all met can we be truly successful.

Unity will reach beyond the FAHRO family as well. We will seek other partners who share our vision and want to unite for our cause—uniting with our sister associations in other states and regions as well as nationally; with our residents; with low-income



Miquell Del Campillo

See **PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE** on page 2

## State Legislative Affairs

### Third Time’s a Charm?

by Oscar Anderson, FAHRO State Affairs Consultant

The Florida Legislature has just begun a third Special Session to work on redrawing the Senate districts to be more consistent with the Fair District Amendment passed by the voters back in 2012. After a recent attempt to redraw the congressional districts was unsuccessful, the buzz around the Capitol is that the Legislature will be unsuccessful this time as well. In the meantime, the Legislature is having a few committee meetings during this Special Session on redistricting, but generally is not taking up many bills to work on at this point. The “slow start” is of some concern only because time will be such a commodity in the short 60-day Regular Session.

At the latest Revenue Estimating Conference in Tallahassee, the state forecasters predicted \$323 million in the housing trust funds for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Broken

down, the totals are \$226 million in SHIP and \$97 million in SAIL. The Legislature has been sweeping less of the trust funds in recent years, so the next few months will be vital to see where the appropriations committees set the baseline for the budgets that include the housing trust funds. As we do every year, FAHRO will join with the Sadowski Coalition to push for full funding of the housing trust funds because of their enormous positive impact on Florida’s economy as well as in meeting the severe housing needs in our community.



Oscar Anderson

See **STATE LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS** on page 2

## Calendar

November 8-10, 2015  
Jacksonville, Fla.  
**SERC Fall Workshop**

January 18, 2016  
Chiefland, Fla.

**FAHRO Regional Training  
Public Housing Specialist**

February 17, 2016  
Ft. Myers, Fla.

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Phone: 305/532-6401 • Fax: 305/674-8001  
Email: mdelcampillo@mbha.org

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11479 Ulmertown Rd., Largo, FL 33778  
Phone: 727/443-7684 • Fax: 727/443-7684  
Email: djohnson@pinellashousing.com

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611 Church St., Stuart, FL 34994  
Phone: 772/287-0496 • Fax: 772/287-4084  
Email: maria11sh@aol.com

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Phone: 850/438-8561 • Fax: 850/438-1743  
Email: execdir@areahousing.org

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Phone: 386/253-5653 • Fax: 386/255-2136  
Email: woods@dbhaf.org

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Sarasota Housing Authority  
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Phone: 941/928-6403 • Fax: 941/366-4661  
Email: davelmorgan@hotmail.com

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Broward County Housing Authority  
4780 N. State Rd. 7, Lauderdale Lakes, FL 33319  
Phone: 954/739-1114 • Fax: 954/535-0407  
Email: adeibert@bchaf.org

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Marcus D. Goodson, Executive Director  
Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers  
4224 Renaissance Preserve Way, Fort Myers, FL 33916  
Phone: 239/344-3220 • Fax: 239/332-6695  
Email: mgoodson@hacfm.org

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Winter Haven Housing Authority  
2653 Avenue C SW, Winter Haven, FL 33880  
Phone: 863/294-7369 • Fax: 863/291-0266  
Email: llanders1@tampabay.rr.com

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Sarasota Housing Authority  
40 S. Osprey Ave., Sarasota, FL 34236  
Phone: 941/361-6210, ext. 224 • Fax: 941/366-4661  
Email: wrussell@sarasotahousing.org

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Phone: 813/253-0551, ext. 113 • Fax: 813/367-0778  
Email: irenew@thaf.org

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Fort Walton Beach Housing Authority  
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Phone: 850/243-3224 • Fax: 850/244-6533  
Email: gail@fwbha.org

**Member at Large**  
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Seminole County Housing Authority  
662 Academy Place, Oviedo, FL 32765  
Phone: 407/365-3621 • Fax: 407/359-2576  
Email: scha001@clh.rr.com

**Executive Director (Non-Voting Member)**  
Corey Mathews, CAE, Executive Director  
FAHRO Headquarters  
1390 Timberlane Road, Tallahassee, FL 32312  
Phone: 850/222-6000 • Fax: 850/222-6002  
Email: corey@fahro.org

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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 at-tabby 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.*

- Oscar Anderson and Corey Mathews recently presented Senator Darren Soto (D-Orlando) with the FAHRO Legislator of the Year award in his Tallahassee office. The FAHRO family appreciates the senator's work to help provide safe, affordable housing for Florida's citizens.
- Youth from the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers and Lee County Housing Authority attended the Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Eagle Expo/



*Laquasha Jones, housing authority employee; Dakendo Michel, FGCU graduate/mentor; Madeline Heath, FGCU graduate/mentor; Twaski Jackson, HACFM client services director; Prochelle Morrison, FGCU youth development ambassador; and Kathleen Leon, FGCU youth development ambassador*



Eagle Inspire, an event held each semester at the university. The Inspire portion of the event focuses on students in middle and high school, who have an opportunity to tour the campus facilities and dormitories, speak with faculty and staff, speak one-on-one with mentors who are current and/or former FGCU students as well as meet the university's president.

- The Lakeland Housing Authority is in the early stages of planning the Micro-Villages of Williamstown, a cottage community for seniors of low to moderate income. LHA has entered into a partnership with Housing Trust Group of Miami to take advantage of the firm's expertise in acquiring tax credits, which are then sold to raise construction funds. The \$5.8 million subdivision will help alleviate a shortage of affordable housing for seniors in Polk County.

If you would like to contribute to Sounding Off, please email your comments to Susan Trainor, FAHROgram editor, [editor.trainor@gmail.com](mailto:editor.trainor@gmail.com).

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued from page 1

advocates; with our development partners; and even with the general public to ensure that we have the resources necessary to meet our obligations and to fulfill the promises made to us through our ACCs, just as we are accountable for accomplishing our goals.

In the coming weeks, I will be calling on you individually, in groups and collectively to join me in pursuit of these objectives to help us fully realize a vision for FAHRO Unity!

## STATE LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS continued from page 1

This year we are once again pushing for our language to allow for the voluntary consolidation of housing authorities, the clarification of reporting requirements and salary calculation so as not to duplicate current federal requirements. We will also continue to advocate for PHAs to be allowed to provide access to commercial goods and services and to fully utilize all renewable energy options.



*The FAHRO team presented a plaque to Senator Darren Soto (D-Orlando) for working so hard on our legislation last year. Pictured here are Oscar Anderson, FAHRO state affairs consultant; Senator Soto; and Corey Mathews, FAHRO executive director.*



# We Love Our Lindsey Software.

## **Bartow Housing Authority**

Executive Director: Catherine E. Reddick  
Bartow, Florida

*“I have been using  
Lindsey for more than  
23 years, and I would  
not use anything else.  
Lindsey has so many  
good shortcuts, that it  
doesn’t take me long  
to do anything!”*

— CATHERINE REDDICK —

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- User-friendly software
- Easy to learn
- Economical
- Saves time
- Free, unlimited training
- Great support
- Mobile solutions
- Online rental applications

### **THE SITUATION**

Catherine Reddick, Executive Director of Bartow Housing Authority in Florida loves to talk about Lindsey software. With more than 23 years as a user, she feels that Lindsey is user-friendly, very easy to learn and helps her do her job more effectively.

Catherine began her career in public housing at the Winter Haven Housing Authority. After 13 years, she moved to the Bartow Housing Authority as Executive Director and has been there for 11 years.

### **THE SOLUTION**

Lindsey is a total solution for Catherine and her staff and she is not afraid to tell other agencies. “I know I am not their largest client, but they always treat me like I am,” says Catherine.

Bartow HA uses almost every module Lindsey has, plus the mobile solutions and HousingManager.com online rental applications. They have made an investment in the entire package and like the way everything works together.

### **MOBILE**

Catherine comments, “When we first got the mobile products, I was a little afraid of making the change. Then I went out and did an inspection on the iPad myself and realized that it was much easier than I ever expected.”

### **HOUSINGMANAGER.COM**

Moving applications online has been extremely beneficial in reducing tenant traffic in the office. Tenants are very versatile and have adapted well to filling out applications from their computer, tablet or mobile device.

### **TRAINING & SUPPORT**

Catherine and her staff take advantage of the free training opportunities whenever possible, attending webinars and using the online Portal. “We use support when there is a problem, or something I just cannot figure out. They know me by my first name,” says Catherine with a smile.

Bartow Housing Authority is a satisfied Lindsey customer. After 23 years using Lindsey, Catherine says it would be hard to find another company that could change her mind. “Lindsey has made an investment in this industry by creating products that make my job easier, and I have made an investment in Lindsey.”



# The Use of Social Media in Employment Decisions

by Tracy M. Evans, Esq.



Tracy M. Evans, Esq.

With millions of users logging in daily to their social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, it is not surprising that employers are regularly turning to social media when making employment decisions. As social media becomes increasingly accessible from virtually anywhere in the world, employees are using social media, often during work hours, to boast or complain about their job, working conditions, co-workers or employers. As a result, employers are beginning to feel the need to monitor their employees' social media accounts due to legitimate business concerns arising from their employees' social media postings.

Employers currently using or considering using social media as the basis for hiring or disciplinary decisions should be aware of the regulating agencies and the laws pertaining to employment decisions based on social media. As to using social media to screen potential employees, employers should be aware of the role the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) plays and the statutes it enforces.

Under federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the EEOC, an employer may not solicit information regarding factors such as race, color, national origin, religion, marital status or sexual

orientation during the hiring process. In addition, employers may not use these types of factors to screen applicants in a way that results in discrimination. Most employers are well aware of these antidiscrimination laws, but fail to consider that using social media to screen applicants, which often contains this type of information, could potentially give rise to a discrimination claim. Having viewed this information on a potential employee's social media page, the employer may be forced to prove that the employer did not use this information in making a hiring decision, even though the employer had knowledge of it. It is important for employers to weigh the benefit of using social media to screen potential employees against the risk of potential liability under antidiscrimination laws.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has taken the lead in reviewing and regulating employment decisions with respect to current employees, and disciplinary actions taken against employees based on social media postings. Therefore, employers should also be aware of the NLRB's decisions on these issues. Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) protects concerted activities in which employees engage for the purpose of "mutual aid and protection." Examples

See **LEGAL UPDATE** on page 6

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of these types of concerted activities include complaints about working conditions, employers or other employees. For social media postings to be considered “concerted activities,” an employee must be posting with other employees or on behalf of other employees. An individual’s post may also become a “concerted activity” if other employees subsequently “like” or comment on the post.

Under Section 8(a)(1) of the NLRA, employers are specifically prohibited from disciplining employees for engaging in protected, concerted activity or “Section 7 activity.” Keep in mind, however, that not every post on social media is protected. Posts containing slander, libel, confidential information or comments about individuals unrelated to the work environment may lose protection, and may form a valid basis for discipline or termination. However, the NLRB has previously rejected an employer’s argument that the employee’s posts were not protected because they were profane and maliciously false.

The NLRB also reviews an employer’s policies pertaining to social media postings to ensure they do not have a “chilling effect” on protected, concerted activity. Under Section 8(a)(1) of the NLRA, a policy that intends to “chill” an employee’s exercise of protected Section 7 activity is considered unlawful. Therefore, in formulating policies regarding social media posts, employers must walk a very tight rope to avoid instituting policies that may violate the NLRA.

Policies regarding the use of social media should be carefully crafted, and should avoid using ambiguous and undefined terms or complicated language difficult for employees to understand. For example, a policy against the disclosure of confidential information on social media should detail what is meant by the term “confidential information.” Employers may also consider using a disclaimer explaining that the policy is not meant to restrict Section 7 rights.

As the use of social media continues to grow, develop and change, laws impacting social media will also continue to evolve. Employers should conduct a careful risk/benefit analysis on using social media as the basis for any employment decision, and resist the temptation to delve blindly into the vast amount of information contained on these websites without first conducting such an analysis. In addition, employers should be careful when creating social media policies and should review these policies regularly to ensure compliance with any new laws, regulations and judicial decisions, especially as this area of law continues to develop. 🌿

## Send Your News to FAHRO!

Tell us about your accomplishments, milestones and other interesting member news. Your fellow members want to know!

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# Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers Wins Business Award

The Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers was recently awarded the 2015 Healthy Business Award in recognition of its outstanding commitment to employee wellness.

The award, on behalf of the Horizon Foundation, Lee Memorial Wellness Program, the Chamber of Southwest Florida and the Society for Human Resources Management of Southwest Florida, was presented during the second annual Workplace Wellness Summit, held Aug. 26 at the Lee County Education Center.

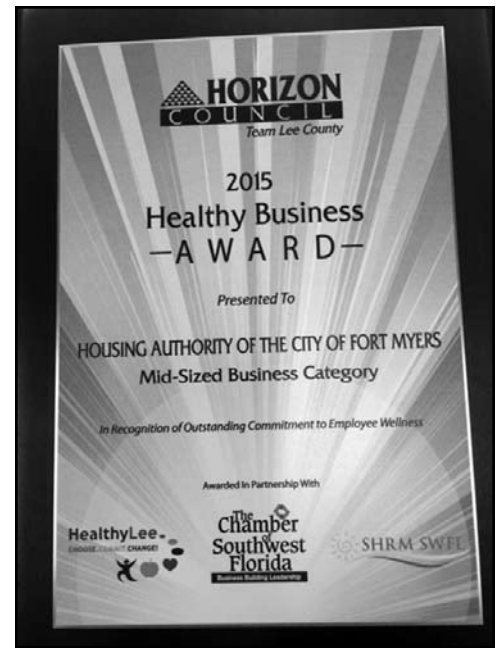
The HACFM created an employee wellness program, Working On Wellness (WOW), in early 2013. During the past few years, it has evolved into monthly health-related events with a variety of topics and more than 60 percent employee participation. Topics have included healthy cooking and eating, exercising and fitness instruc-

tors, financial fitness, mental wellness, stress management, infectious disease, skin care, safety and driving, sleep disorders, chiropractic benefits and more.


“The mission of our wellness committee was to establish and maintain a workplace that encourages environmental and social support for a healthy lifestyle,” says Sherri Campanale, director of housing operations for HACFM. “We wanted to encourage employee’s personal and professional productivity and physical and mental well-being to foster a work site culture that supports anyone’s desire to make healthy lifestyle choices.”

Campanale added that WOW was created at a time when housing funding was being cut and agency budgets were proving to be challenging to executive staff.

WOW has provided staff the opportunity to participate in fitness programs



*HACFM's 2015 Healthy Business Award*

outside of the agency, such as boot camps, outdoor fitness groups and gym memberships. The HACFM also has a state-of-the-art gym on site for employees to use before and after work hours. 

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# Business Ownership: A GHA Resident's Journey

Since joining Gainesville Housing Authority's Job Training & Entrepreneurial Program (JTEP), there was no looking back for housing choice voucher participant Monique Brumfield. Although her previous entrepreneurial venture was not very successful, her dream of being her own boss was driven by her motivation and desire to have a job where she can take care of her sick son.

After Brumfield was informed about the availability of rental space in the Woodland Park community, she discussed her goals with JTEP Coordinator Regla Exavier. Brumfield worked with Exavier to develop an action plan to open Monique's Candyland as soon as the space was ready. She received help creating a business name, obtaining the necessary licensing and coordinating inventory.

One of the biggest hurdles Brumfield faced trying to get Monique's Candyland open to the public was waiting for the rental space to be ready, but despite this setback she maintained a positive outlook.

Monique's Candyland had its grand opening on Sept. 16. The event was a huge success. Thus far, the blossoming entrepreneur says she is already seeing a relatively steady profit margin, and residents of the community are really showing their support by patronizing her business.

"A year from now I want to open a second location with a convenience store and a gas station. I want to be able to



*Ribbon cutting for Monique's Candyland*

employ others and give them an opportunity to do better," Brumfield says.

Brumfield thanked the JTEP program for helping her learn so much about business ownership, saying, "This business is helping me provide for my kids and work towards my ultimate goal of getting off the program and owning my own home."

Asked for words of advice, Brumfield states, "You can do absolutely anything you put your time to." 🌿

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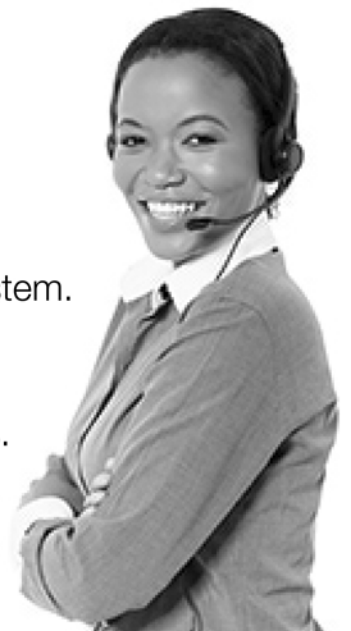
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## It's Holiday Time and That Means Accommodation Time Brought to you by FPHASIF!

by Leslie Zieren, Esq.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in the workplace on the basis of an applicant's or an employee's sincerely held religious beliefs or practices.

"Religion" is interpreted broadly in the law. It includes not only traditional, organized religions, but also religious beliefs that are not part of a formal sect. Religious beliefs include theistic as well as non-theistic beliefs.

If requested, an employer must reasonably accommodate a sincerely held religious belief or practice unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the employer. An undue hardship means more than a minimal burden on an employer. Examples of an undue hardship include an accommodation that jeopardizes security or health.

A reasonable religious accommodation is determined on a case-by-case basis. It could be any adjustment to the work environment that will allow the employee to practice his or her religion. Most accommodations are easy to fashion and implement. Some possible accommodations include flexible scheduling, voluntary substitutions or swaps, job reassignments, lateral transfers and modifications to workplace practices or policies.

The risk to employers is not insignificant. In fiscal year 2014, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) received 3,549 charges alleging religion-based discrimination, and the commission recovered \$8.7 million for victims of religion-based discrimination.

The EEOC shares some helpful guidance on its website at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).

"What You Should Know About Workplace Religious Accommodation" [www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/nysk/workplace\\_religious\\_accommodation.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/nysk/workplace_religious_accommodation.cfm)

"Questions and Answers: Religious Discrimination in the Workplace" [www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/qanda\\_religion.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/qanda_religion.html)

Mark your calendars for these holidays/observances through January 1, 2016:

**Diwali** – Nov. 11, 2015; Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain festival of lights, reaffirmation of hope lasting for five days

**Birth of Bahá'u'lláh** – Nov. 12, 2015; Baha'i Holy Day, celebrating birth of Bahá'u'lláh, one of the Baha'i faith's most important figures

**Hanukkah** (begins at sundown) – Dec. 6-14, 2015; Jewish festival of lights, celebrating Jewish struggle for religious freedom

**Yule/Winter Solstice** – Dec. 20, 2015-Jan. 1, 2016; Pagan, Wiccan, Druid beginning of the new year and celebration of the new solstice sun

**Christmas** – Dec. 25, 2015; Annual Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus

**Gantan-sai** – Jan. 1, 2016; Shinto New Year festival

This informational piece was published on Sept. 7, 2015. Republished from [mycommunityworkplace.org](http://mycommunityworkplace.org) on behalf of Hunt Insurance Group, LLC.



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*Season's Greetings & Warm Wishes  
To All!!*



*One of the real joys of the Holiday Season  
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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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stephen.blake@huntins.com

SARAH HUNT ELLIN  
sarah.ellin@huntins.com

PHONE: (850) 385-3636  
TOLL FREE: (800) 763-4868

FLORIDA PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY

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