TAHRA Annual Conference

TAHRA members and guests from around the state experienced quite a treat with breathtaking views of the mountains in and around Kingsport when they arrived for this year’s conference. “Gear up and climb the mountain of leadership” was an appropriate theme for the TAHRA conference held at the Meadowview Marriot Conference Resort & Convention Center. The 77th annual meeting provided outstanding material and sessions for attendees.

Presiding over the opening session, President Jim Payne welcomed members to Kingsport and thanked committees, vendors and volunteers for the hard work that goes into having a successful conference. Tosha LeSure, director of Knoxville/Nashville Office of Public Housing, reviewed the existing HUD regulations and offered participants an explanation of updates and changes planned for 2017.

A special treat at the opening session were visits from Representative John Holsclaw, Jr. and Congressman Dr. Phil Roe from the First Congressional District. Kingsport Mayor John Clark encouraged the group to visit and explore the city during their free time.

SERC-NAHRO President Dave Baldwin gave organizational updates and provided dates and information on upcoming workshops and conferences. The theme of his two year term has been “a place to call home,” which has called everyone working in public housing to strive to end homelessness.

Another exciting attraction for the group was keynote speaker Glen Ward. A professional humorist and inspirational speaker, Ward

Upcoming events

Spring Workshop
April 10-12, 2017
Franklin Marriot
Cool Springs, TN

Annual Meeting
September 17-20, 2017
Muscle Shoal Hotel and Spa
Florence, AL

To download and back issues visit www.tahranet.org.
Earlier issues back to November 2004 are available at:
http://talesoftahra.googlepages.com
Greetings Everyone!

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended TAHRA’s annual meeting “Gear Up and Climb the Mountain of Leadership”. This year’s annual meeting was held in Kingsport, Tennessee and was a huge success, not just because of the many hours of planning invested by committee members, but also because of all of you who attended and contributed to the various sessions.

Strategic Planning committees met in October and began making plans for the upcoming year. If you have suggestions, please let the board or committee members know as soon as possible so we can incorporate those as we finalize our 2017 organizational plan.

I hope everyone will mark their calendars and make plans to attend our upcoming TAHRA events:

* Plans for our Legislative Day on the Hill are in progress and the dates will be announced as soon as they are available. Remember this will be our first one since making this a bi-annual event, so we expect it to be bigger and better than ever!
* Our annual spring workshop is scheduled for April 10–12, 2017 in Franklin, Tennessee at the Franklin Marriott.
* The 2017 annual meeting will be held September 17–20 at the Marriott Shoal Hotel and Spa in Florence, Alabama.

Once again, I want to thank everyone who has played such a vital role in the progression of TAHRA. I’m looking forward to a great 2017 for our organization. Until then, my wish is that each of you will have a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year, and that you will enjoy this special time with your family and friends.

Best wishes,

~Jim

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NEWSLETTER AWARDS

Congratulations to the winners of the TAHRA newsletter awards. Entry recognitions go to four categories based on size of the public housing authorities around the state: Small PHA, Medium PHA, Large PHA, and X-Large PHA.

Small PHA Newsletter Winner
Franklin Housing Authority
The Porchlight, Susan Minor

Medium PHA Newsletter Winner
McMinnville Housing Authority
Neighborhood News, Marie Padgett

Large PHA Newsletter Winner
Cookeville Housing Authority
Highlands Residential Services
Community Times, Kathy Smith

X-Large PHA Newsletter Winner
Jackson Housing Authority
The Neighbor, Geneva Gibson

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Congratulations are also in order for Franklin Housing Authority newsletter being chosen as the winner of the SERC-NARHO Agency Newsletter of the Year award in the Small PHA category. McMinnville Housing Authority received accolades for Medium Newsletter Winner. Recognition was made on Sunday, November 6 at the Fall Workshop opening session in Asheville. Thank you again for your agency’s participation.
The Hamilton Street Resident Activity Center of the McMinnville Housing Authority had a Thanksgiving dinner and program for 55 children on November 23. Lisa Harvey organized the event which included turkey with all the trimmings and a program at which Mayor Haley spoke on thankful living. Father John Melcher offered the blessing prior to the meal. The children are now working hard on the Christmas program which is their biggest fund raiser. The special program will be presented at the downtown Park Theater on December 22. Tickets are available to the public, and should be gotten early as it sold out last year. They are hoping the balcony renovations are completed before then so it will hold more than 400 people, making this their largest audience to date.

Twice a year, the Johnson City Housing Authority hosts a health fair for the senior adults of the community. This event serves an important role in promoting wellness among JCHA residents and connecting them to the many beneficial services available. The old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” has never been truer. Making strides toward a healthy lifestyle helps residents improve their quality of life and serve as positive role models in their community.

The Fall Health Fair was held in October at the Keystone Community Recreation Center. At the event, informational booths were set up by area agencies including the Johnson City Community Health Center, JCCHC/JCHA Partners for Health Medical Clinic, Salvation Army, First Tennessee Area Agency on Aging and Disability, ETSU College of Pharmacy, Johnson City Health Department, Keystone Dental, Appalachian Community Federal Credit Union, Health Resource Center, Aid and Assist at Home, and the JCHA Department of Pest Control. Residents also enjoyed a healthy lunch, door prizes, and participated in a scavenger hunt which led them to meet with representatives from each booth. Thank you to the JCHA Department of Residents Services and their tireless efforts to serve the tenants of JCHA!
Jackson—

“Reach your goal and get rewarded!” That is Donna Wade’s reaction to completing the Section 8 FSS program in July. Wade enrolled in the program in January 2013. She did not graduate from high school, and she was determined to obtain her GED while in the program. “This program has kept me motivated and focused on getting my GED,” Wade said. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts at taking the GED test, she became even more determined. She continued to work, attend GED classes, and raise her eight-year-old daughter on her own. On July 26, Wade’s goal of obtaining her GED was a reality. She had a lot of excitement in her voice as she told others she passed. “I am so happy to have been a part of the FSS program,” she said. “I reached my goal and received an award along with it.”

Candace Allen started on her road to self-sufficiency in 2013 when she was accepted in public housing’s Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program. The program allowed her to work and budget her funds appropriately, she said. “I was given many tools and knowledge regarding my plans to return to school. In 2015 I transferred to the Section 8 FSS program.” Allen graduated from nursing school at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology in Jackson last April and recently got a job with her new degree. She more than doubled her salary. “My credit score is higher than I could ever imagine, and I am on my way towards homebuying options,” she said. Words simply cannot express how grateful I am for the FSS program and the FSS coordinators who go above and beyond to ensure the success of others. Thank you JHA and HUD!”

Women reach goals to become self sufficient

• Brenda Greer and Traci Story increased their earned income and are no longer receiving housing assistance payments.
• Cecelia Miliken earned her pharmacy technician certificate.
• Kaylea Jenkins resolved credit issues, accomplished her FSS goals and increased her earnings. Kaylea works at U.S. Farathane and has a daughter.
• Ashley Robinson completed her FSS goals and got a job with the University of Tennessee Health Science Center–Memphis. She is a medical assistant in family practice in Jackson.

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shared stories about the life-lessons he learned growing up in a minister’s home. His well-known political impersonations combined with his hilarious stories that kept the audience entertained as well as emotionally engaged.

Early morning session topics included: HUD Capital Fund Guidebook, commissioner’s training, fair housing updates, wage compliance and enforcement, protecting your identity, and G.A.S.B. impacts on government non-profits. In addition to morning training, the afternoon sessions included section 8 topics, managing housing authorities of the future and basics on how to create a nonprofit organization.

The exhibitors’ Monday night event featuring dueling pianos was an overwhelming hit! Many displayed their piano talents, engaging the crowd with music for all ages. The crowd stayed until the last song was played! It was truly enjoyed by everyone.
Annual conference—continued

Sessions continued the next day with more topics on commissioners, section 8, fair housing updates, and RAD roundtable discussions.

A murder mystery dinner theatre wrapped up the final night, and had everyone guessing who the villain was in this intriguing and fun production.

Sessions ended on Wednesday with Section 8 Roundtable Discussion where participants examined trust funds that provide grants to states to increase and preserve the supply of rental housing for very low income families, including homeless families, and to increase homeownership.

We offer a special “thank you” to those companies and members who contributed and worked very hard to make our 77th annual conference a success.

We look forward to the 2017 conference in September that will be held at the Marriott Shoal Hotel and Spa in Florence, AL.

As always, please check the TAHRA website at: www.tahranet.org for upcoming information on 2017 conferences.
The 77th John Acuff Annual Scholarship Golf Tournament was held this year at the on-site course of the Meadowview Marriott Resort and Conference Center. A stunning golf course set in the mountains near Kingsport, Tennessee not only provided golfers with great views, but offered challenges for a fun-filled day of competition among exhibitors and members.

First-place this year went to the 4-man team of Conkin, Lewis, Jennings and Vandevate with a low score of 60. Close behind in second-place with a score of 61 was the team of Hoeschen, Hayes, J. Green and D. Green.

The tournament proceeds fund college scholarships for qualified graduates living in public housing who want to continue their education.

We send a special “thank you” to all of the sponsors and participants, and we look forward to seeing you next year!
Retainage

Retainage is money earned by a prime contractor for work completed, but held until the project is complete to assure that the contractor will satisfy its obligation for project completion. The prime contractor often withholds retainage from subcontractors until they complete their work.

State law has specific requirements for handling retainage on construction contracts - for both public and private projects. See the following areas of Tennessee Code Annotated §12-4-108(c), §12-4-108(d), §4-15-102, §66-34-103(a), §66-34-103(b), §66-34-104, §66-34-104(a), §66-34-104(e), §66-34-104(g) and §66-34-104(h)). Among the requirements are those listed below:

• The maximum retainage rate is 5 percent.

• Retained funds must be kept in a separate interest-bearing escrow account with a third party. Once money is deposited into the account, it belongs solely to the contractor.

• The escrow account must be established prior to withholding any retainage. Retainage cannot be withheld until proper escrow account has been opened.

• The withholding party must provide written notice to the contractor that it has complied with the retainage escrow requirements. Each notice must include identification of the financial institution, the account number and the amount of retained funds that are deposited in the account.

• Funds must be released by the owner to the prime contractor within 90 days of completion or substantial completion of a project, whichever occurs first.

• The statutory escrow requirements cannot be waived.

• It is a Class A misdemeanor for non-compliance with the statute. Each day of non-compliance is subject to a $3,000 penalty.

Please note that these are general observations. Consult your own experts and legal counsel for official guidance about retainage issues.

As always, if I can be of help to you, feel free to contact me at tmckee@kcda.org.

~Terry McKee
Cleveland Housing Authority
Lay Street Development Renovations

This project combines phases of exterior upgrades with off-street parking and a mixed-use green space for the community. Amenities include playground, dream basketball court, walking trail and pavilion for picnicking.
HUD AND CENSUS BUREAU REPORT NEW RESIDENTIAL SALES IN OCTOBER

Sales of new single-family houses in October 2016 were at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 563,000, according to estimates released jointly today by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Census Bureau. This is 1.9 percent below the revised September rate of 574,000, but is 17.8 percent above the October 2015 estimate of 478,000.

The median sales price of new houses sold in October 2016 was $304,500; the average sales price was $354,900. The seasonally adjusted estimate of new houses for sale at the end of October was 246,000. This represents a supply of 5.2 months at the current sales rate.

New residential sales data for November 2016 will be released on Friday, December 23, 2016 at 10:00 A.M. EDT.

Explanatory Notes

These statistics are estimated from sample surveys. They are subject to sampling variability as well as non-sampling error including bias and variance from response, non-reporting, and under coverage. Estimated average relative standard errors of the preliminary data are shown in the tables. Whenever a statement such as “2.5 percent above” appears in the text, this indicates the range in which the actual percent change is likely to have occurred. All ranges given for percent changes are 90-percent confidence intervals and account only for sampling variability. If a range does not contain zero, the change is statistically significant. If it does contain zero, the change is not statistically significant; that is, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. The same policies apply to the confidence intervals for percent changes shown in the tables. Changes in seasonally adjusted statistics often show irregular movement. It takes three months to establish a trend for new houses sold. Preliminary new home sales figures are subject to revision due to the survey methodology and definitions used. The survey is primarily based on a sample of houses selected from building permits. Since a “sale” is defined as a deposit taken or sales agreement signed, this can occur prior to a permit being issued. An estimate of these prior sales is included in the sales figure. On average, the preliminary seasonally adjusted estimate of total sales is revised about four percent. Changes in sales price data reflect changes in the distribution of houses by region, size, etc., as well as changes in the prices of houses with identical characteristics. Explanations of confidence intervals and sampling variability can be found on our web site listed above.

A traditional southern Christmas
Reprinted from the Plantation Resort Insider newsletter

When picturing Christmas scenery, the first thing to come to mind may be a snow-covered house up North. Many people don’t know that Christmas actually caught on in the Southern states first! The South, which was more open to European influences, embraced the holiday before the more Puritanical Northern states. Louisiana, Alabama and Arkansas were the first to make Christmas a legal holiday in the 1830s. Finally, in 1870, President Grant declared Christmas a national legal holiday. By this time, many of the South’s Christmas traditions had spread and have become deeply rooted in the way we celebrate. Here are a few of our Southern traditions—some you may recognize, and a few you may like to start!

Magnolia Wreaths: When the Pilgrims arrived in Jamestown, they noticed that the magnolia tree is an evergreen. From there, they began incorporating the symbolic flower into their Christmas decor. This beautiful plant is still traditionally used to deck the halls in the deep South.

A Single Candle in Each Window: This tradition was begun by the Irish and they brought it with them to Colonial Williamsburg. This sentiment demonstrates loyalty to loved ones who are not present in the home.

Citrus: Currently, we are able to enjoy fresh fruit almost any time we would like. In the old days, however, that was not the case. Having citrus in the off-season was a luxury that only the very rich could afford. Therefore, children would eagerly await to receive citrus in their stocking on Christmas morning. Citrus eventually became a big part of Southern holiday decor. It is hung on Christmas trees and woven into garland. Cloves are also pushed into the citrus as a form of decor that is a treat for the eyes and the nose.

Poinsettia: This festive plant is unofficially recognized as the traditional flower of Christmas. Few people know, however, that this flower was first introduced into the United States by a man from Charleston, South Carolina: Joel Robert Poinsett, the first United States minister to Mexico in 1825. The poinsettia was a traditional Christmas decoration in Mexico, which he chose to carry back with him.

HUD Update
Reprinted from HUD.com

H U D U P D A T E
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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