

COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

Strengthening the bond of unity between the Lakeland Housing Authority and the communities that it serves.

FIRST QUARTER

MAY 2013



Inside you will find.....

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From the desk of
Benjamin Stevenson, Executive Director

Greetings Everyone:

After recently completing my first year as Executive Director, I am very excited about the direction in which the Lakeland Housing Authority is headed. Please allow me to share a couple of our achievements. HUD recently completed the Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) certification process for the LHA Section 8 program. The program is rated a High Performer after receiving a score of 97%. Congratulations go out to Carlos Pizarro, Idalia Gonzales-Morales and their staff. While we are extremely happy with the rating, we are still looking for ways to improve the program and services.

I also want to congratulate the Resident Services staff on winning two national awards from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO). LHA's Office Skills Training Program and YouthBuild-Lakeland each received the NAHRO Award of Merit in Housing and Community Development. Special thanks is given to Earl Haynes and his staff; Cynthia Zorn-Shaw (OST Program) and Nick Elzy, Richard Mooneyham and Janiene Bambridge (YBL).

I would also like to congratulate **Michael Pimentel** on being selected by the Board of Commissioners to serve another term as Chairman. **Rev. Richard Richardson** was selected as Vice-Chairman. Please join me in extending heartfelt congratulations to both of them.

LHA is continuing our efforts to build partnerships while providing summer programs in our communities. In the spirit of that initiative, we have joined with **Polk Works** to provide a Summer Youth Employment Program at the LHA Emma Turner Center. The partnership will provide employment and training opportunities for youths age 16-21. LHA strongly supports Polk Works and all of the partners in this endeavor. Residents of all communities may visit EMC to learn about employment and training opportunities.

LHA is also continuing its partnership with **Girls, Inc. of Lakeland** and their **Prodigy Cultural Arts Program**. This is an outstanding program and I encourage all eligible young ladies in our communities to participate. I guarantee that your life will not be the same after experiencing what Prodigy has to offer.

As you can see, LHA continues to provide several programs and services to help our residents improve their lives and move towards self-sufficiency. It is definitely *a new day at LHA!!!* I look forward to working with the LHA Board of Commissioners and staff to deliver quality products and services for the LHA community during 2013. I will close by extending a special thanks to my alma mater, **Mulberry High School**, for inducting me into their Alumni Hall of Fame. Go Panthers!!!

Lakeland Housing Authority's Homeownership Program

Offers opportunities for qualified buyers to purchase
a home in the beautiful Lakeland community of

Hampton Hills



For more information about the Hampton Hills Homeownership Program
and other housing opportunities visit or call **Shauna Ginn** at:

Lakeland Housing Authority
430 Hartsell Avenue, Lakeland, Florida 33815
Telephone: (863) 687-2911 Ext. 234
www.lakelandhousing.org

Live Where You Work!

Homeownership Assistance Program for residents of the Lakeland Housing Authority, residents of the City of Lakeland and Polk County with preference given to persons who are employed in the areas of law enforcement, fire, paramedics, nursing, and teachers.

Offering Down-Payment & Closing Cost Assistance and Second Mortgage gap financing for qualifying homes in the Lakeland Housing Authority's Hampton Hills homes.

Disclaimer: Amounts and eligibility requirements are subject to change without notice. Eligibility for participation is determined at time of full application upon verification of information provided. Eligibility does not necessary insure the receipt of financial assistance.

Housing Authority Executive Director Embraces School Career Day



L-R: Rashard S. Johnson, South McKeel Academy student with Alice O'Reilly, VISTE President/CEO, Ben Stevenson, LHA Executive Director and Earl W. Havnes, LHA Resident Services Director at the VISTE Annual Meeting.

A strong supporter of education, **Benjamin Stevenson**, Executive Director of the Lakeland Housing Authority (LHA), welcomed an opportunity to participate in South McKeel Academy's Career Day. **Rashard S. Johnson**, a sixth grade student at SMA, arrived at the agency with his pen and pad in hand, to shadow **Stevenson**. Throughout the day, **Rashard** asked questions and took notes about what **Stevenson's** role is at the agency. He also had the opportunity to meet various staff members. One of the highlights of his day was attending the Annual Meeting and 30th Year Celebration of VISTE (Volunteers in Service To the Elderly), an agency that provides meals and services to LHA's elderly population. The luncheon meeting was held at the Lakeland Yacht Club. After the meeting, Rashard was introduced to **Alice O'Reilly**, President/CEO of VISTE and to her husband, **Frank O'Reilly**, a former Mayor of the City of Lakeland. "He really enjoyed spending the day with **Mr. Stevenson**," stated his mother, **Vanessa Johnson**. She continued, "**Rashard** was really impressed that **Mr. Stevenson** talked to him, answered his questions and made the day all about **Rashard**." **Johnson**, who is also an employee of LHA, appreciates how **Stevenson** welcomed the idea of her son shadowing him for a school project. She also appreciates that as her employer; **Stevenson** is easy to talk to and shows concern for staff members.

Rashard shared, "I like what he does; it's different from what my Mom does here." **Rashard** has a 3.0 g.p.a. And it appears that his day spent with **Stevenson** definitely had a 'business-minded' impact on **Rashard**. Maybe, the seeds that were sown by **Stevenson**, into **Rashard's** life, will grow into a future Housing Authority Executive Director.

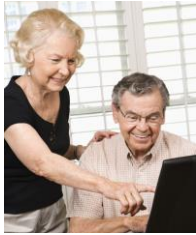
COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

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EMMA TURNER CENTER



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FRIDAY

9:00 a.m. - 12 noon

FLORIDA
VIRTUAL SCHOOL
on-line classes
available!

FREE computer usage reservations are available

For LHA Residents. Walk-ins are welcome.

To make a reservation, please call
(863) 413-3394 Ext. 308



NOTE: Children 12 and under must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Shoes, shirt (no undershirts) and pants at waist required.



Creating communities one life at a time.

Benjamin Stevenson, Executive Director

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Valerie Brown, Development Director

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Carlos Pizarro, Housing Director

E-mail: cpizarro@lakelandhousing.org

We are here to serve you!

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Florida Relay Service: 711

Website: www.lakelandhousing.org

In Loving Memory

On Monday, March 25, 2013, Brenda Smith, a valued member of the Lakeland Housing Authority family, passed away. Ms. Brenda was employed at LHA's 21st Century Program at the Lake Ridge Center. The Wake was held on Friday, March 29th at Coney's Funeral Parlor and the Funeral Service on Saturday, March 30th at Harmony Missionary Baptist Church. Final arrangements were entrusted to Coney's Funeral Home. A floral arrangement was sent to the family from Ms. Brenda's LHA family. While some staff members attended both services, others could attend only one. In support of the students and LHA staff, grievance counselors were on-site at the Lake Ridge Center on Wednesday, March 27th. Ms. Brenda is deeply missed by all who knew and/or worked with her. She will forever be remembered for her fun-loving character and big beautiful smile.

Rest in Peace, Ms. Brenda.



Lakeland Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners



Michael Pimentel, Chairman

Rev. Richard Richardson, Vice Chairman

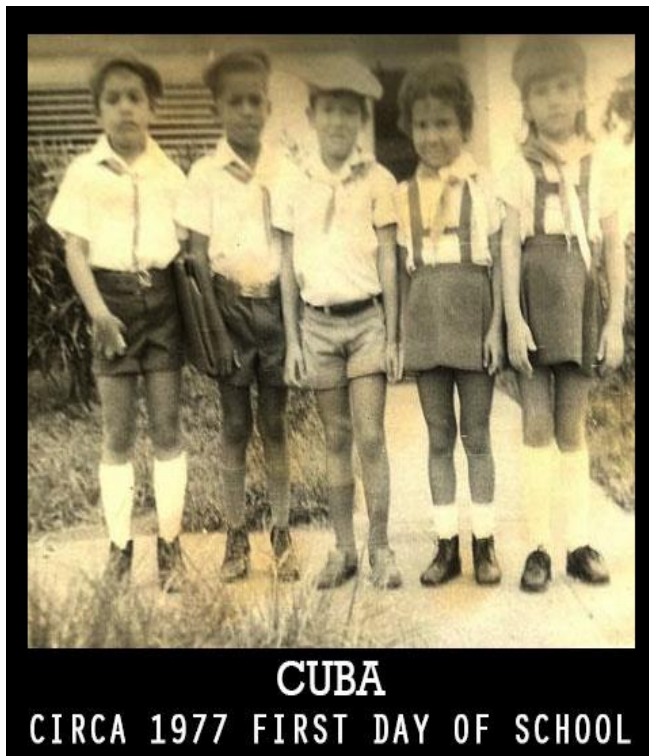
Dr. Bernice I. Evans, Commissioner

Edward Hall, Commissioner

Dorothy Sanders, Commissioner

Joseph DiCesare, Commissioner

Ellis Hirsch, Commissioner



LHA Employee Spotlight

Cesar L. Diaz

Information Technology Operations Manager

Born and raised in Cuba, the Province of Camaguey, Mr. Diaz graduated from C. Cienfuegos Military High School in 1989. Later, he graduated from the C. Ramos Technical Institute of Technology, where he earned a Bachelor Degree in Computer Science and several Microsoft Certifications (Systems Engineer and Solutions Developer). Mr. Diaz also attended Law School (completing 4 of 5 years) in Cuba before coming to America. He has over 18 years of experience working in the computer industry and web applications development.

Ten years ago, Mr. Diaz moved to the U.S. as an immigrant “using the hard way of travel.” He had to learn a new way of life in a new country while obtaining U.S. citizenship. He worked for the Tampa Housing Authority for the past 7 years as a Systems Administrator and Senior Web Developer before coming to LHA. He currently serves as the Information Technology Operations Manager. In this capacity, he oversees network information systems, web design and development as well as providing technical support for all LHA staff.

Mr. Diaz likes adventure motorcycling, photography, pottery, cross-country backpacking and hiking and many other activities. He is relocating to Lakeland in June so he may be closer to the office. He has been employed at LHA since October 2012.

The first LHA employee to identify Mr. Diaz in the picture above wins a prize. Please e-mail your responses to Earl Haynes. The first respondent with the correct answer wins.





The Cooking Corner

Grilled Shrimp with Mango Salsa

From O, The Oprah Magazine.....This is an easy and appealing shrimp dish to make for company. If there are any leftovers, serve them in a salad, stir-fry, or as a garnish for butternut squash soup.



Ingredients

Salsa:

- 2 large ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted, and diced
- 1/4 cup(s) minced red onion
- **1/4 cup(s) chopped cilantro leaves**
- 3 tablespoon(s) fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon(s) minced fresh ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon(s) salt, or to taste
- 1/4 teaspoon(s) freshly ground black pepper

Shrimp:

- 1 1/2pound(s) large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tablespoon(s) reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoon(s) fresh orange juice
- 2 tablespoon(s) olive oil, for grilling

Directions

To make salsa: Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Set aside.

To make shrimp: Rinse and drain shrimp; pat dry with paper towels. In a bowl, combine shrimp, soy sauce, and orange juice. Let stand 10 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare a grill, oiling the grill rack. Thread shrimp onto metal skewers (or wooden skewers that have been soaked in water for about an hour). Brush with oil and grill over medium heat, regularly brushing with soy mixture, 3 to 4 minutes per side, until shrimp are cooked through. Remove from skewers and place on a serving platter. Serve with mango salsa and [Basmati Rice with Toasted Pine Nuts](#).

Let's Move! America's Move to Raise a Healthier Generation of Kids

"The physical and emotional health of an entire generation and the economic health and security of our nation is at stake."

First Lady Michelle Obama at the Let's Move! - February 9, 2010

Let's Move! is a comprehensive initiative, launched by the First Lady, dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams. Combining comprehensive strategies with common sense, Let's Move! is about putting children on the path to a healthy future during their earliest months and years. Giving parents helpful information and fostering environments that support healthy choices. Providing healthier foods in our schools. Ensuring that every family has access to healthy, affordable food. And, helping kids become more physically active.

Everyone has a role to play in reducing childhood obesity, including parents, elected officials from all levels of government, schools, health care professionals, faith-based and community-based organizations, and private sector companies. Your involvement is key to ensuring a healthy future for our children.

Visit the Let's Move website at: <http://www.letsmove.gov/>

Community & Supportive Services

By: Earl W. Haynes
LHA Director of Resident Services

During the year, the staff of the Lakeland Housing Authority Resident Services office has continued to operate with full force. Efforts to provide quality customer service are a high priority. Despite the unknown factors and the impact of sequestration in our future, we must all continue our team effort to achieve the overall goals of this agency and provide quality, affordable rental housing and self-sufficiency to all of our residents. More importantly, we must continue to provide service in a professional, courteous and caring way.

LHA residents and the general public can expect prompt return of all telephone calls made to the Resident Services staff and the provision of timely information with regard to any concerns requiring our attention. Beginning in May, resident meetings will be scheduled monthly at all of the LHA communities. It is my belief that our residents are our most valued asset. To this end, please know that “we are here to serve you with respect, honesty and Integrity” and we hope to get the same in return because together we can build quality communities. I would like to thank all staff of the Resident Services Department components for their continued support: YouthBuild-Lakeland,



21st Century Community Learning Center Program, Resident Opportunity in Self-Sufficiency, Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency, HCV Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency and Homeownership.

Now is the time when we especially appreciate our partners around the community for all that they do each and every day. Without them, the impact of sequestration would be even more severe. Bear with us as we work through this trying time.



The commencement exercise for the YouthBuild Class of 2013 was held in partnership at the Coleman-Bush Community Center. YouthBuild is one of the facets of LHA's Community and Supportive Services arena.

Local Ministry Hosts Its Spring Time Luncheon

On Friday, April 12th, Leland Family Ministries (LFM) held its Spring Time Luncheon at the Bartow Recovery Resource Center. **Libbie Combee**, Executive Director rendered a power-point presentation to educate the guests about LFM. This ministry connects with offenders, addicts and their families, assisting them with supportive services that include, but are not limited to: *Recovery for Life, Meth Free Project, Handyman Outreach, Food Pantry & Warehouse, Recovery Resource Center* and a *H.E.A.L. (Healthy Eating & Active Lifestyle) Program*. Clients are referred to LFM from Peace River, Hope Now, Polk County Jail, Polk Correctional Institution, Dept. of Corrections – Probation & Parole, and other agencies. LFM is a 501(c) 3 non-profit, para-church. A lot of its clients don't have transportation. To assist the families who are in need of LFM services, however, they do not have their own means of transportation; the agency provides them with free bus passes. The Recovery for Life program is active in Polk, Columbia, Pasco, Dade and Hillsborough counties. A community garden that is cared for and nurtured by LFM staff and community volunteers serves the agency's clients with free produce and generates funds to assist with the sustaining of LFM. The ministry will celebrate its 19th anniversary in June 2013.

During the Spring Time Luncheon, remarks were given by Pastor Jim Jones, a retired Winter Haven Police Department Sergeant, with his wife, Jenna standing nearby with Linia Holoman. All three are facilitators at LFM.

In attendance were Polk County commissioners, representatives of the State



LINIA HOLOMAN, a program facilitator, rendered remarks about Leland Family Ministries.

Attorney's Office, law enforcement, a Pasco County Corporal, Polk Works staff, and representatives of local businesses and non-profit agencies. **Tom Mayrant** of Polk Works rendered a presentation about the Fresh Start Offender Program. A program that is centered on truth, one of the goals of Fresh Start is to prepare and assist ex-offenders to obtain gainful employment. **Mayrant** shared that the weekly classes are now averaging 100-120 clients. Of that number, ten to twelve percent of the Fresh Start clients, who attend class regularly and follow through on what they are instructed to do, these persons will be hired. Remarks were also shared by **Amanda Jendersee** and **Mike Jones**. **Jendersee** and **Jones** are students at Keiser University who are completing their internships at LFM. For further information about LFM, call (863) 519-0000.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Lakeland Housing Authority's Residents Advisory Association (LHARAA) Meeting with Residents

Second Monday of each month - 6:00 p.m.

The public is invited to attend. Location to be announced. Call (863) 413-3394 Ext. 308.

LHA Residents Meeting - Cecil Gober Villa

Second Wednesday of each month - 10:00 a.m.

Cecil Gober Villa Community Center
2626 N. Florida Avenue, Lakeland, FL 33805

LHA Residents Meeting - West Lake Homes and John Wright Homes

First Thursday of each month - 6:00 p.m.

YouthBuild Community Center, 501 Hartsell Avenue, Lakeland, FL 33815

The public is invited to attend.

LHA Residents Meeting - Colton Meadows and Villa at Lake Bonnet

Second Thursday of each month - 6:30 p.m.

The public is invited to attend. Location to be announced. Call (863) 687-2911 Ext. 210.

LHA Residents Meeting - Dakota Park/Lake Ridge/Washington Oaks/The Manor

Third Thursday of each month - 6:00 p.m.

The public is invited to attend. Location to be announced. Call (863) 413-3394 Ext. 300.

LHA Residents Meeting - The Manor at West Bartow

Fourth Thursday of each month

The public is invited to attend. Location and time to be announced. Call (863) 413-3394 Ext. 300.

Paul A. Diggs Neighborhood Association Meeting

*Third Tuesday of the month - 6:30 p.m.

Coleman-Bush Building

1104 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Lakeland, FL 33805

*There are no meetings held in the months of July and December.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Lakeland Housing Authority is to provide quality, affordable housing and self-sufficiency opportunities in an effective and professional manner, in Lakeland and Polk County, Florida.