

Regional Update

A Monthly Report of Activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

November 2006

Regional Housing Authority Designated a High Performer

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has completed its Section Eight Management Assessment Program Review and has determined that the RHA is a High Performer. These reviews assess the RHA's quality control system with respect to program management and compliance with program requirements. The Director of the Office of Public Housing, Robert Jennings, commended our staff for being "knowledgeable and committed to providing high quality service."

As a result of this review, the RHA can now look into offering two additional programs, the Homeownership Vouchers and the Family Self Sufficiency Program. The Homeownership Voucher Program allows families who meet certain income, employment, and other eligibility requirements to use their Housing Choice Voucher to purchase a home. The Family Self-sufficiency program helps voucher families obtain employment that leads to economic independence. Staff are currently working

to put small local programs in place by 2008.

Prior to this review, the program was in Troubled Status but, with the changes made by the staff, the entire program scored above Standard Status to the highest level attainable, High Performer. Staff continue to make improvements to the management of the program. The goal they are working toward is 95% leaseup and they anticipate achieving that goal by January 2007.



Staff of the Housing Choice Voucher Program: (left to right, standing Josephine James, Kathleen Edwards, sitting Bobbie Jo Wert, Irv "BK" Kurzbard)

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PDC Now a HUD-Approved Housing Counseling Agency

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission is now a HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agency serving Accomack and Northampton Counties. This program requires that an agency must be non-profit, have experience administering a housing counseling program, have served the specific geographic area they detail in their application, and be able to follow a housing counseling plan.

The PDC has two counselors on staff and anticipate another staff member becoming certified in the spring.

The counselors focus on homeownership education, budget counseling, mortgage delinquency, relocation, and money and debt management.

Staff assist over 600 local families with these issues every year though the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Community Development Block Grant Programs, Indoor Plumbing Program, and Homelessness Intervention Program. Over the course of the next year, the staff will be working on ways to expand this program to include more families.

Bobbie Jo Wert Recognized for Outstanding Service

Bobbie Jo Wert has been recognized for outstanding service to the citizens of Virginia through extraordinary efforts in the field of housing counseling. Ms. Wert has been a certified Housing Counselor since 2003.

She is certified to offer counseling in the areas of general homeownership, Section 8 rental and budget counseling. Ms. Wert has been instrumental in the PDC being certified to become a HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agency.

Ms. Wert received the award at the 2006 Annual Housing Counselor Conference in Virginia Beach. The Virginia Association of Housing Counselors' mission is to assure that all low and moderate income families and individuals are offered the opportunity to live in safe, decent and affordable housing. They also offer training and administer

the certification exams. Ms. Wert chose to join them because she is especially interested in assisting first time homeowners. The PDC staff congratulates her on her award.



VDOT's Enhancement Applications Update

The Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission has completed four Enhancement Grant, formerly T21, applications for local jurisdictions.

Cheriton Historic Streetscape Enhancement

This project is a continuation of the 2004 application. The project will allow the Town to proceed with improvements to the business area, including rehabilitation of sidewalks. Landscaping and drainage improvements are also addressed.

Exmore Downtown Improvements

This is Phase V of the improvements to the business area in Exmore. This application focuses on improving Front Street's streetscape in anticipation of the new passenger train service from Cape Charles to Exmore.

Chincoteague Waterfront Improvements

A lot near the new bridge landing will be purchased and developed to include a visitor center, interpretive panels and parking. The lot will also include parking for the bridge tenders.

Northampton County Bicycle Trail

The project includes the construction of a 1.35 shared use path along the abandoned railroad near the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge's Visitor Center. Its end point at Latimer Siding Road is across from Kiptopeke State Park's southern bicycle trailhead.

PDC Staff Warmly Welcomes Deborah Andersen

Ms. Deborah Andersen has been hired to the position of Grant Accountant to provide accounting services for the grant programs, as well as assisting with various administrative duties.

Prior to being hired by the PDC, Deborah held the position of Grant Specialist with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a position she held for 20 years. As the Grant Specialist Deborah oversaw all grant applications as well as being charged with auditing qualifying recipients.

Ms. Andersen is a native of Ohio, a former member of our armed forces, and has a business management degree from Southwest Texas State University.

Deborah, a mother of 3 and a grandmother of 2, is a valued addition to the PDC staff.



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