

Tales of TAHRA



News and information for members and friends
of the Tennessee Association of Housing and
Redevelopment Authorities

Informing TAHRA Members and Friends Since 1984

Summer 2011

Spring Workshop mapped “Avenues for Success”

By Joyce Floyd, Program Chair

This year we returned to the Cool Springs Marriott in Franklin, TN for two and a half days of a variety of sessions.

The Workshop was kicked off with a great start as Assistant Secretary of Public and Indian Housing, Sandra B. Henrequiz, addressed our opening session. Not all of the news was good, but it was very informative to hear HUD’s intents and plans from the top. There was also a very thorough legislative report from Bo Pierce, Booty Reed and Anne Carr. And the insurance update from Jim Thiltgen and Bob Bush was great news ~ again member agencies received a rebate on paid premiums.



Donna Baumgartner, TAHRA Executive Director, left, and Joyce Floyd, workshop Committee Chair check in attendees.

There were 332 attendees registered and we had 21 vendors attend. Our committee members really worked hard this year to find topics and speakers to bring current, useful, informative information! Eric Bellamy, KCDC, did an excellent job on designing the program this year. A special thanks to all our presenters who took the time to participate in our workshop and the moderators who agreed to make sure everything was on track. And many thanks to Donna Baumgartner who somehow manages to pull it all together!! It takes commitment and work from a lot of volunteers to make our workshop successful! Hopefully every attendee took at least one new piece of information back to their agency to put to use.

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Upcoming Events 2011

PHAS Training with Joe Schiff
May 24 or 25—Murfreesboro

Executive Director’s Retreat
July 17 - 19—Nashville, TN

2011 Annual Meeting
September 18 - 20—Nashville, TN

THDA Offers Special Mortgage Rates for Veterans

A special mortgage interest rate discount has been approved for active and retired members of the military by Tennessee Housing Development Agency’s Board of Directors.

Service members can apply for the “Homeownership for the Brave” discount which is a ½-percent interest reduction on any of the three mortgage choices at lenders working with THDA. THDA offers 30-year fixed rate mortgages, with or without downpayment assistance, for persons of low to moderate income. The program began April 1 and is available through March 31, 2012.

“We recognize that many service members were deployed in 2010 while other Americans had access to the federal First-Time Homebuyer Tax Credit,” said Lindsay Pully, director of THDA’s Single Family Programs division. “That program is closed, but this is an extra incentive if they are ready for homeownership in Tennessee.”

For the purpose of the Homeownership for the Brave Program, the definition of veteran is: All members of the military including retired and reservists (at least 180 days), i.e. active duty, National Guard, spouses, and surviving spouses. If discharged or released, was done so under conditions other than dishonorable.

Generally THDA’s targeted audience is first-time buyers or those who have not had ownership in a primary residence in the last three years. Veterans have a waiver for the first-time buyer requirement. Sales and income limits vary by county. The Homeownership for the Brave option is available across Tennessee, as are all THDA’s mortgage programs.



Message from TAHRA President Melba Johnson

We have had another very Stormy Spring, but as far as I know Tennessee has been very blessed compared to other parts of the Country.

Our Spring Workshop was again a huge success. Joyce Floyd did a wonderful job as usual. We had great training plus some fun. The second Womanless Beauty Review was very successful. There was \$1,594 raised for the Scholarship Fund. Another round of thanks to all who planned this event and also to all of the participants.

The Exhibit Co-Chairs, John Cauthen (Barge Cauthen & Associates) and Patricia Basham (McMinnville Housing Authority) with the help of their committees arranged for a total of 20 vendors to participate at our Spring Workshop. This was a great number of vendors at the Spring Workshop for the second year.



In the fall of 2010 Winston Henning and Art Cate were added to the existing Ad Hoc committee with Marilyn Medley remaining as Chairman of this Committee. The committee did recommend a change to the TAHRA By-Laws that would change the term of office from one year to two years. This change passed with a majority vote and the nominating committee will have recommendations for officers for the first two-year terms at the Executive Director's Retreat in Nashville in July.

The dates for the Executive Director's Retreat will be July 17th thru July 19th at the Hermitage in Nashville. You will receive information about this Retreat shortly. Hope everyone is making plans to attend.

Hope everyone has a safe summer filled with lots of fun. I look forward to seeing all of you at the Hilton in Nashville for our Annual Meeting in September.

Melba

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK Donna Baumgartner, TAHRA Executive Director

We have just completed another successful spring workshop and many thanks to the program committee chair, Joyce Floyd, KCDC and her committee members. And I thank all of you who attended and hope you found the sessions to be helpful and informative. We are also in the midst of other training being offered and put together under the leadership of our education and training committee, chaired by Dow Harris, Cookeville Housing Authority. Training planned for May is the NAHRO commissioners certification training, planned for June is Policies and Procedures Recap presented by Mickey McInnish and PHAS training presented by Joe Schiff and offered on two days. I hope you take these excellent opportunities for training for yourself, staff members and commissioners.

For the past few months, I have been working on our website and new membership software. I am in the final implementation stages so watch for updates and remember to keep me updated on any changes within your authority. Enjoy our beautiful Tennessee spring!

TAHRA MEMORIES of Mark Brezina

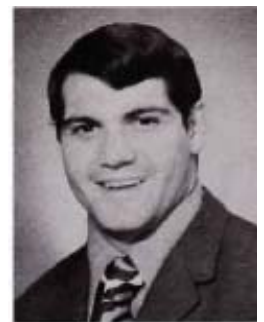
By Bo "Words Mean Something" Pierce

Effective April 24, 2011, Mark Brezina was named Region VI Deputy Regional Administrator of the Fort Worth, Texas Regional Office. The announcement was made by C. Donald Babers, Regional Administrator Region VI.

I first met Mark in Atlanta in the late 1980's. HUD Region IV Administrator Raymond Harris introduced Mark as his Special Assistant to lead the new Youth Sports Program Initiative introduced by HUD Secretary Jack Kemp. Mark, a big guy then, bounded to the microphone, gesturing, waving his hands as he spoke. It was like a pre-game huddle and he was "fired up"! And Mark got the crowd "fired up"! Now Mark is going home.

Mark was born in El Campo, Texas and graduated from Louise, Texas High School in 1968. Mark played football at the University of Houston and graduated in 1973 with a B.S. in Education. He played in the Canadian Football League, then received a M.A. in Education from the University of Alabama Birmingham. He taught and coached football in high school. He married (I tell him he married UP) Deborah Davis and became involved in business. He and Deborah had 3 children along the way.

With his federal career beginning because of sports, Mark later became Resident Initiatives Coordinator for Region IV and Chief in the Atlanta Field Office of the General Management (Continued on Pg. 5)



BUTCH BREZINA
Louise

Mark (Butch) Brezina from a 1971 University of Houston Football Program. Louise is not another nickname. It's his hometown in Texas.

Professional Services
by Terry Mckee




Open Records Requirements

HUD's Procurement Handbook states that certain information about PHA procurements is considered public (e.g., name of the winning contractor and total contract price) and should be released to the public in accordance with the PHA's procurement policy and applicable State laws and regulations governing freedom of information. Other information related to procurement is often protected from disclosure (e.g., proprietary business information such as technical methods or processes, detailed pricing information, personal information, et cetera). PHAs must exercise caution to ensure that protected information is not made public. In addition to laws requiring the publication of procurement opportunities, many State governments have enacted Freedom of Information or similar laws designed to further the goal of open government by providing public access to procurement information. Each PHA must incorporate applicable State laws into its procurement policy and ensure that procurement actions are conducted in accordance with such laws.

The State of Tennessee has broad "Open Records" laws for all of its political subdivisions and these affect PHAs. Generally speaking all procurement information is considered public information and is subject to citizen review. This is true whether is on paper, computer disk, email or any other mode.

So if a citizen shows up and wants to see your procurement records they have both HUD and State of Tennessee rules and laws to allow them to do so. This is a complex issue and you may want additional insights. Additional information is available from the State of Tennessee Comptroller's Office (<http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/openrecords/forms.asp>). The Comptroller also has a FAQ web page at <http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/openrecords/faq.asp>. Finally your attorney may provide additional information for you.

If I can be of help to you, feel free to contact me: tmckee@kcdc.org




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(Workshop-continued from Pg. 1) In addition to being informative it was also a lot of fun! We are always amazed at the creativeness of our members! The “Walk Like A Lady” contest to raise money for the scholarship fund was so much fun ~ some participants really enjoyed the spanx and makeup just a little too much! Most importantly the contest raised approximately \$1,500 for scholarships! Thanks to everyone who contributed to such a worthy cause.

And most of all, thanks to everyone who attended. Without agencies being willing to send staff and commissioners, these workshops would not happen. It takes all of us to make our spring workshop a success. committee members really worked hard this year to find topics and speakers to bring current, useful, informative information! Eric Bellamy, KCDC, did an excellent job on the program this year. A special thanks to all our presenters who took the time to participate in our workshop and the moderators who agreed to make sure everything was on track. And many thanks to Donna Baumgartner who somehow manages to pull it all together!! It takes commitment and work from a lot of volunteers to make our workshop successful! Hopefully every attendee took at least one new piece of information back to their agency to put to use.



Spring Legislative Report (Words Mean Something)

By Bo Pierce

Historically my Spring Report has included legislative activity in Nashville and in Washington. Part of my Report has included what could be described as an editorial commentary, which I first titled “Words Mean Something.” This Report will follow that pattern.

The 107th General Assembly in Nashville has produced over 2,100 Bills this session. Our elected representatives have vigorously debated important legislation ranging from appropriate fines for cock fighting convictions, to Bovine liability (which addresses the proper signage to warn citizens of potential dangers from the behavior of cattle) to the age when a child can no longer be breast-fed in public, to a Resolution to Honor and Commend the Polk Salad Association in Harriman for their culinary and cultural activities to promote poke sallet, the Spring Tonic of the South. For the record, I grew up on poke, still eat it, and plan to attend part of their Festival. The legislature has also found time to enter Bills to re-write the Uniform Residential Landlord Tenant Act of Tennessee, a Bill to expand the Landlord Tenant Act to all 95 counties, a Bill to re-write the Tax Increment Financing Act of Tennessee, and numerous other Bills that potentially could impact some, or all, of our 86 public housing authorities. We, along with the able assistance of Anne Carr, TAHRA’s Legislator Educator (she is not a lobbyist Madame Assistant Secretary), have tracked the legislation, insisted on amendments to some Bills, opposed some Bills, and supported some Bills. We have tried, and continue to try to represent TAHRA’s best interests in Nashville. Some times it’s tough; with an 86 member association of authorities of varied sizes and concerns.

As a friend said last month, “In Washington, if you are not at the table, you are probably on the menu!” My Friends, TAHRA **is** at the table in Nashville, and in partnership with our friends at NAHRO, we **are** at the table in Washington.

Several years ago I was researching 1870 Census Records for Giles County and was drawn to an entry for a lady (not a relative) listed by herself. Out from her name, under the column for Occupation was the word “Idiot”. My friends, “Words Mean Something.” I discovered she was a resident of the County Poor Farm, at that time. Remember, this was 1870. I shared that story with my wife and daughter. Since then, when I would make an occasional bad decision, I would say “Idiot”. It became a family joke. Last Fall my daughter was preparing a lesson plan for her Civics class. She was researching the ancient Greek political system and called me very excited. “Do you know that idiot comes from the Greek? Of course, I did not. She said any person declining to take part in public life, especially the democratic process of city and state government was considered dishonorable, and was labeled an “IDIOTE”!

Translation: If you did not follow political issues and debates, if you did not get off your hump and vote, you were an idiot. Definitions and sensitivities have changed over the years. My point is this, please participate at some level in the political process, at a minimum please educate yourself and vote at every opportunity. With respect, please don’t be an “Idiote”.

Several times over the years I have used this opportunity to caution, maybe preach to my friends to be good steward’s of our federal funds. Our credibility, like our name, is precious. TAHRA members have not escaped some embarrassing incidents of fraud over the years. With the involvement and cooperation of TAHRA members, their Boards, HUD staff, Inspector General staff, and local law enforcement, housing authorities in Tennessee have moved quickly, in my opinion, to identify and address any discovered violations of law. Ya’ll know I have prosecuted residents and a former staff member for fraud.

My friends: please, please do not put at risk, your employment, your freedom, your good name, and TAHRA’s good name by making a foolish decision. That decision will also give ammunition to those in Washington wishing to do our programs harm. As I said before, we are at the table, we do not want to be on the menu.

Brezina-continued from Pg. 2) Branch for Public Housing. Mark has held many titles in Knoxville’s HUD Office: Senior Community Builder, Acting Coordinator, Acting Manager, Deputy Manager, and Field Office Director. I hope I didn’t miss one.

Oops. I did miss one. Mark J. Brezina has been a personal friend to me and a friend to scores of PHA staff, residents, and community representatives in Tennessee and the South East. We will miss him but we are pleased that Mark has the opportunity to “go home” and continue his service. God Bless you and your family, Mark!

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TAHRA By-Law Changes approved

The TAHRA membership voted to amend the associations by-laws effective at the Annual Meeting on September 20, 2011. A copy of the by-laws is posted on the TAHRA website for your review (<http://tahrnet.org>).

The major change is the composition of the Board of Directors. The new Board will consist of the President, the Senior Vice President, four Vice-Presidents and the immediate past president. The term of office has also been changed from one year to two years with the vice presidents serving no more than two consecutive terms as vice president. Of course the vice presidents could move up to senior vice president or president if so nominated by the nominating committee and approved by the membership.

The nominating committee is now the immediate past president and two members appointed by the Board. The nominating committee for this transitional year is Art Cate, Winston Henning, and Booty Reed. The committee will recommend a slate of officers by the end of July.

The new vice president positions are designated as:

- 1st vice president of professional development
- 2nd vice president of housing
- 3rd vice president of membership, and
- 4th vice president of commissioners

The new TAHRA organizational chart is also posted on the website for your review.



A Happy Prize Winner!

Donna Martin, left, with KCDC, was the happy winner of a GPS during the Spring Workshop!

Prizes are a favorite part of many TAHRA gatherings.

“Tales of TAHRA” Back Issues Available Online!

You can now access electronic archives of the *Tales of TAHRA* issues back to November 2004 online. All these issues are available as .PDF files so you will need the free Adobe Acrobat Reader program to open them. Go to: <http://talesoftahra.googlepages.com>
(Please note: *there is no “www” in this address.*)

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Alvin Nance, KCDC; Sandra Henriquez, HUD Assistant Secretary; Joyce Floyd, KCDC; and Charles Barnett, HUD Program Center Coordinator

HUD Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez Spoke at the TAHRA Spring Workshop

Assistant Secretary Henriquez addressed some HUD changes and future plans during the opening session of the TAHRA Spring Workshop. Below is an email expressing her thanks for the welcome she received:

I cannot thank you all enough for your warmth and hospitality. I had a wonderful time and thoroughly enjoyed seeing the work some PHAs are doing. My time with you at the conference and then in Columbia and Nashville were such high points that I came back to D.C. talking about what I had seen and heard.

Thank you for sharing with me. Continued success with all of the fine work you do every day in the service of others.

TALES OF TAHRA Welcomes Your Comments and Article Submissions!

Comments can be sent to Donna Baumgartner, TAHRA Executive Director or any member of the TAHRA Board. Article submissions should be emailed to Tales Editor, Jim Young at talesofTAHRA@gmail.com - mailed to Jim at Crossville Housing Authority, P.O. Box 425, Crossville TN 38557 or faxed to Jim's attention at (931) 456-1513. We are looking for articles of interest to HA's across Tennessee concerning interesting problem solutions and new programs that could be replicated at other HA's. Previous issues can be found online at <http://talesoftahra.googlepages.com>

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE July 22, 2011 for Publication August 2011.