

The Alabama Traveler

AUGUST 2009



Alabama Association of Housing
and Redevelopment Authorities
www.aahra.org

The Alabama Traveler

*Alabama Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities
Housing Professionals Serving the State Since 1940*

President

Lee Eastman, Auburn

Vice-President

Lewis McDonald, Jefferson Co.

Secretary

Pam Bedsole, Elba

Treasurer

Gail Moseley, Montgomery

Board of Directors

Ken Vaughan, Troy

Sheila Rushing, Vernon

Lena Boswell, Andalusia

Al Harris, Athens

Leon Cleveland, Sylacauga

Message from the President.....12

Feature

17th Annual Basketball Tournament4

Players Fly to Tournament6

Around Alabama

Vernon News10

Talladega Youth Celebrate Reading11

Phenix City Kids Rewarded11

Alex City Touts FSS Program14

Hamilton Resident Writes Novel15

Coupon Queens in Abbeville 16

Youth Appreciation Day in Auburn17

Meet Alice Rogers18

NAHRO Board Training a First20

New SERC President22

Bits and Pieces

AHARM Corner23

Calendar of Events24

The Alabama Traveler is published periodically by the Alabama Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities. It is intended to inform and encourage those associated with the public housing industry and be used for informational purposes only. It is mailed free of charge to member housing authorities as well as vendors and other agencies that support AAHRA through financial contributions to our scholarship program and participate in workshops, conferences and other events hosted by AAHRA.

Decatur to Rename Apartment Complex

By Evan Belanger, Decatur Daily News

Andy Holloway, director of the Decatur Housing Authority, says the local agency is renaming W.T. "Doc" Jordan Apartments on Alabama 20.

Holloway said the facility will be renamed Jordan-Neill Apartments in honor of the agency's previous director, Charles "Bob" Neill.

"Our board thought it would be a nice touch to put his name on it," Holloway said.

Neill was Executive Director of the Decatur Housing Authority for more than 30 years and worked for the agency for at least 40 years, Holloway said. He retired in January 2007. The Housing Authority will construct a 60-square-foot sign to denote the name change.

Neill died May 29 after suffering a severe head injury when he fell while trying to manually open a garage door at his Decatur home.

"He was respected in the housing community, and he was our executive director," Holloway said.

The apartment complex already bears the name of W.T. "Doc" Jordan. Jordan was a principal at Decatur's former Riverside High School in Northeast Decatur.

In a related matter the Housing Authority plans to construct a 60-square-foot sign at Summer Manor, another Decatur Housing Project on Alabama 20. Holloway said the name at Summer Manor will remain the same.



17th Annual Basketball Tournament Expands to Include SERC Teams

Birmingham, Ala. - The inaugural Martin Luther King, Jr. Southeastern Regional Council Basketball Tournament was held in Birmingham, Ala., on Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, January 17-19, 2009 at the University of Alabama Birmingham recreational facilities.



The tournament - hosted by the Alabama Sports Festival, Partners in Neighborhood Growth (PING), the Alabama Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities (AAHRA), and SERC - hosted 15 teams from Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia. The event was open to public housing and Boys and Girls Club teams from Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. Participants were from 10 to 18 years old.

Alabama has held a statewide tournament for 17 years, and has now expanded it to a regional tournament which gives teams a chance to compete on a broader scale with teams from several states throughout the Southeast. "We are excited to be able to provide an opportunity for youth from around the Southeast to compete with each other in a tournament-style setting," said Alabama Sports Festival Executive Director Marc T. Riker.



There were also opportunities for educational and entertainment time as well during the weekend.

An opening ceremony banquet in Birmingham's Boutwell Auditorium featured Birmingham Police Chief A.C. Roper, who spoke about the Power of Choices; and was attended by approximately 275 players, coaches, chaperones and tournament personnel. The tournament's awards ceremony was held in the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame and featured former Harlem Globetrotters player Melvin Adams as an entertaining and inspirational speaker. The student-athletes also toured the Civil Rights Museum, rounding out a weekend of sportsmanship, culture, education and citizenship.

"This tournament is really more about the educational value than the athleticism of the teams involved. The tournament offers these children the opportunity to experience a city they may know nothing about while taking advantage of the educational tours provided," said Alabama Sports Festival's Chris Wilkins, the event coordinator for



LUTHER KING JR. SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL CHALLENGE

the tournament.

Each student-athlete, coach, coordinator and chaperone was required to sign a code of ethics for the tournament to ensure the tournament was carried out to promote good sportsmanship and beneficial competition. Each student-athlete was also required to maintain an academic C average or be enrolled in an approved tutoring program.

“This type of event is what we are all about - giving young people an opportunity to better themselves by engaging in organized sports using great facilities,” said Riker. “The academic and ethical standards for this tournament ensure that it will be a character-building experience for all involved - we're proud of that.”

The Alabama Sports Festival, now in its 27th year, is a non-profit organization that started at the request of the United States Olympic Committee and is part of a nationwide network of state games programs. The ASF teaches the importance of academics and good citizenship through statewide, Olympic-style athletic competition. For more information, visit www.alagames.com.



Chesapeake, VA Players Fly High in Birmingham

By Brenda Willis, Executive Director
Chesapeake Housing Authority

First time flying jitters were quickly overcome by the excitement of participating in the Inaugural Martin Luther King, Jr. Southeastern Regional Council Basketball Tournament in Birmingham, Alabama January 17-19, 2009. For ten young men from Chesapeake, Virginia, this was an opportunity to escape the narrow confines of their community and reach for the brass ring in the form of a basketball hoop.

The tournament, in conjunction with the Alabama Sports Festival, gave the tournament players from three states, including teams from seven housing authorities and a Boys & Girls Club, not only an opportunity to compete and interact with other young adults from across the region, but also to participate in formal educational activities including a visit and tour of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.



Player, Isiah Tyler expressed his appreciation of the event; “The best part of the trip was the civil rights institute because it made me think about some things that I had learned in my history class”. These thoughts were shadowed by teammate, Tim Daniels who shared, “This was a

great learning experience for me. We had the opportunity to visit the Civil Rights Museum and the Sports Hall of Fame”.

For many, winning was secondary to the wonderful opportunity and experience of the tournament and traveling to another part of the country. “I enjoyed my trip to Alabama. On the trip we had fun and at the same time we learned about history. Although we came in third, it does not matter because my team had fun and we got to fly on a plane,” remarked Team Captain Kasey Johnson, and teammate, Reggie Dean expanded, “My trip to Alabama was fun. When we got on the plane we made friends with other people and they made us feel like we were pro basketball players. The basketball tournament was great.”

The tournament, coordinated by the Alabama Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities in partnership with the Alabama Sports Festival, boasted extensive community support and involvement with local sponsors. Support was in abundance at their home housing authority

for the Chesapeake Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA) Monarchs, skillfully lead by talented coach Baron Freeman, with enthusiasm and encouragement from the entire CRHA agency beginning with Executive Director Brenda G. Willis. The young men proudly wore their newly purchased "CRHA Basketball" sweat suits, bought specifically for the trip. The CRHA Board of Commissioners believed strongly in this tournament and opportunity for the community youth. They actively backed this event, including financial support through direct monetary donations from the Board members to help defray some of the costs of travel, which otherwise may have proved a stumbling block for participation with a struggling economy and bare-bones budget.

A once in a lifetime opportunity for many, the first of a lifetime for others, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Southeastern Regional Council Basketball Tournament brought to life the concept of teamwork, encouraging these young public housing residents to embrace responsibility, sportsmanship, hard work, dedication, and commitment. The competition, defined by true "Southern Hospitality", proved both educational and entertaining. Remarked Coach Baron Freeman, "This was a great trip to make with a group of young men that have never been anywhere before. This was one of the most

organized tournaments that I have been involved in, in my nineteen years of coaching". Though the Monarch's brought home third place, they also brought home the much more valuable reward of an enriching experience and memories to revisit throughout their lives.



Don't Be Afraid of What You Don't Understand

By Tom Wachs, Executive Director, Eufaula, AL

If you're like me, there are many things you don't understand. I don't understand how a telephone works, I don't understand HUD regulations, and I don't understand women! Of course, that is just the tip of the iceberg of my limited knowledge. Having said that, I still use a telephone, continue striving to learn HUD regulations and we won't get into the women issue.

We recently held the SERC public housing basketball tournament in Birmingham over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend. This marks the 17th Annual Alabama Public Housing Tournament and the first held jointly with SERC. The tournament went off without a hitch. Fifteen teams from three states and more than 150 young men and women participated.

I have to admit, I don't understand the kids growing up in public housing. I don't understand the clothes they wear, their lifestyles or the circumstances they grow up in. However, I shouldn't be afraid of what I don't understand. Before I make my point, let me digress into a brief history of the public housing basketball tournament.

The History

In 1992, while working in the Birmingham HUD Office, I read an article about a kid growing up in public housing in the Los Angeles area. The article mentioned how sports saved his life – how his high school football career kept him out of trouble and out of gangs. In addition, he was good enough to earn a scholarship and went to college, played football and got a degree.

This wasn't news to me. Sports changed my life as well. Growing up a skinny, relatively shy kid without much confidence, baseball changed me. It produced a tremendous work ethic, gave me unshakable confidence and helped me reach my dream of playing professional baseball. It also taught me how to be a leader. This story I read and my sports background gave me an idea.

I went to my boss, Birmingham HUD Public Housing Director Mack Heaton, and presented a plan to bring housing authorities across the state together for a basketball tournament. Being the most played sport in public housing, I pitched the idea of having kids compete for a basketball state championship. The catch? They couldn't play for the high school team and they had to have a "c" average in school or be involved in a tutorial program. This would put everyone on an equal playing field.

Mack, being as wise as an owl, told me he liked the idea. He also told me I was in charge. Mack, Abraham Williams, Donald Belle and I quickly put together a youth sports workshop that taught the importance of sports in children's lives, described how the program would work and how to fund it. NFL Hall-of-Famer and former Pittsburgh Steeler John Stallworth was the headliner that also included former Auburn Coach Terry Bowden and three other speakers. In 1993 we held our first statewide tournament that quickly grew within five years to 58 teams and over 700 participants. North Carolina also had a basketball program and so did Kentucky. We discovered that numerous individual housing agencies provided wonderful programs for their youth as well. Several years later the SERC tournament was born.

What Happened?

PHDEP – better known as the drug elimination grant dried up. With its demise, many housing authority youth sports programs followed suit. But, we kept plugging along. Year after year, we raised money and somehow kept the program alive. You might ask why we have, and still are, working so hard for these kids and these programs. The answer... it works!

Over the years, the basketball tournament has always had an opening ceremony banquet. Featured speakers have included professional athletes, businessmen, principals, mayors, judges and most recently the Birmingham Chief of Police. After 17 years, they have pretty much had the same message – but from different points of view. The message has been encouraging – stay in school, get your grades, surround yourself with positive influences and you can do anything with a positive attitude and determination. The messages have also included what not to do – drugs, alcohol, drop out of school, etc.

The issue for housing authorities, so they say, is that

funding a youth sports program is not feasible anymore due to the elimination of the drug grant. Buying uniforms, travel expenses, hotel rooms and meals are expensive. And Directors have told me they see no bang for their buck. They have spent money over the years on youth programs and still have the same problem with kids they had before. They see no difference now that the program has gone away or before when they had one.

The Four Amigos

Several years ago at a SERC meeting, Abraham Williams (Bowling Green, KY) Donald Belle (Mobile, AL) David Meachem (Statesville, NC) and myself, found ourselves in David's hotel room after the SERC banquet. We began to talk about ourselves and our diversity, how we were raised and what we were doing at our respective agencies. We laughed so hard that night we had tears coming out of our eyes. I thought Abraham was going to have a heart attack and die on the spot. We had so much fun and at the same time learned more about each other and about our programs than we ever could have at a seminar. That night marked the beginning of a commitment for each of us.

The commitment? We vowed to help children, no matter what. Can we change the world? No. Will we change every person that participates? No. But we will never say we quit trying. Almost 10 years later, our commitment is still strong.

Expectations

It's always easy to blame. Easier than encouraging change. Finding fault, pointing fingers and bashing are easy. Taking the time and effort to get involved is hard.

With this generation of kids being raised in public housing, we can't afford to point fingers and blame. There are so many problems out there – drugs, gangs, the breakdown of the family, no father figure, lack of education and others too numerous to list. However, we shouldn't be afraid of what we don't understand. Public housing authorities have often been responsible for providing those missing elements through after school programs, boys and girls clubs and youth sports programs. Is it really our responsibility? No. But it has fallen in our lap and we need to make it happen.

While Abraham, Don, David and I sat at UAB out-

side the basketball court, a young man from Birmingham's basketball team walked by. "Hey young man," David called out. "Come here for a moment." The young man sat down with us and we talked for a few minutes about his experiences at the tournament. We snapped a quick photo with him.

The night before at the opening ceremony banquet, Abraham Williams made a few comments. He told the young people what we expected of them while at the tournament. He told them to be courteous, to say yes sir, no sir, yes ma'am, no ma'am, please and thank you. While talking to us, everything he said was "yes sir" and "no sir." As he walked away, he pulled his pants up without us saying a word. Why? He knew what was expected of him.

Here is what a few others had to say:

Greg Chambers, age 18 said, "In Alabama I learned things about African American Heritage and culture. I also learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. and what he stood for. I learned that he died for what he believed in and that was that all people of every race and color should be treated equally."

T.J. McCombs, age 18 said, "What I learned in Alabama was self control, self respect, and responsibility. I learned to work with others and coaches."

Joshua Dunn, age 18 said, "My trip to Alabama was real fun. It was an honor just to make the traveling team, but I think I had more fun seeing the historic sites. It was a new adventure and something that I know nothing about. Overall, this trip was one of the best trips I have ever been on."

Conclusion

Over the years, I have learned one thing about kids in public housing – you have to show them. They have heard of different places, but never been there. They have seen things on TV, but never experienced them. They have heard people say they were going to help, but then nothing happened.

One thing about our youth sports program is that we show these kids two things. Number one – there is a coach who will be with them and will be concerned

(continued on next page)

Don't Be Afraid... (cont)

about them. They will learn basketball, teamwork and discipline. But the coach will also make sure they are going to class, keep at least a "c" average and go to tutorial if necessary. They will see that someone cares about them.

Number two – we show them something they have never seen before. We learned 17 years ago that most of these young people had never been outside their city limits. They had never stayed in a hotel. They had never been to a banquet and eaten and dressed appropriately. They will experience that for the first time. They will also see things on the educational tours they've never seen before. This year they toured the Civil Rights Museum and Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

My final thought is this – if you have tried to organize a youth sports program before and didn't see results, maybe you didn't have the right people in place. Or maybe you had unrealistic expectations. Remember, we will not change everyone. But the ones we do influence, we not only change them, we will change their friends, their families and their kids and grand kids. We also know funds are a problem, but where there is a will, there is a way.

Remember, changing a young person cannot be measured in statistics! Isn't the life of one worth it?



Vernon Housing Authority News

New Resident Advisory Committee Members

The Vernon Housing Authority would like to welcome two new members to our Resident Advisory Committee; Mr. Billy Coleman and Ms. Jeanette Cole.



Mr. Coleman has been a resident in Strickland Circle since 2004 and Ms. Cole has been with us since 1987. Our Resident Committee plays a very important role in providing input

for resident activities and funding programs. We want to thank our Resident Advisory Committee for their participation in representing the residents of our community.

Open House

The Vernon Housing Authority staff and commissioners welcomed residents and visitors from the surrounding community to the open house of our new office addition and renovation of the existing building and Community Center. Custom Building Systems, Inc. out of Rogersville, AL won the bid and did an excellent job.

Through the renovation and new addition, we now have an expanded waiting room, private interview room, two storage/file rooms and expanded administrative offices. The positive comments we received have been overwhelming and we are thrilled to have been able to provide this facility to better serve our residents and community.

Talladega Youth Celebrate Dr. Seuss' Birthday

Children all over observed "Read Across America Day" and Dr. Seuss' 105th birthday. Over one hundred children living in Talladega's Curry Court, Knoxville Homes and Westgate communities celebrated Dr. Seuss birthday.

The celebration started with guest readers in each of the communities. Dr. Joanne Horton, superintendent of Talladega City Schools, read "Horton Hatches the Egg" to children at the Curry Court community center. Dr. Dolia Patterson, principal of Houston Elementary School read "Ernie the Ermine," a children's book written by her husband, Talladega City Council President Dr. Horace Patterson, read Seuss' "Happy Birthday to you" at the Westgate community center. Talladega City Councilman Eddie Tucker read "The Cat in the Hat" at the Knoxville Homes center.

In addition to honoring Dr. Seuss' birthday, National Read Across America Day was observed. Read Across America is the largest reading event in the United States. Dr. Seuss changed the landscape of children's books with his controlled vocabulary and colorful meals. Dr. Seuss epitomizes a love of children and learning. Also, his use of rhymes makes his books an effective tool for teaching young children the basic skills they need to be successful. When we celebrate Dr. Seuss and reading, we send a clear message to America's children that reading is important.

The children enjoyed making their own booklets with rhymes as well as enjoying birthday cake and singing Happy Birthday to Dr. Seuss. Each participant received a certificate. Talladega Housing Authority will continue to offer a reading program in each of its communities to help residents realize the value and importance of reading and that reading can be fun.

Phenix City's Kids Rewarded For Progress

In partnership with Troy University, the Phenix City Housing Authority has developed an after-school program for its residents.

Thirty-five children participate in the program consisting of a variety of activities including "Kids in the Kitchen" arts and crafts, sports challenge and dance. For one hour daily, tutors specializing in reading, math and science work with the children in groups and individually. A tutor is also available to assist the children in internet search for school reports.



The children participating in the program are required to bring in progress reports and report cards to determine areas the children need tutorial assistance. After the second nine weeks, 20 of the children had one to four grade improvements. As a reward for the grade improvements, they were taken to the River Center Performing Arts Center to see "Drum Line". Our Program Director, Cheryl Carter, said the children were mesmerized the entire show. We are very pleased with the program and believe that education is the most important tool we can provide to assist our residents to self-sufficiency.

Message From the President



*Lee Eastman, Auburn
AAHRA President
2008-2009*

My term as your AAHRA President is rapidly coming to a close and I want each of you to know how much I have enjoyed serving you and AAHRA this year. What an amazing year this has been!

Each of you, in your own special way, has contributed to the overwhelming success that AAHRA has enjoyed. Whether you took that all important action in response to a legislative action request, you served as the chairperson of a committee, served on a committee, or have loyally supported AAHRA in other ways, all of these events have come together to culminate in a huge success.

Alabama and AAHRA continue our great tradition of being leaders in our industry. This year Akinola Popoola will begin his tenure as NAHRO President and John Nolen will take the reins of SERC as its President. These colleagues and their great accomplishments bring with their service pride and distinction to our State and I hope that you will join with me in offering our

support for them.

We have had other individual accomplishments as well. Tom Wachs who has published the Alabama Traveler for the past twelve years has certainly made us all proud of the SERC recognition of Best Newsletter of the Year. Additionally Tom acts as webmaster for the AAHRA webpage. This year Tom has made numerous additions and enhancements like the Forum, and other features.

Cindy Early worked hard to put together items to go into the basket for the NAHRO auction. Legislatively we have had the most active year to date. Alabama has and continues to lead the Nation in responses to legislative calls to action.

Thank you to Shaler Roberts, Chair, Legislative Action Committee, for his efforts in the legislative area. This has helped and in some cases has been instrumental in passing legislation that favors our industry while on other occasions helping to defeat poor legislation. Thank you to each of you who took just the few moments required to make a difference.

On the State side your support in opposition to HR881 (this was the bill introduced to make us get city and/or county approval before purchasing anything) possibly helped prevent it from reaching the calendar. However, we need to be vigilant because the sponsor has vowed to reintroduce this bill and possibly other legislation during the next session.

Your AAHRA Committees have worked hard all year. The Education Committee chaired by Debra Graham worked tirelessly on not two but three workshops. Due to Debra and her committee members all were hugely successful. The Spring Workshop went over the four hundred mark for attendance.



In preparation for our new two year terms that will begin in October the Administrative Procedures Manual Committee, lead by Carolyn Sutley, revamped the "Administrative Procedures Manual." It is now published on the AAHRA webpage so that everyone can have access. The Committee revisited and updated the "AAHRA Annual Meeting and Convention Guidelines" also published on the website.

Carolyn took over this year as AAHRA Treasurer and has worked diligently on the books and insuring that AAHRA monies are fully invested. Pam Bedsole, AAHRA Secretary has worked with Tom to publish several years' worth of AAHRA minutes on the AAHRA webpage.

The biggest event that we have each year is our Annual Business Meeting and Convention. This year's convention, at the Beau Rivage, will be exceptional. The Convention Committee, lead by Chairman Dave Madden, has worked to provide your staff and commissioners with an unforgettable combination of education and fun packed events. The theme for this year "Stayin' Alive" is a reminder that we, AAHRA are still here and as strong as ever, we are "Stayin' Alive." It is looking back and seeing where we've been and knowing that we can work through the tough times ahead, together, united under one cause. It's about passion, drive and excitement of things to come. I want to thanks Shannon Barrios for the theme idea. The Convention breaks the mold and boasts a number of first time events.

Many thanks go to the Birmingham Area HUD Office for their support throughout the year and especially at the workshops. I want to specifically thank Ms. Cindy Yarbrough and Mr. Ed Sprayberry for their support and assistance with the workshops and Annual Convention.

In closing I want to say that I am honored to have served as your President. We have a magnificent AAHRA family and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you and AAHRA.

God bless America and may God bless each of you.

Lee

Alexander City Touts Public Housing FSS Program

In June of 2008, Alexander City Housing Authority received the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency Grant (ROSS) and began what promises to be a successful Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program. There are currently 16 participants enrolled in the program with a possibility of 9 additional participants to be included.

The Family Self-Sufficiency program is designed to assist and encourage the participant to set goals for themselves and their families, and to work hard to obtain those goals. To become suitably employed and self-sufficient is the ultimate goal.

Each participant has individual dreams and expectations for their specific situation, but commonly share the desire to complete their education, whether it be GED or post-secondary, improve their credit, have their own transportation, and to be employed in the field of their choice.

Susan (*name changed to protect identity) is a single mother with three children. She enrolled in the FSS Program with determination to complete her personal goal of graduating from Faulkner University with a degree in Criminal Justice. She achieved this goal in December 2008. She continues to seek employment in this field, but is currently employed with Russell Corporation, and is now escrowing \$316 each month.

Nancy* has enrolled in GED classes at the Adult Learning Center and hopes to complete the fast-track classes soon and take the GED exam.

Kim* is enrolled in classes at Central Alabama Community College and Rhonda* moved from Public Housing into home ownership.

Success stories in the making!! Each of these participants are at different stages of their lives, but are determined to persevere, reach their goals and become self-sufficient!

Section 8 Success Story

The Alexander City Housing Authority's HCV Family Self-Sufficiency Program is currently thriving. The FSS Program has a full caseload and several success stories.

When one pictures true success, a particular participant immediately comes to mind. This FSS participant is a 27-year single mother of three. She has been on the FSS Program for approximately two years. When she joined FSS the goals that she set forth for herself included: registering for the cosmetology program at a local community college, successfully completing and graduating from that program, and obtaining a job in the cosmetology field.

This participant has worked diligently to meet her goals, however, it has not been an easy road for her and her family. Roughly a year after joining the FSS program she lost her home in a fire. She immediately turned to FSS for guidance. We were able to get her in touch with different resources in the community that were able to help her. Within a few months she was back in a Section 8 rental home and back on her feet continuing to work toward her goals.

The path to meeting her goals has had several hurdles, which she and her family have had to conquer. This participant has risen to challenges she has faced and has come out on top. She recently graduated with her Associate's Degree in Cosmetology from the local community college and has been fortunate enough to obtain a job at a local salon. Due to her newfound employment she had an increase in earned income. She has been able to establish an escrow account and is earning \$57.00 per month. She is currently working toward her master's certification in cosmetology.

It is possible for families to rise above the circumstances, which they face. With a clear path defined and some positive reinforcement, change can be achieved. Maybe not in a year or even two, but in time, one is able to overcome challenges and rise to new heights. The participant in this article is a prime example.

Hamilton Housing Authority Resident is a Published Novelist

The Hamilton Housing Authority is extremely proud of one of their residents, Mr. Jim Carruth.

Jim was born in Lamar County Alabama in 1939. His Dad moved the family to Aberdeen, Mississippi during WWII, where he worked for the Ordinance Plant that manufactured bombs for use in the war. After the war, the family moved to the little town of Gatman, MS, and his Dad became a machine operator for the Frisco railroad. He remained there until his death in 1969.



Graduating from High School in 1957, Jim served in the USAF until 1964. After basic training, he was trained as an administrative specialist and given on and off-base writing courses while stationed in Clovis, New Mexico. The USAF transferred him to Alaska, and his first interest in writing was working for the base Sergeant Major on Elmendorf AFB, at Anchorage. This was the command section - they wrote policy and command letters for the Base Commander, a Colonel, later promoted to General.

Jim married Judy Funderburg in 1965. They have two sons, Andy and Daniel.

Jim worked for the GAF Corporation, in Mobile and Joliet, IL and during this time he attended college on the GI Bill, and earned a degree in business. He attended two writer's workshops and continued as a part-time student, taking only English courses. He spent the last fifteen

years before retirement working for the BIVAC and Intertek Corporations as a government inspector for goods being exported to foreign countries.

Jim and his wife Judy have since moved to Hamilton, Alabama where they live in an apartment at the Hamilton Housing Authority.

Jim's writing was limited for years, because of time spent on his day job making a living, and the only thing he could get published was letters to the editor in a local paper.

To date, he has published 4 novels. His latest is "Rosa's Revenge." His books are listed for sale on most of the on-line book sellers.





LENDING A HELPING HAND

The plight of the economy has left no one untouched, and during these difficult times there is a huge challenge to try to help residents meet their daily needs. With the cost of everything soaring, the dollar doesn't buy much to fill the pantry or the stomach anymore.

The residents of The Abbeville Housing Authority are being given a helping hand by their neighbors through the establishment of a "Coupon Cupboard."

Since October 2008, two resident volunteers who we call our "Coupon Queens" report to the Housing Authority Office with Sunday Paper Flyers in hand, saved for them by friends and relatives. They clip, file and distribute various coupons to their neighbors based on orders that have previously been placed.

So far, these "Coupon Queens" have distributed approximately \$300.00 in manufacture coupons to use at local grocery and drug stores.

Coupons Queen Kim was very skeptical about using coupons, but says now that she is "hooked" and is amazed at how much she is saving on items for her family.

Coupon Queen Phyllis is an experienced "professional coupon shopper" but had not been using them in recent years since she is no longer working and doesn't get a newspaper. Manufacture coupons can be used in conjunction with food stamps and helps make the monthly allotment go farther, however, sales taxes still must be paid. Since non-consumable items such a paper products, cleaning products and health care products are not food stamp eligible products, the coupons provide enough savings that the residents have money left over to purchase these items that were previously considered non-essential.

Through the use of the coupons clipped by the "Queens," several hundred dollars worth of items are purchased for free. These items include shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, razors, pain relievers, make-up, etc. Many of these items have been given away to the residents free of charge to those who wish participate in the program. If saving money wasn't enough, this activity qualifies as a Community Service Activity that any resident who can hold a pair of scissors can perform. Anyone interested in finding out more on how to help residents save money for free can go to www.couponmom.com or contact Lisa Dunn at the Abbeville Housing Authority.

Photo shows queens Phyllis (L) and Kim (R) displaying some of the items given away.

Youth Appreciation Day in Auburn

The Auburn Housing Authority recently sponsored a Youth Appreciation Day for children that participated in poster contests offered throughout the year. The event included arts and crafts, Coke, pizza and cookies. The goal was to complete the 450-500 "Pet Rocks" that will be given to each participant at the 2009 AAHRA Annual Convention.

Pictured from left are Shannon Barrios, Property Manager; Kadijah Dinkins; Sarah McMillian, mother of three of the participants; Rebecca McMillian; Curtis McMillian; James McMillian; and Brittney Hugley. We had a wonderful time!



Former Gadsden Director Passes Away

Sue Fells, the former Executive Director of the Greater Gadsden Housing Authority, passed away on February 11. Mrs. Fells was 83. She is survived by her husband and two daughters.

Mrs. Fells was a lifelong resident of Gadsden. After high school, she worked at Kohn Ribbon Mill in Attalla while waiting for her marine to return home from World War II. She was married to Joe in 1945. She graduated from Gadsden Business College and began a career in accounting.

She was a past member of the Pilot's Club, NAHRO and RSVP, where she volunteered her services by doing taxes for others. She and her sister volunteered at her church where they became guardians of the babies at church. She loved children and after she retired, became a mentor at Gaston School, teaching them to read and love books, as she was an avid reader herself.

Mrs. Fells began her career with the housing authority as an accountant and worked her way up to Executive Director, the only woman to ever hold that position. She worked at the Housing Authority approximately 27 years and was the Executive Director for 5 years. She retired in December of 1991.

Countdown to Census Day: April 1, 2010

What is the Census?

The census is a count of everyone living in the United States every 10 years.

The census is mandated by the U.S. Constitution.

Your participation in the census is required by law.

It takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

Federal law protects the personal information you share during the census.

Census data are used to distribute Congressional seats to states, to make decisions about what community services to provide, and to distribute \$300 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year.



2010 CENSUS: IT'S IN OUR HANDS

Meet Alice Rogers

submitted by Athens Housing Authority

Year - 1960, Huntsville, Alabama

SHE was 37 years old, hunting for a place to take her young sons to learn how to fall down without hurting themselves. She had learned how to fall protectively during tumbling in high school in Hagerstown, MD, but her two sons were not so fortunate. Six weeks prior, she had taken her two boys to a roller skating rink, where within the half hour, the oldest boy fell and fractured his wrist because he did not know how to fall. Nothing was available at the time, not even tumbling or gymnastics. However, she lucked out, a judo club had just been established around the corner by an Army Sergeant from Redstone Arsenal.

Enrolling herself and her two sons, ages 11 and 9, turned out to be a blessing. Alice loved the martial arts immediately. But she found herself among teenagers who thought a woman of her “advanced years” too old to be there. This was indeed a struggle for her. The young boys only had eyes for the two younger females enrolled in the class. Consequently, she made herself work harder to deter their attitude. Little did they know that this woman was determined that no one would force her out of an art she enjoyed.

One day, a Commanding Officer at Redstone came to the club making an unannounced visit. He met Alice and worked with her all afternoon. Recognizing her talents, he insisted she be promoted to Brown Belt. Soon after, other females joined the group, but since she had previously been made to work with men, the new women felt like feathers to her. They provided very little competition.

Home life had not been so good for Alice. Divorce was inevitable, however, she was a registered nurse. She soon married one of the Judo instructors. Wherever they lived, her hus-

band had a Judo Club, and her instruction and training continued. She and her new husband soon began taking lessons from Leo Wilson on Green Mountain, overlooking Huntsville. They spent a lot of time together and became great friends.

In class, grunts, groans and the words “try again” were heard along with the sounds of laughter at one’s own mistakes.

In time, teaching children at the Judo Club became Alice’s job. Her experience field training dogs years earlier proved an advantage in working with children. Alice realized that children have about the same attention span as dogs - about 10 minutes. The children never realized when new routines evolved that they were learning a part of a throw or grappling technique. They laughed, they tumbled and they had fun.

After 18 years, her second marriage ended in divorce. Alice traveled the country as a nurse going from cities to towns to many nooks and crannies. She used her knowledge of pressure points and healing points as well as her nursing skills to help those in need.

At age 73, Alice returned to the Huntsville area and tried to find her old instructor Leo Wilson, but learned he had moved. One day she read in the paper that her old judo organization was having a clinic at the gym at UAH. She jumped at the chance to possibly find Mr. Wilson again.

Excited, she arrived at the event. Not only did she find Mr. Wilson, she found many of her old judo buddies as well. It was a great reunion as they reminisced about old times.

One of her friends talked her into going back to the martial arts class where he was giving lessons. She obliged and found loud booming music, kids playing on the mats, and parents interrupting the class.

She recognized the kata were performed too

fast. Kata is a slow, stylized, predetermined movement showing a person how to get into or avoid a maneuver.

Everything had sped up during her absence. Speed and flash and winning were the drives now. People were literally wallowing on the mats. She had always been trained not to get down on the mat, for the aim was to get your opponent on the mat. She rationalized that some “nit wit” had separated jujitsu from judo, and choking the opponent out then reviving him was wrong. Her sport had changed, so she had to change with it.

She couldn't understand what had happened to her beloved art so she began teaching again. Students approached her with caution, apologizing when they threw her or applied a grappling technique. Shaking her head, Alice finally convinced them that she wouldn't break. She continued working out with them, teaching them, until the age of 82. Her doctor suggested, somewhat strongly, that she may not want to take falls anymore.

But there is so much more to her sport than falls. Now she learns other arts, like knife fighting, cane defense, and even though swords are a little much for her, she tries. She loves clinics and still is on the mat as much as her body will allow, but disapproves of having only one partner. The goal is to learn and help others. As to the noise, she just removes her hearing aid,

reads the instructors lips or asks someone what was said.

At age 86, you quickly learn not to mess with Alice Rogers. Alice now has a 7th degree black belt in Yudo (Korean Judo).

Year - 2009, Athens, Alabama

Alice simply must tell a couple of amusing incidents that happened at the dojo. In the ladies dressing room one day, there stood a nubile young woman clad only in her underwear, proudly admiring her body in a full length mirror. Alice says she was wearing a saggy, baggy, old ladies body. Turning, the young lady shot her a withering look of contempt. Looking at her straight in the eye, Alice said, “One day when your fat falls and your skin falls, you won't be able to iron it out either - and don't you forget it!” The young lady gathered up her clothes and fled without saying a word.

OK, so she is an aging mess. She doesn't have much hair on her head, so she wears wigs in the winter and hats in the summer. One fine day she had been to a party wearing a wig, when afterward, she decided to go to judo class. Upon entering the dressing room, she pulled off her wig and flung it aside. A young woman in the room let out a startled gasp as she scampered out. Next thing Alice knew, the fleeing girl had returned with another girl. Smiling at Alice, she demanded, “Do that again!”



Piedmont's New Office

The Piedmont Housing Authority recently moved into their new office.

Executive Director Keith Word said the office is only about 50 yards from the old office and the phone numbers and mailing address will remain the same.

NAHRO Launches New Board Training Program

The National Housing Association of Housing & Redevelopment Authorities (NAHRO) recently took a groundbreaking step at their summer conference by launching a new program.

This program, designed for Housing Authority Board of Commissioner members, includes strategic planning and leadership development called Basic Fundamentals for Housing Commissioners. This course is part of NAHRO's series of professional development portfolio offered and aimed at delivering in-depth, relevant, and practical education to serve its members across the country.

Alabama was one of the first states to train and certify five (5) trainers. These trainers will then travel around and train board members in basic commissioner's fundamentals.

The trainers selected by the AAHRA Board of Directors were Mr. Iverson Gandy, Jr. of Tuskegee University and a current board of commissioner for the Tuskegee Housing Authority; Mrs. Henrietta Snipes, the current Board Chairperson of the Opelika Housing Authority; Mr. Jack Mundy, retired Executive Director and current board of commissioner member of the Columbiana Housing Authority; Mr. Jimmy W. Brown, the current Executive Director of the Calera and Montevallo Housing

Authorities; and Mr. Keith Word, the current Executive Director of the Piedmont Housing Authority.

The first Alabama Commissioner Training was held in Birmingham and twenty-two Board of Commissioner members graduated. The training lasted a day and half. Trainers for the class were Mr. Iverson Gandy, Mrs. Henrietta Snipes, Mr. Jack Mundy, and Mr. Keith Word.



Each of the board members reported how much they truly enjoyed the class. They also stated how much they learned about what their job really entailed as a commissioner.

The commissioners experience on a housing authority board ranged from just a few months to over twenty years.

Keith Word, Executive Director of the Piedmont Housing Authority, had this to say, "This program is a huge success and is a right step forward in the training of all board members. It doesn't matter whether the person is new to a Board or a veteran member who has served a housing authority for years."



Some residents of the Alexander City Housing Authority are very excited about their new parking spaces. Funds received from both the Capital Fund and the CFGR Stimulus Package were used to remodel the parking lots in the Springhill and Laurel Heights communities. A total of 34 additional parking spaces were acquired. The additional parking spaces allow the residents to park closer to their apartments. The upgrade to each parking lot adds great curb appeal, and will be an asset to residents for years to come.

Data Sets Guide Brought Up-to-Date

From: HUD USER News

The Office of Policy Development & Research (PD&R) recently updated our Guide to HUD USER Data Sets. The Guide briefly describes each of 20 data sets maintained and kept current by PD&R, and includes the website address, release information, format(s), and the relevant timeframe for each data set. Examples of the collection are below:

- o Fair Market Rents and Income Limits
- o 50th Percentile Rent Estimates
- o Annual Adjustment Factors
- o Qualified Census Tracts
- o Consolidated Plan Data (CHAS Data)
- o HUD Subprime and Manufactured Home Lender List
- o Special Tabulations of Households
- o Government Sponsored Enterprise Data
- o State of the Cities Data Systems
- o Neighborhood Stabilization Program Data
- o Housing Affordability Data Systems
- o HUD Aggregated USPS Administrative Data

The new Guide to HUD USER Data Sets can be downloaded at www.huduser.org/datasets/pdrdatas.html, or a print copy can be ordered by calling 800-245-2691, opt 1.

Both versions are available free of charge.



Lewis McDonald recently represented Alabama as he carried the Alabama State Flag at the SERC Opening Session in Memphis during the June annual meeting.

Nolen Tapped As New SERC President

Hello everyone.

Tom asked me if I wanted to write a little something for this issue of the "Traveler" as I become SERC President in October, so I accepted.

I just wanted to let all of you know how much I appreciate your support for me as I become the next SERC President for the term of 2009 – 2011. I am extremely honored to serve in this position for ALABAMA and the rest of the nine states that make up the Southeastern Regional Council.

I have been in housing and SERC for 30 years now and an additional eight years with the HUD office in Jackson, MS. when I first started in housing. I think it's about time, don't you. But it is a true honor to be your President and I promise that I will give it my all to represent you and AAHRA to the best of my ability. Please don't stop supporting me though, because I will still need that throughout my two year term. I am also very happy to have Lewis McDonald as President of AAHRA by my side during this time. Lewis and I have been working on SERC committee appointments for a while now and really do appreciate so many of you stepping up to the plate and serving on the various SERC committees.

I think Alabama will be well represented and I want to encourage you to come to the meetings and lend your support and ideas. If you are not a member of SERC, please either call me or email me and let's get signed up. The dues are really low for the largest region in the country and that is because we are a volunteer organization and we keep the dues low on purpose. Our number one goal is to provide quality training and services at an affordable price and also a quality atmosphere where we can learn and enjoy ourselves at the same time. I have found the SERC membership to be comprised of wonderful people who are dedicated to their profession and to each other. That is the main reason I have spent so much time in this organization. Please join us if you haven't already and experience the same thing I and others have enjoyed for so many years.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to be your SERC President. Our first meeting will be at the Fall Workshop in Hilton Head, SC, November 7 – 10, 2009. Information has already been sent out plus all the information is on the SERC website. If you can't find what you need, just call me and I'll be happy to assist. I look forward to serving you and working with you over the next two years.

John



AHARM Safety Tip: “SEVEN COMMON ACCIDENT CAUSES”

I encourage you to share this information with your Maintenance staff at possible safety meeting or training session. This department in most cases is your largest group of employees and is exposed to a number of hazards as they perform their day to day maintenance and service work.

Consider this statistic: 80 out of every 100 accidents are the fault of the person involved in the incident. Therefore unsafe acts cause four times as many accidents & injuries as unsafe conditions.

Accidents occur for many reasons. Have you been guilty of any of these attitudes or behaviors? If so, you may have not been injured-but next time you may not be so lucky.

1) **Taking Shortcuts:** Every day we make decisions we hope will make the job faster and more efficient. But do time savers ever risk your own safety, or that of other crew members? Short cuts that reduce your safety on the job are not shortcuts, but an increased chance for injury.

2) **Being Over Confident:** Confidence is a good thing. Overconfidence is too much of a good thing. "It'll never happen to me" is an attitude that can lead to improper procedures, tools, or methods in your work. Any of these can lead to an injury.

3) **Starting a Task with Incomplete Instructions:** To do the job safely and right the first time you need complete information. Don't be shy about asking for explanations about work procedures and safety precautions. It isn't dumb to ask questions; it's dumb not to.

4) **Poor Housekeeping:** Housekeeping is an accurate indicator of everyone's attitude about quality, production and safety. Poor housekeeping creates hazards of all types. A well maintained area sets a standard for others to follow. Good housekeeping involves both pride and safety.

5) **Ignoring Safety Procedures:** Purposely failing to observe safety procedures can endanger you and your co-workers. Being "casual" about safety can lead to a casualty!

6) **Mental Distractions from Work:** Having a bad day at home and worrying about it at work is a hazardous combination. Dropping your 'mental' guard can pull your focus away from safe work procedures. Don't become a statistic.

7) **Failure to Pre-Plan the Work:** Being hasty in starting a task, or not thinking through the process can put you in harms way. Instead, Plan Your Work and then Work Your Plan!

"It is better to be careful 100 times than to get killed once." (Mark Twain)

Calendar of Events

2009 Schedule

September 20-22 PHADA Legislative Forum - Washington, DC
October 4-6 NAHRO National Conference - Washington, DC

2010 Schedule

January 10-13 PHADA Commissioners Conference, Tampa
March 29-31 NAHRO Legislative Conference, Washington DC
June 6-9 PHADA Annual Convention, Las Vegas
July 23-25 NAHRO Summer Conference, Boston
August 16-18 AAHRA Annual Conference, Bay Point Marriott, Panama City
September 12-14 PHADA Legislative Forum, Washington DC
Oct 31-Nov 2 NAHRO National Conference, Reno

The Alabama Traveler

Tom Wachs, Editor
Eufaula Housing Authority
PO Box 36
Eufaula, Alabama 36072-0036

