



Online compliance workflows based on PHA industry best practices



"We shortened our waiting list by 40% in a matter of days. RENTCafé PHA makes it easy for waitlisted households to update their status online."

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Bob Havlicek, Executive Director



Streamline compliance without in-person meetings or paperwork

- · Accept applications online
- Expedite intake, interim and annual certifications
- Update waiting lists without mass mailings
- Maximize consistency from initial intakes through residency
- Connect with residents for service requests, payments, inspections and more



2021 AWARDS PROGRAM

More than three decades and 6,400 winning programs ago, NAHRO created the **Awards of Merit** to honor our members' successes and to lift up the ways in which they've bettered their agencies, their communities, and the lives of the people they serve.

In addition to achievements such as new affordable housing, creative new services for residents and more, this year's 182 winning programs also include many adjustments and adaptations made to keep staff, residents, and communities safe, housed and well during the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside new developments, student enrichment and engagement, and Little Free Libraries you'll find emergency rental assistance programs, remote learning centers, safety, and wellness initiatives, and more.

These annual awards shine a light on our members' hard work and creativity. They're also a catalog of innovative local solutions from agencies of all sizes, across the United States, in the face of two continuing national crises — the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of affordable housing. Looking for a specific type of program? The subject index in the back of the book makes it easy to search by topic. NAHRO members can also find all the awards in our searchable Best Practices database — just visit www.nahro.org/best-practice.

Congratulations to our 2021 NAHRO Awards of Merit winners. In this most challenging of years, we are so proud of your achievements and dedication. Thank you for sharing with us your hard work, your creativity, and all you do for your communities.

Sunny Show

Sunny Shaw NAHRO President

Mike Gerber NAHRO Interim CEO

Note: The award-winning entries have been arranged by category and then alphabetically by state. Award of Excellence nominees and entries from Small/Medium agencies are also noted in the program. Finally, the subject index references the entries' number, not the page number.

ADMINISTRATIVE INNOVATION

1 Water Cooler

Like many companies across the nation, employees from Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) began working from home in March. They didn't know if they would be working from home for two weeks or two months or more. What they did know was that any period of time separated from co-workers was bound to cause isolation, feelings of depression and disengagement from CIHA company culture. In order to prevent this, CIHA created and launched the "Water Cooler," a weekly email photo newsletter, where employees share photos of what they've been up to during the pandemic. Feedback has been incredible.

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Nominated for Excellence/Small/Medium Agency

2 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Town Hall Series and Strategic Plan

In 2019, Fresno Housing (FH) staff embarked upon a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Assessment process led by the Ivy Planning Group, a 30-year old woman and minority-owned management consulting firm specializing in DEI. They facilitated the assessment and strategic plan process with the goal of translating efforts to clear, measurable outcomes. The objectives of the DEI Initiative included the following: embrace and embed DEI in the FH workforce and workplace; support FH residents and business partners through a DEI lens; and influence the well-being (equity/inclusion) within the community beyond FH.

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3 Clean Energy Reaps Benefits for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) is committed to reducing dangerous carbon (CO₂) emissions and creating sustainable communities. Starting in the fall of 2018, HACLA began replacing its aging motor vehicle fleet with Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles and installing charging stations with the goal of moving to an all-electric vehicle platform. This shift away from a gasoline-fueled fleet is expected to eliminate fuel costs, reduce vehicle maintenance expenses, and most importantly, reduce CO₂ emissions. HACLA's fleet sustainability initiative is one that can be replicated and scaled by housing authorities of any size.

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Courtesy of Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

4 Operation Staying Connected While Staying Apart

On March 18, 2020, the Governor of California declared a state-wide health emergency initiating "stay at home" orders and restrictions for Calif. residents. Area Housing Authority staff immediately went into solutions mode. The first priority was to serve clients by continuing to administer the Section 8 and Public Housing programs along with managing more than 655 agency-owned units. The Information Technology Department spearheaded a strategic plan to provide

tools to get approximately 50 employees connected and working from home to administer the programs. The Finance Department re-organized operations including processing rent payments, invoices, and distributing mail, all without staff physically being at their desks.

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5 COVID-19 Incident Command Response

In January 2020, the United States acknowledged its first case of COVID-19 and communicated that the entire country could be on the verge of a critical pandemic. Oakland Housing Authority's (OHA) leadership continuously monitored events, and in the early days of March 2020 held the agency's first meeting related to the pandemic in order to establish protocols and processes for organizational continuity and to ensure critical services to the community would not be negatively impacted. As a result, OHA established a COVID-19 Incident Command Team (CICT) and commenced emergency preparedness in an efficient, effective manner.

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6 Homelessness Program for Engaged Educational Resources (PEER)

The "Homelessness Program for Engaged Educational Resources" (PEER) is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) and San Diego City College that provides specialized education, training and job placement assistance to develop the workforce needed for programs and services that help San Diegans experiencing homelessness. SDHC identified the need for additional qualified applicants for positions in the area of homelessness programs and services. SDHC funds the PEER program, with a budget of approximately \$187,000, while

San Diego City College leverages existing San Diego Community College District resources. More than 40 students enrolled in the first class.

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7 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Online Application Portal

To streamline the application process for funds available from the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC), the agency created a new online Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) Application Portal. Developers and qualified vendors can use this portal to submit an application for current NOFA opportunities, and to apply for funds available for new construction or rehabilitation and rental housing vouchers. The portal, available on SDHC's website, launched on Aug. 31, 2020, coinciding with two NOFAs for more than \$46 million to create and preserve affordable rental housing units for San Diegans with low income, including those experiencing homelessness.

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8 Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego

Addressing affordable housing challenges requires a balance between constructing new housing and preserving existing affordable housing. The San Diego Housing Commission published a new report, "Preserving Affordable Housing in the City of San Diego," which provides a current housing inventory in the City of San Diego, including a first-of-its-kind inventory of naturally occurring affordable housing, cost estimates for preserving housing at risk of losing its affordability, and strategies to preserve affordability. The City Council on Oct. 27, 2020, approved seven actions based on this report to implement a strategy for affordable housing preservation in the City of San Diego.

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Nominated for Excellence

9 Adams County COVID-19 Rental and Mortgage Assistance Relief Fund

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the U.S. housing crisis. Many Coloradans found themselves out of work and unable to keep up with necessary expenses — housing included. To keep Coloradans housed, Maiker Housing Partners, a progressive, socially conscious housing authority based in Adams County, Colo., partnered with Adams County to create the COVID-19 Rental and Mortgage Assistance Relief Fund. The fund provided rental and mortgage assistance for low-income Adams County residents experiencing economic stress due to the COVID-19 crisis. As of December 2020, the fund has distributed \$3,866,871 to 930 households serving 2,790 people.

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10 Fostering Futures

Foothills Regional Housing (FRH), CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin County, and Jefferson County Department of Human Services created and partnered on a program focused on serving foster youth transitioning out of foster care. Fostering Futures was designed to provide youth with services they need to succeed while giving them an affordable place to call home.

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Nominated for Excellence



Courtesy of Foothills Regional Housing (Jefferson County Housing Authority)

11 Business Continuity Plan (COVID-19 Response)

The success of the Tampa Housing Authority (THA) Pandemic Business Continuity Plan hinged both on having remote access to the agency's network by key employees who may be required to work from their homes and educating/communicating current information (in tandem with local and state health resources) to both employees and residents. While human resources/risk management served as a leading steward, a pandemic response/crisis team was formalized to refine all preparedness and related action plans. The agency's entire executive team met daily since March 2020 to work through business continuity issues, and to discuss any COVID-19 developments and questions. (See also #62 and #97.)

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12 HACC Cares Project

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Housing Authority of Champaign County (HACC) participants faced many unprecedented challenges, ranging from complete loss of employment to lack of access to childcare. In response, HACC developed the HACC Cares Project. HACC participants who were eligible

for the program must receive tenant-based voucher assistance through the MTW Housing Choice Voucher Program or project-based assistance at one of the HACC-affiliated properties. The HACC Cares Project was also designed in accordance with COVID-19 safety regulations and guidelines.

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13 Virtual Voucher Briefings

Due to unprecedented circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Housing Authority of Champaign County (HACC) facilitated Virtual Voucher Briefings to continue the issuance of Housing Choice Vouchers to its participants and applicants. The online voucher briefings began on April 15, 2020 via Zoom and GoToMeeting. A case specialist took the lead, and the agency continued the voucher briefings to ensure that all participants and applicants received adequate and detailed information on how the program worked and ensure proper lease-ups. If any technical issues arose, they quickly switched to phone briefings once all attempts to fix the issue had been made.

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14 Digital TV Channel

Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) recognized the importance of utilizing modern digital technology to enhance community outreach and improve its clients' and residents' evolving communication. This new approach to RHA communication was designed to provide residents, guests, and staff viewers with relevant and up-to-date news content. The agency's digital signage engaged more people with visual messages that were delivered instantly and reliably, and effectively communicated health and safety protocols, which helped save lives during the pandemic.

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15 A Step Ahead: Pre-COVID Telework Plan Pays Long-term Benefits

When the Fort Wayne Housing Authority (FWHA) adopted a virtual work policy in 2019, no one knew that within months the entire nation would be focused on ways to shift work from the workplace to home. By having already purchased laptops for many of its employees, and a plan in place, FWHA ensured a smooth transition for its 43 employees when the pandemic forced people to work from home. Even the FWHA maintenance staff did some work from home.

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Nominated for Excellence

16 Building on Necessity: Quality Control Meetings Generate Real Impact

Like agencies throughout the country, COVID-19 forced the Fort Wayne Housing Authority (FWHA) staff to work from home for most of 2020. In an effort to increase communication that was lost when casual interaction in the office ended, the FWHA leadership team of eight began holding what they called Quality Control Meetings. These differed from their standing leadership meeting in that they go beyond the day-to-day and include all grants, programs, procurement items, contracts, development projects, and activities the agency is engaged in. In one case, the increased communication and discussion resulted in a \$170,000 savings for the agency.

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17 Fostering Leadership to Develop Personal and Organizational Growth

Leadership has become an increasingly important element of organizational development in recent years. Fort Wayne Housing Authority recognizes the importance of helping its employees reach their full potential, and implemented a Leadership Academy to help team members better understand and act on a variety of leadership principles. Participants gained deeper understandings of the importance of definable purpose, navigating HUD's expectations, maintaining mental health, practicing inclusivity, and maximizing trust and communication. These new skills fostered an impressive level of growth and helped participants set and reach new personal and professional goals.

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Courtesy of Housing Authority of the City of Fort Wayne

18 Zooming Ahead: Increasing Effectiveness by Sharing Best Practices

When Zoom calls were still novel, Fort Wayne Housing Authority Executive Director George Guy recognized an opportunity to improve public housing across Indiana. In April 2020, he invited the state's 75 public housing agencies to participate in a Zoom call to share best practices. The first call sparked enthusiasm for more,

and soon the weekly calls and information-sharing sessions attracted local HUD field office administrators, state finance authority officials, and even National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) regional members attended on a bi-weekly basis. Eventually, HUD Regional Administrator Joseph Galvan encouraged other HUD regions to replicate the calls.

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19 Employee Engagement and Communication Plan

Effective communication is essential within an organization. In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA) did not have a solid internal communication plan in place. GHA needed to improve communication to ensure consistency in their message, reiterating its mission, vision, and culture. To do this, GHA started regularly communicating with all employees on Fridays. This included sending a staff newsletter, offering employee competitions, and providing materials based on GHA's core values. Feedback from employees is positive and sets the stage for GHA to expand their brand identity, mission, and vision.

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Nominated for Excellence

20 Adapting to Changes and Planning Our Future

The pandemic changed the lives of everyone in the nation, pushing many people and business to the brink. The Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) showed just what it is capable of during these ever changing times. It made improvements for delivery of expanded services to ensure families had a roof over their heads and the community was able to stay safe. CMHA was proactive with planning for

the changes and the innovation led to new programs and increased services that helped residents and businesses. The changes also led to a better work/ home balance for employees, improved program administration, and increased productivity.

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21 Community GIS Mapping Tool

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) Community GIS Mapping Tool is a comprehensive neighborhood database that leverages spatial data so CMHA staff can better understand the social, economic, and spatial features of Greater Cleveland's neighborhoods and communities. A GIS-based tool containing 35 map layers, the CMHA Community GIS Mapping Tool tracks key indicators pertaining to the local real estate market, education and economic outcomes, and the distribution of neighborhood amenities. This tool serves as an important repository of data for CMHA programs and planning including Project-Based Voucher evaluation, agency grant applications, and overall portfolio repositioning.

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22 HCVP Wait List Opening Marketing Video

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The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) opened its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program waiting list in 2020. In the midst of COVID-19, CMHA needed to create a way of responding to the frequently asked questions people had regarding the waiting list and the HCV program as well as staffing availability, social distancing, and other issues brought about by the pandemic. In order to address the questions consistently and in a timely manner, CMHA created a HCV Wait List Opening Marketing video to walk people through the process using a visual platform. Video: www.cmha.net/apply.

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Courtesy of Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority

23 RAVE Alert Notification System

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) sends communications to various audiences, including those they serve and employees. To assist in ensuring all residents, participants, landlords and employees receive information, CMHA implemented the RAVE Alert Notification system, a mass notification system communications tool that sends messages by text, email, voice call and video. CMHA understands not everyone has access to certain modes of communications, so by implementing RAVE, CMHA expanded its communication methods to ensure information is being more widely received. It was especially helpful during the pandemic and also strengthened and furthered their mission to serve residents efficiently and timely.

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24 A Tale of Two Offices — The Importance of Customer Service

The Allegheny County Housing Authority built a beautiful new central office for its staff four miles outside of the city limits. When the office moved from the city limits, it became more challenging for tenants and landlords to access the new office. To better serve all of its customers, the agency decided to create a separate housing choice voucher office in the eastern suburbs of Pittsburgh while maintaining a presence in the western suburbs in the central office. The new satellite office opened in April 2020 and receives approximately 25 to 30 visitors each day.

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25 Gaining Ground During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Safety is top priority, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 12 months, the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) maintenance department addressed 95,376 demand-driven service orders on its properties — an average of about 384 service orders per business day. PHA's pandemic response plan added new efficiencies in regards to service orders and vacancy reduction. The plan had four components: personal protective equipment (PPE), service orders, vacancy reduction, and maintenance contracts. The PHA's moratorium on evictions also played a central role. Since returning to full duty, the PHA maintenance team reduced open service orders from more than 17,000 to around 5,100.

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26 Lockdown Lockboxes: Repurposing Old Methods in the Time of COVID-19

Although most of Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh's (HACP) operations moved to remote services during the first COVID-19 lockdown, Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections, by their very nature, cannot be done remotely. Previously, HQS inspectors would schedule a time and meet with the landlord to enter the unit. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the strict social distancing guidelines that came with it, meant that was no longer possible. To continue executing inspections, while also protecting everyone's health and safety, HACP implemented a mechanical, manual lockbox program for inspectors to access keys to units. This allowed inspectors to continue inspections without making physical contact with landlords.

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Nominated for Excellence

27 12-Month Action Plan

A barrage of negative press and public concerns about all aspects of Columbia Housing's operations ricocheted through its community and the affordable housing industry. How does an agency overcome pervasive mistrust that hinders its ability to efficiently and effectively execute its mission? In response, Columbia Housing put into place a 12-month action plan that focused on putting residents first, increasing organizational efficiency, creating a climate of transparency and accountability, and rebuilding public trust.

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28 96K United Way Virtual Campaign

Going beyond bricks and mortar and creating real solutions to meet the basic and emergency needs of families is a shared vision between the United Way of the Midlands and Columbia Housing. Columbia Housing is proud to showcase its successful gift giving campaign to the United Way of the Midlands. Over the last two years, employees of Columbia Housing have contributed to the cycle of success for many families with their generous employee contributions in excess of \$96,000 to the United Way of the Midlands Campaign.

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29 Board Meetings Go Virtual and Paperless

At a time when it was practically impossible and not recommended by public health officials to gather for in-person meetings because of the COVID-19 pandemic, video conferencing and other forms of telecommunications offered efficient alternatives to hosted public meetings. Columbia Housing remains committed to providing a more efficient and effective form of governance, and therefore launched the Board Meetings Go Virtual and Paperless initiative to virtually host its monthly public Board of Commissioners meetings.

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30 Brand Identity and Logo Design

Columbia Housing's old brand reputation was tarnished beyond repair. In September of 2019, under new leadership, Columbia Housing launched a new Brand Identity and Logo Design initiative that was reflective of the new leadership's principles of putting residents first, increasing organizational efficiency, creating a climate of transparency and accountability, and rebuilding public trust.

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31 CEO Door-to-Door Chats

The CEO Door-to-Door Chats initiative was designed to underscore the philosophy of prioritizing residents' needs while doubling down on the importance of quality service delivery. Most importantly, CEO Door-to-Door Chats created an avenue for safe one-on-one face-to-face interaction with Columbia Housing's residents at a time when the organization was experiencing an erosion of trust. This helped calm resident fears around the escalating incidents of COVID-19.

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32 Coffee Chat Virtual Staff Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public health officials warned people to stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with others. As a result many businesses closed to protect their employees and the public. To remain connected with the workforce in a safe and responsible manner, Columbia Housing ushered its workforce into telework and virtual meetings and launched the Virtual Coffee Chats Staff Meetings with its 120-plus employee workforce.

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33 CommUNITY Impact Report

Columbia Housing developed a digital, interactive annual CommUNITY Impact Report and uploaded the publication to the agency's website for public access. Prior to the development of the digital report, Columbia Housing had not produced an annual report. In an effort to provide a "green" technology-driven solution, reduce consumables and increase awareness for Columbia Housing's programs and services, their agency produced the annual report as an accessible, interactive, digital publication that showcases the success stories and achievements of their residents and staff.

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34 COVID-19 Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many unforeseen challenges due to its rapid spread and global reach. In response, Columbia Housing launched a swift and strategic response known as its COVID-19 Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan. The plan is a living document with emphasis on putting people first, communicating with stakeholders, reshaping strategies to maintain business continuity, and building resilience.

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35 Digital Transformation — Innovation to the New Normal

Integration of digital technology into all areas of Columbia Housing's business, fundamentally changing how it operates and delivers value to its residents, was the epicenter of its Digital Transformation — Innovation to the New Normal initiative. Columbia Housing's rapid deployment of new technology was an immediate game-changer and a valued asset to its principles of putting residents first, rebuilding public trust, increasing organizational efficiency, and creating a climate of transparency and accountability.

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Courtesy of Columbia Housing

36 E-Blast Communications

Columbia Housing's E-blast Communications initiative is an effective on-line communications tool used to communicate with its residents and the public. This initiative met Columbia Housing's emerging need to effectively transition from a traditional paper communication platform to a digital platform. Using email has become the fastest, least expensive, and most wide-reaching communications channel affording Columbia Housing the option of reaching its 16,000-plus residents and the general public.

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37 Employee Spotlight

The Employee Spotlight initiative is a vital part of Columbia Housing's efforts in reimagining its engagement with the public and rebuilding public trust. In January of 2019, Columbia Housing experienced an unfortunate tragedy, eroding the public's confidence in the organization. Out of every

great challenge, there is always an opportunity for great innovation and leadership. In July of 2019, the agency transformed its governance and leadership, strengthening its organizational capacity, and launching the Employee Spotlight, which acknowledges employees who exemplify Columbia Housing's Core Values every day by demonstrating a positive attitude, resourcefulness, and excellent customer service.

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Courtesy of Columbia Housing

38 Fighting Crime with National Night Out

The Fighting Crime with National Night Out initiative enhances the relationship between neighbors and law enforcement while bringing a sense of community. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to bring police and neighbors together under positive circumstances with an underlying goal of crime reduction. Held on the first Tuesday in August, National Night Out is an annual community-building initiative. In addition to law-enforcement participation, Columbia Housing makes this annual event a real community affair — complete with a parade, cookout, visits from local radio stations, competitive activities for the children, and door prizes for adults.

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39 Onboarding Goes Virtual

First impressions are everything. Columbia Housing takes pride in how it welcomes new hires and knows that a positive engagement has an enormous impact on how quickly new hires will reach their full potential and productivity. Columbia Housing launched the Onboarding Goes Virtual initiative to transition its antiquated paper onboarding processes to a more efficient, easy to use, and all-in-one ADP Workforce Now virtual platform. This versatile platform has proven more operationally effective in managing all phases of Columbia Housing's employee onboarding.

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40 Online Interactive Website Calendar

Transitioning Columbia Housing's events or announcements from a paper calendar to a digital online calendar is critical to providing a convenient resource to access details of current and future events. Nowadays, many people carry their laptops and mobile devices on them at all times and the convenience of accessing a digital calendar is imperative. Launching the Online Interactive Website Calendar provided Columbia Housing's 18,000-plus website subscribers, 16,000-plus residents, board members, media, elected officials, staff, and the public with 24-hour-a day, sevenday-a-week access to its current and future events.

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41 Online Staff Portal

Columbia Housing is currently going through a digital transformation, integrating digital technology into all areas of its operations, and having an employee portal to help manage the culture shift is incredibly important. Consolidation of information into one user-friendly online gateway creates operational efficiencies and helps quickly align employees with organizational objectives. In launching the Online Staff Portal, Columbia Housing is keeping its 115-plus employees informed, engaged, and productive.

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42 Public Meetings Go Virtual

As local governments have a legal obligation to keep conducting business and engaging the public during the global pandemic, Columbia Housing took to social media and virtual platforms to reach target audiences and successfully launched Public Meetings Go Virtual! The objective of Public Meetings Go Virtual! was to facilitate an engagement process through Zoom video, telephone conferencing, and Facebook Live. Meetings were recorded and uploaded to the agency's YouTube channel for 24-hour access.

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43 Reimagining Employee Engagement

The declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic by health officials, forced many states to implement emergency stay-at-home orders for public safety. As unimaginable circumstances arose, and the country transitioned to a remote working environment, organizations had to act swiftly and strategically to engage and maintain their existing workforce. Subsequently, Columbia Housing launched the Reimagining Employee Engagement initiative, which consisted of professional development

training and the creation of a virtual internal communications and knowledge sharing platform to amplify the agency's culture and elevate the employee workplace experience across the entire organization.

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44 Robust Virtual Communications Website and Business Portal

Columbia Housing developed an interactive, responsive website to create transparency, rebuild public trust, place residents first, and increase operational efficiency. Prior to the website launch, Columbia Housing's communications with residents, staff, commissioners, and the community was in need of improvement. Developing and launching the interactive, responsive website allowed Columbia Housing to communicate immediately with their community via text, email, and website updates. In addition, the website features portals for residents, landlords, Columbia Housing's staff, and board members for easy, digital access to applicable information 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

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45 Spread the Word, Not the Virus Campaign

The Spread the Word, Not the Virus Campaign is a major social media communications platform in the Columbia Housing's broader COVID-19 Prevention Plan. They developed the campaign to educate their families about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention protocols and guidelines for keeping families safe during the global pandemic. This effective communications campaign aided in Columbia Housing's efforts to disseminate preventative messaging and community resources to their 16,000 plus residents, 18,000 plus website subscribers, and 2,000 plus social media followers, and to the broader community.

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46 The Break Room

The Break Room is a monthly employee newsletter that has improved internal communications with Columbia Housing's 115 plus employees. A digital communications solution, The Break Room highlights and celebrates all things Columbia Housing. Short, easy-to-read snippets of announcements, commendable feats, milestones, new employee introductions, new employee initiatives, agency news, upcoming events, and much more are showcased in the Break Room.

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47 Redesign of Existing Responsive Website

The Housing Authority of the City of Darlington redesigned their existing responsive website to address Section 508, WCAG and ADA Level AA Accessibility Success Criteria to improve information access for all site visitors. Addressing ADA accessibility enhances communications and builds rapport with residents, staff, commissioners, and the community by ensuring all stakeholders can access and interpret the content provided on the website. Prior to the new website launch, the Housing Authority of the City of Darlington had difficulty providing information in an ADA accessible format to its residents, commissioners, staff, and community stakeholders.

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Courtesy of Housing Authority of Darlington

48 2020 Human Resources Accomplishments "2020 Seeing Things in a New Light — Cultural Diversity"

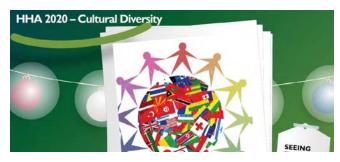
One of human resources' missions is to propose innovative team-building ideas and initiatives that increase agency morale. In 2019, the Human Resources Department administered a climate survey for the Houston Housing Authority (HHA). In response to the Employee Engagement portion of the survey, human resources identified an opportunity to increase agency morale. In 2020 they focused on "Cultural Diversity" by uplifting employees' differences, increasing cultural awareness and knowledge.

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Courtesy of Houston Housing Authority

49 MyGoals: Partnering with Community Organizations

MyGoals is a self-sufficiency demonstration project designed to promote self-sufficiency among housing recipients. The new program sought to build community partnerships that would help clients on their journey to success. There are many programs within the city and determining the well-equipped organizations to collaborate with the Houston Housing Authority's clients, required detailed understanding and research of what they would bring to the table before collaborating with them.

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50 MyGoals: The Year of Change — Adaptations and Transformations

MyGoals is a self-sufficiency demonstration project funded by MDRC. The program allows housing subsidy recipients to receive a personal career coach for the course of 36 months. MyGoals Coaches meet with their clients monthly for a coaching session along with follow-up calls to monitor progress. Coaches work with clients by examining their executive skills, implementing goal setting, and utilizing modifications to monitor the clients' progress.

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51 Surviving the Pandemic One Zoom Briefing at a Time

In March of 2020, COVID-19 was declared a national emergency. The virus did not alleviate the need for adequate housing for the most in need people of the city, seniors, disabled and those living below poverty. In April 2020, Houston Housing Authority (HHA) made the decision to switch to Zoom technology

to host their housing choice voucher briefings. As a result, from the onset of COVID-19, they have virtually briefed more than 1500 individuals with the goal of new housing or relocation.

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52 Tackling NIMBY Stigmas: Grassroots Housing Video Series Educates Community

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) aims to build an innovative mixed-income community in Houston's Second Ward, but a group of Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) adversaries began spreading misinformation and hurtful stigmas about affordable housing. To demonstrate HHA's commitment to transparency and foster positive community relationships, they developed a grassroots digital campaign to lead the conversation with facts. A series of captivating and informational videos were produced and shared with community groups, elected officials and on social media. Not only was engagement on the videos high, but the videos also served as a helpful tool to educate the community and drive advocacy.

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53 #WEARESAHA Campaign

In light of negative media coverage housing authorities often face, the San Antonio Housing Authority launched a year-long social media campaign titled #WeAreSAHA to bring positivity to the forefront and highlight residents who have overcome challenges and are doing everything possible for their families, as well as staff who are behind the scenes helping make changes. The social media campaign was twofold — an opportunity to let people take positivity into their own hands and share untold stories through video and photographs and promote self-sufficiency programs and encourage participation.

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54 A/C for Public Housing Initiative

The San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) installed 2,400 air conditioning units in 22 of its public housing communities across the city in an effort to provide cooling ahead of summer. SAHA established a public-private partnership with San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg, the City of San Antonio, philanthropist Gordon Hartman, and Texas State Representative Diego Bernal to secure \$1.5 million in funding to provide public housing complexes with air conditioning. The initiative was completed in Summer 2019. Now all SAHA public housing communities have both heating and air conditioning to withstand extreme temperatures during summer and winter.

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55 COVID-19 Emergency Response

At the peak of the pandemic, the city of San Antonio underwent community shutdowns, allowing the housing authority to only communicate with residents electronically. Mass communication was more important than ever and required the agency to gently move toward all electronic communication. To prevent residents from experiencing panic, the San Antonio Housing Authority launched a COVID-19 Emergency Response webpage to share community resources and launched a bi-weekly email to share important updates and available resources for families impacted.

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56 SAHA Website Redesign

Overhauling an outdated website with security threats, disorganized information and unresponsiveness to mobile devices was a challenge the San Antonio Housing Authority faced for saha.org, the agency's largest and most used communication tool. The launch of the new website marked a new vision and tone for the agency, which was meant to be aspirational and inspiring. The website's menu was streamlined for easier navigation and restructured according to most frequent website visitors. The new site also features a search menu for quick navigation, a new events calendar to promote agency and community events, an alert bar to highlight important news, and more.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

57 Coronado Park II

Coronado Park II is the second phase of a mixed-income neighborhood development consisting of multifamily senior housing, market-rate townhouse condos and affordable family rental housing. This second phase of development consists of six affordable rental duplexes and an affordable multifamily 27 apartment senior housing building named Qintali View. Coronado Park II also includes the build out of a large park area, featuring community garden beds, a play area and a gathering area, which will be enjoyed by the entire Coronado Park community.

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Courtesy of Cook Inlet Housing Authority

58 Day Creek Senior Villas

Day Creek Senior Villas is an example of the future in the development of cost-contained high-performance affordable housing. With strong city and community partners, National CORE was able to provide 140 units of affordable housing for seniors at risk of being homeless. Using a hybrid financial structure, National CORE was able to keep the community 100% affordable. As National CORE's first zero net energy community, Day Creek Senior Villas integrates energy efficiency and sustainability into each development and apartment home. The result is a stunning community offering housing stability, onsite social services, and community amenities within walking distance.

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Courtesy of National Community Renaissance

59 Golden Apartments: A Permanent Supportive Housing Development for Homeless and Chronically Homeless Individuals

The Golden Apartments community is the first permanent supportive housing site for homeless and chronically homeless individuals developed by the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino (HACSB) in partnership with the County of San Bernardino Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP). The primary goal is to provide permanent housing and supportive services to help address the homelessness crisis. The site was redesigned and rehabilitated to convert 21 existing two-story units into 38 rental units, a unit for the onsite manager, a leasing office, community space, and offices for partners providing onsite supportive services to residents.

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Courtesy of The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino

60 Hillcrest Inn Middle- and Low-Income Housing

The San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) purchased Hillcrest Inn, a single-room-occupancy property without any restrictions requiring affordability at any

specific income level, in order to create 45 long-term, deed-restricted affordable rental housing units for a mix of incomes — from individuals who experienced homelessness to middle-income households with income up to 150% of San Diego's Area Median Income (AMI). California State Assembly Bill AB1637, enacted in 2017, allowed SDHC to implement a pilot program to develop and finance this middle-income housing project. SDHC worked with then California State Assemblyman, Todd Gloria, currently San Diego's Mayor, on AB1637.

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61 Crossing Pointe North

There is a critical need for affordable senior housing in the Denver metro area, and the city of Thornton is no exception. According to Thornton's Housing Needs Assessment, 75% of renters 65+ are rent burdened and many are below the poverty line. To combat this issue, Maiker Housing Partners, a progressive, socially conscious housing authority based in Adams County, Colo., constructed Crossing Pointe North, the first phase of a new, multi-generational, affordable housing model available to low-income seniors who wish to age in place. This "green" community, available to adults 62 years or older, promotes a healthy and supportive lifestyle for its active adult residents.

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Courtesy of Maiker Housing Partners

62 Fostering Futures

Foothills Regional Housing (FRH), CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin County, and Jefferson County Department of Human Services created and partnered on a program focused on serving foster youth transitioning out of foster care. Fostering Futures was designed to provide youth with services they need to succeed while giving them an affordable place to call home. (See also #11 and #97.)

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63 Trinity Walk Revitalization

The Housing Authority of the City of Decatur, Ga. (DHA) faced a shortage of affordable housing. The Gateway Manor and Oakview developments were in dire need of repair, with a lack of amenities and services, complex financing and contract issues, and sensitive relocation issues. As part of the Gateway/ Oakview revitalization, DHA replaced 112 obsolete housing units, added 43 new affordable homes in a high-cost area, solved HUD contractual concerns, and returned residents with minimized relocation that kept students in local schools. DHA engaged and partnered with residents, the neighborhood, the city, and city schools in creating a Transformation Plan that guided the successful revitalization of \$30.9 million in new housing, including 34 new units at Oakview Walk and nine additional units at Trinity Walk.

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Courtesy of Housing Authority of the City of Decatur, Georgia

64 Valor Pointe, PSH for Homeless Veterans

Valor Pointe is a 27-unit permanent supportive housing development that serves vulnerable veterans in the City of Boise. Opened in August 2020, Valor Pointe uses the "housing first" model which creates sustainable positive outcomes for veterans experiencing chronic homelessness by providing a home first and then providing residents with healthcare, mental health counseling, and substance abuse treatment to help them live healthier lives. Valor Pointe is made possible through a public-private partnership working to end homelessness in Ada County, leveraging funds totaling nearly \$6.3 million. The Boise Veterans Administration Medical Center provides the wrap-around services for residents.

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65 More Choices for the Betterment of Our Families

The Housing Authority of the City of North Chicago (NCHA) established a cooperative agreement with a neighboring PHA to share jurisdictional territory for the expansion of North Chicago Housing Authorities Housing Choice Voucher program. The cooperative agreement provided their families the opportunity to deconcentrate and relocate to nearly every city in Lake County III., for the sole purpose of utilizing local resources and providing opportunities to underserved residents of both jurisdictions. NCHA staff actively worked to

source new landlords and promote the positive benefits of the program to the community. To date they have housed over 90 families that might have otherwise been lost to unhealthy or unstable housing conditions.

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Small/Medium Agency

66 River's Edge: A Collaborative, Community Approach to Specialized Housing

Like most cities, Fort Wayne struggles to help people who are chronically homeless. The Fort Wayne Housing Authority (FWHA) helps address this by serving as lead convener of River's Edge, the first permanent supportive housing complex in northeast Indiana for people with disabilities who are homeless. Its 56 one- and two-bedroom units are subsidized through vouchers from FWHA and supportive services are coordinated in onsite common areas by Park Center, a nonprofit community mental health center. As a result of River's Edge, 56 formerly homeless households have a permanent place to live, and with support services onsite, their health outcomes will improve.

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67 Utilizing CARES Act Funding to Provide Emergency Rental Assistance

The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique opportunity for organizations to utilize their combined efforts to help provide immediate assistance where it was most needed. Fort Wayne Housing Authority (FWHA) has been fortunate in its ability to work with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority toward providing this assistance to a clientele that it normally would not have the capability to serve. This assistance has provided much-needed relief to both renters and landlords during a time of unprecedented crisis.

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68 The Glen at Valley Creek Affordable Senior Housing

The Glen at Valley Creek is a 42-unit apartment affordable to very-low income and extremely-low income seniors. Innovative financing partnerships included an inter-county bond issue, a senior housing pilot program, six project-based vouchers, and subordinate investments from local partners. The Glen at Valley Creek is positioned to help seniors live independently for as long as possible with a variety of design features and on-demand services. While it is designed for individuals who can live independently, it is unique among other independent senior communities in that service coordinators are available on-site to help residents with a variety of matters.

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69 Rental Assistance Demonstration

The Housing Authority of the City of Del Rio, Texas (HACDR) used the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program and was successful in converting 170 units. HACDR was able to earn the resident's trust and community support, which helped achieve great results. All apartments were fully renovated, improving the quality and house environment for the residents. A clubhouse was constructed, which will serve many purposes, including after-school tutorials and other educational programs to assist residents in becoming self-sufficient. It was also a positive impact for the community as the properties rehabilitation elevated the neighborhoods curb appeal.

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70 Fixing the Affordable Housing Problem in Houston — One Deal at a Time

Over the past two years, the Houston Housing Authority has worked with partners to increase the affordable housing stock. As the effects of oil prices and COVID-19 decrease the overall employment in the Houston area, the need for affordable housing has never been greater. Since 2018, the housing authority has teamed up with eight different partners to increase the affordable housing stock by 17 new properties and 2,859 units. In addition to this, they signed MOUs for an additional 12 properties — three tax credit and nine new Workforce housing deals — which could provide up to an additional 2,500 affordable units.

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71 COVID-19 Set-Aside Voucher Program

During the COVID-19 pandemic, residents in San Antonio — like many across the country — experienced economic hardships such as general housing instability or even housing evictions for the inability to pay rent. In response to this housing crisis, and through a collaborative effort with local non-profit groups, the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) allocated 100 tenant-based vouchers specifically for those experiencing homelessness or housing instability, inability to safely isolate or quarantine, or experiencing other housing issues due to the pandemic.

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72 East Meadows-Urban Infill Homes

The construction and sale of affordable new homes on vacant lots is a component of the Transformation Plan to revitalize the Wheatley neighborhood on San Antonio's east side. The San Antonio Housing Authority's (SAHA) goal was to acquire as many vacant lots and abandoned structures as possible and clear them to create new single family housing. To make the Infill Homes more affordable, SAHA contributed 12 vacant lots to the builder, who designed smaller, urban-style homes to provide 24 homes. In doing so, SAHA revitalized the neighborhood, increased the number of owner-occupied houses, and provided an opportunity for lower-income families to own a home.

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Courtesy of San Antonio Housing Authority

73 The Hub of Opportunity

The Hub of Opportunity, a 157-unit mixed use development, set a new standard for how to combine community services, workforce development opportunities, and fully-accessible living. The Hub, a product of the long-standing partnership between Housing Connect and the Columbus Community Center, is an innovative commercial and residential development for accessible and affordable housing. The building is located adjacent to the UTA TRAX station in South Salt Lake City. Funded through a complex mix of 9%, 4% and New Market Tax Credits,

the Hub was designed to enhance visitability where residents, families, and visitors have barrier-free access to the community and to each other.

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Courtesy of Housing Connect

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

74 The Haven at Marketplace Development

The Housing Authority of Champaign County (HACC) has a mission to provide affordable housing for all. That mission also relates to the businesses and contractors for their projects, by being fair and inclusive to women, veterans, and minority businesses. HACC wants to make sure all businesses have an opportunity to work on these projects and has partnered with the City of Champaign, stakeholders, and developers to achieve this by creating the Haven at Market Place Development. HACC came up with a strategic plan to increase the number of contractors starting with skills training, internships, financial capacity building, construction gap financing, and Section 3 job training, employment, and business ventures.

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75 Growing Our Families One Plant at a Time

The Housing Authority of the City of North Chicago entered into a partnership with the Eden Restoration Project for a community garden at their Kukla Tower site. The Micro-Farm is 3000 sq. ft. of growing space to help feed the residents of Kukla Tower and the neighborhood. For more information, visit www.edenrestorationproject.org.

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PROJECT DESIGN

76 Rosa Parks Administration Building

Discovering a disconnect between the community center, property management office, insufficient meeting space, and a memorial for Rosa Parks; the Montgomery Housing Authority set out on a mission to unite all these areas under one roof. They found ways to incorporate other aspects to create an environment their residents, staff, stakeholders, and community would be proud of by developing the Rosa Parks Administrative Building.

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Courtesy of The Housing Authority of the City of Montgomery, AL

77 Public Housing Improvements with No Relocation!

The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) sought new ways to service 354 public housing units experiencing "pinhole" leaks in the plumbing system. Replacing the pipes involved cutting into walls and ceilings, and the subsequent restoration of the damaged walls and ceilings. This inevitably meant disrupting and relocating residents during the process. Originally estimated to cost \$6.8 million to complete the project, the LACDA partnered with ePIPE® system, a lead-free, leak-free, in-place pipe restoration process that allows residents to remain in their homes during the improvements and complete the work for half the cost, a win-win for all involved.

NORMA CLARKE

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Courtesy of Los Angeles County Development Authority

78 Pueblo Del Rio Neighborhood Beautification

To better address the aging façade and appearance of the Pueblo Del Rio public housing site, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) commenced with the beautification of the community. Pueblo del Rio has remained essentially unchanged in appearance over the years despite the damage inevitably caused by time and wear since it was constructed in 1941. HACLA decided to improve the exterior of the buildings to meet today's

new standards in quality of life and appearance. Improvements included lead paint abatement, drought tolerant landscaping, and LED lighting fixtures.

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79 Don't Lift a Finger: Hands-Free Elevator Controls

On March 18, 2020 the Governor of California declared a state-wide health emergency and initiated "stay at home" orders and restrictions for Calif. residents. The impact to the agency's senior/disabled residents was tremendous, since all social programs were cancelled and common areas were also closed. Increased sanitizing was initiated, but ensuring that elevators were sanitized after each use was unsustainable. With input from site staff, the "Don't Lift a Finger" project was launched. The project retrofitted elevators with hands-free elevator controls at three elderly/ disabled public housing sites. The solution provided durable, easy-to-access foot controls in hallways and elevator cars that are easily maintained.

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Courtesy of Area Housing Authority of the County of Ventura

80 West Park Inn Rehabilitation

The comprehensive renovation of West Park Inn transformed a market-rate Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel into 46 affordable rental apartments with supportive services for seniors and adults with mental disabilities who previously experienced homelessness. The San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) worked with its nonprofit affiliate, Housing Development Partners (HDP), to complete extensive interior and exterior renovations, including new flooring and bathroom fixtures, resurfaced exterior walkways, and a new roof. West Park Inn's rental units will remain affordable for 55 years for individuals earning up to 60% of San Diego's Area Median Income.

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Courtesy of San Diego Housing Commission

81 The Art of Urban Farming at Meacham Urban Farm, Encore Development

The Encore project was formerly a decrepit public housing development within an underutilized 28-plus acre site. That anomaly was remedied by the new plan developed under a model public-private partnership between Tampa Housing Authority and Banc of America CDC. The partnership has dramatically transformed the site into an environmentally sound

sustainable mixed-use, mixed-income, transitoriented community development that links the existing downtown with historic Ybor City. Lot 1 is "The Meacham Urban Farm," which utilizes the empty urban land for gardens, encourages the community to eat healthy, fosters entrepreneurship and tourism, inspires community involvement in the local food system, and embodies a commitment to organic, healthy, environmentally conscious farming.

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Courtesy of Tampa Housing Authority

82 Capehart Playground and Splashpad

Bangor Housing celebrated its 50th Anniversary by opening and dedicating a state-of-the-art playground and splashpad in its Capehart neighborhood, the largest public housing site north of Boston. Capehart has approximately 800 school age children representing about 20% of Bangor's total school population. The neighborhood was always busy, but had one major deficiency, no recreational space for kids. The playground and splash pad solved that problem and since opening, has been packed with families from the neighborhood, as well as surrounding towns. The pride it brought to the families made the investment worth every penny!

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Courtesy of Bangor Housing

83 Riverside Park Phase III Opening

The Riverside Park Phase III was the final phase completed as part of the nearly 500-unit Cleveland Riverside Park Estates community. Though the development faced additional challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, construction was able to stay on schedule and be completed on time for residents to live in 204 substantially rehabilitated units that provide modern comforts, open and spacious layouts, and improved accessibility features.

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84 An Innovative Approach to Philly's Urgent Housing Demand

Recent homeless encampments underscore the need for affordable housing in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Housing Authority found a way to build more units, and meet the urgent demand. Blumberg 83 consists of 83 energy-efficient rental apartments spread across a mix of townhomes and multi-unit walk-up buildings. They were built on ground that once housed the Blumberg Apartments, where 1,500 people lived in a pocket of

PROJECT DESIGN

poverty and crime. The development features modular wood frame construction, a community center, green space, and a management office. Construction started in May 2019 and occupants moved-in January 2020.

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Courtesy of Philadelphia Housing Authority

85 North Central 3: Design that Fosters a Sense of Belonging

More than 40 public and civic partners came together in Philadelphia to revitalize Norris Homes. That vision gave rise to Norris Apartments III, one of the newer additions to this collaborative initiative, which provides lower-income families' access to a vital transportation hub. Phase III, with 50 units, is a mixture of two- and three-story townhomes, and six apartment-style buildings. Included onsite is a parking lot, a community building with kitchenette, computer labs, art room, and a library. Norris Homes once defined this area with its superblocks and stark architecture creating a sense of isolation. Now Norris III provides a safe neighborhood, offering the convenience of a bustling transportation hub and a sense of belonging.

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Courtesy of Philadelphia Housing Authority

86 A Space of Their Own: Integrating Research in Nature-Based Play Design

Increasingly, education research has shown that young children benefit tremendously from using their hands and having the opportunity to participate in nature-based play. To create a mechanism for students to reap those benefits of nature-based activities, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) and its partners constructed a nature-based play area. The ABK Learning and Development Center (ABK) Nature-Based Play Area was a collaborative design effort between HACP, ABK, and the Duquesne University School of Education. It continued the work to implement a research-based curriculum in an early childhood education program available to low-income public housing residents.

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87 Meals and Masks

The Meals and Masks collaboration between Senior Resources and Columbia Housing facilitates the successful delivery of nutritious healthy meals and masks to residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meals are carefully planned in consultation with a nutritionist to meet one-third of the daily nutritional needs of senior citizens.

This program was initially slated to run 16 weeks, but it became so popular that it is still ongoing.

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88 Corpus Christi Housing Authority Thanksgiving Homes Affordable Housing

Corpus Christi Housing Authority and Affiliates (CCHA), embarked on an ambitious plan to improve access to quality housing and improve neighborhoods through repurposing underutilized and often neglected infill lots. Thanksgiving Homes, an affiliated non-profit offers homeownership/affordable rentals for low- to moderate-income families previously did not exist in the market.

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89 Artisan at Ruiz

The Artisan at Ruiz is an entirely affordable 102-unit housing development, with a mix of two- and three-bedroom units developed by the San Antonio Housing Authority. This community is designed as walkable, sustainable, and inter-generational with improved connections to the surrounding neighborhood. A collaborative process with residents, community leaders, city partners, the San Antonio Housing Authority and other stakeholders was key to developing a plan to provide the highest quality of life and long-term sustainability.

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Courtesy of San Antonio Housing Authority

90 East Meadows II

East Meadows II is the third phase of development for an overall master plan community known as Wheatley Courts spearheaded by the San Antonio Housing Authority. Wheatley was a 248-unit public housing development built in 1940. Over time, the cinder block style development negatively impacted the neighborhood as its structure and unit design became obsolete and deteriorated beyond repair. East Meadows II added 119 multifamily units, with 23 of them being three-to-four bedroom townhomes. Thoughtful design consideration enhanced the streetscape and livability of the East Meadows community, but to further magnify the diversity of the streetscape, multiple color schemes were chosen to create the sense of an extension of the neighborhood.

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Courtesy of San Antonio Housing Authority

RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES

91 Guiding Residents on a Path to Success

The Los Angeles County Development Authority's (LACDA) Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program links residents with a case manager who helps clients develop a plan to increase income with tools such as training, education, and financial literacy. Each client is expected to meet their goals in five years. During the term of the contract, any increase in income that results in an increase in the tenant's portion towards the rent, will be saved in an escrow account with the goal towards home ownership. Since Jan. 1, 2017, the agency expanded its outreach efforts by implementing New Resident Services Orientations, creating a special FSS website with resources for its participants, and utilizing the agency's social media platforms to highlight the FSS Program and the success of its participants. To date, the FSS team has enrolled 332 new clients.

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Courtesy of Los Angeles County Development Authority

92 Fresno Housing Education Scholarship Removing Barriers Results in Highest Application Rates to Date

The Education Advancement Scholarship Program is sponsored by the Fresno Housing Authority and the Fresno Housing Education Corps. This scholarship program is designed to benefit undergraduate students who live in assisted housing programs of the Fresno Housing Authority who want to complete their higher education. The scholarship will be offered in increments depending on eligibility criteria, the number of applicants, and the educational institution. The scholarship award will be distributed in two equal payments during the fall and spring semesters.

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93 Workforce Development Pilot Program Focused on Section 3 and Career Goals

In 2019 and 2020, the Fresno Housing Board of Commissioners identified the strategic goal and initiative to embark on a workforce development pilot program that would be led and implemented by the Resident Empowerment Team. The Board provided two-year funding for the pilot program, which includes providing workforce related workshops, resume writing, barrier identification, and resident engagement.

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Courtesy of Fresno Housing

94 Fair Housing Leadership Training: Overview of Resident-to-Resident Fair Housing Issues

Over the last several years, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) staff became aware of the need of better fair housing education for its public housing tenants. HACLA has long provided regular fair housing training to its employees. However, the right to live in an environment free from discrimination and harassment is not limited to discrimination and harassment caused by HACLA employees. It includes the right to be free of such discrimination and harassment by other residents as well. Thus, HACLA created a training program to educate residents about fair housing practices.

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95 Maintaining and Increasing Resident Services During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic shut down the County of San Bernardino, much like the rest of the nation, in March 2020. Some of the hardest-hit families lived in the Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino's (HACSB) affordable housing communities. Many rely on school lunches for nutritious meals for their children and often work in vulnerable sectors of the economy. HACSB was concerned about the pandemic having an amplified adverse impact on these families. Despite receiving no direct federal funding for resident services, HACSB had already implemented a Resident Services program for its affordable housing communities in 2019. Because of this existing program, instead of reducing resident services due to the pandemic, staff instead were able to enhance services for their vulnerable households.

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Courtesy of The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino

96 Operation Shelter to Home

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Diego Housing Commission was among the leaders of the collaborative initiative, Operation Shelter to Home. The program launched in April 2020 to protect the health of San Diegans experiencing homelessness and help them obtain housing as quickly as possible. This initiative temporarily repurposed parts of the San Diego Convention Center as a temporary shelter, which served more than 1,000 single adults experiencing homelessness per day. As of Oct. 31, 2020, Operation Shelter to Home helped more than 750 individuals obtain permanent or longer-term housing.

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97 Fostering Futures

Foothills Regional Housing (FRH), CASA of Jefferson and Gilpin County, and Jefferson County Department of Human Services created and partnered on a program focused on serving foster youth transitioning out of foster care. Fostering Futures was designed to provide youth with services they need to succeed while giving them an affordable place to call home. (See also #11 and #62.)

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98 EnVision Center/Workforce Development Initiative (WDI)

The District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) Workforce Development Initiative (WDI) moves customers to work through unique partnerships in high demand industries. The program was designed to support DCHA's public housing residents and Housing Choice Voucher participants in becoming self-sufficient. The EnVision Center serves as DCHA's workforce development hub and is located on the agency's Greenleaf Gardens property. WDI leverages both its convenient location and DCHAs supportive services, to reach over 15,000 agency customers.

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99 Frederick Douglass Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Center

The District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) opened a new one-stop shop for its Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program in 2020. The Frederick Douglass Family Self-Sufficiency Center was renovated to house the multitude of services that help DCHA customers reach their individual goals in the DCHA Pathways of Self-Sufficiency: education, employment, and homeownership. The center will house service coordinators who work directly with DCHA customers, as well as D.C. residents, to connect them to innovative strategies, programs, and services that already exist in the local community, such as credit counseling, financial literacy training, and homeownership preparation. Partner organizations also can use the space to host classes and trainings.

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100 Youth Development Program

The District of Columbia Housing Authority's (DCHA) Youth Programming works with youth to provide academic support and variety of leadership and other opportunities outside of school. The Do Your Best program provides students with job opportunities; the DCHA STEM program prepares young leaders to tackle the world of STEM through exploration, education, and skill development; the DCHA Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program helps youth academically, socially and personally throughout their transition into adult hood; and the DCHA Story Times program, promotes the importance of and the positive impact of reading.

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101 Learning Today...Leading Tomorrow

The LEAD Center of the Housing Authority of the City of Daytona Beach, in partnership with CareerSource Flagler/Volusia, serves disengaged, out-of-school young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 whom reside within Volusia County. The program design offers a non-traditional approach with a holistic perspective that focuses on the development of every person's intellectual, emotional, social, physical, artistic, and creative potentials. Participants must complete all four phases of programming: mental toughness, active programming, placement, and follow-up. Although each phase is different, all phases contain components to increase a young person's knowledge, skills and abilities.

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102 Rental Assistance Program for Daytona Beach Residents

The Housing Authority of the City of Daytona Beach was invited to partner with the City of Daytona Beach as a subrecipient in its efforts to provide rental assistance to income eligible Daytona Beach residents who were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Upon becoming a subrecipient, the housing authority is responsible for providing screening, intake, and assessment services. This helped ensure housing stability for low- to moderate-income workers who have been furloughed, lost jobs, or had work hours reduced due to the pandemic.

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103 Weekly Door-to-Door Grocery Deliveries for Public Housing Families

Starting in May 2020, the Housing Authority of the City of Daytona Beach partnered with Halifax Urban Ministries (HUM) to package, deliver, and distribute meals to Daytona Beach public housing residents in respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Families, seniors and/or persons with disabilities received bags of groceries delivered to their door weekly during the pandemic. HUM's mission is to prevent homelessness among low-income families by providing emergency assistance and to intervene on behalf of homeless people. This partnership is an inevitable match because both organizations serve the needs of low-income people.

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104 Family Self-Sufficiency Services During a Pandemic

Lakeland Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program introduced interactive web-based

video workshops for resident participants as a result of COVID-19. This was an innovative way to continue to provide FSS services to program participants who were home bound and otherwise unable to make office visits to meet with their counselors or advisors. The video workshops created an opportunity for residents to continue with their respective program activities while providing a user-friendly setting whereby participants were able to ask questions of instructors and converse with their fellow program participants.

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105 Book-Rich Environments

The National Book Foundation, Urban Libraries Council, Department of Education, and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) joined forces to transform Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) into book rich environments. Book-Rich Environments is a tri-sector collaboration between nonprofit organizations, national government agencies, and corporate publishers that aims to infuse public housing communities across the country with a vibrant and accessible culture of books. The initiative connects families with reading related resources, working to improve opportunities, and providing successful literacy outcomes. Tampa Housing Authority (THA) participated in this initiative.

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106 Financial Literacy

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The Tampa Housing Authority (THA) promotes economic mobility among lower-income households for financial success with strategies and policies that help families, youth, and seniors learn more about money and savings. In partnership with Wells Fargo, THA implemented a Financial Literacy Program to assist youth and seniors with financial education and capability to empower them to make informed choices, know where to go for help,

and take other actions to improve their present and longterm financial well-being. The program helps individuals acquire appropriate access and understanding of financial products, services, and concepts.

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107 Food Distribution Program

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The Tampa Housing Authority (THA) serves more than 10,000 low-income families. Its Food Distribution Program distributed fruits, vegetables, meats, and more to residents within the housing authority. This included residents living on THA properties and those who are housed with tenant-based vouchers outside of the THA properties. THA partnered with different companies and organizations who supplied the food to THA for the residents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the program helped families who suffered loss of income through employment or other sources.

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108 JPI — Virtual Integration of Services

The Jobs Plus Initiative (JPI) expanded locally to residents residing in the Robles Park Village community. Services are employment driven and tailored to address work readiness training, employer linkages, job placement, educational advancement, technology skills, computer literacy, community leadership, and financial literacy. JPI targets three core components including: employment (and related services), community support for work, and financial incentives for community collaboration of job-driven approaches to remove barriers, build a culture of work that increase earnings, and advance employment outcomes for public housing residents.

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109 Parent Involvement

Village Link-Up is a parent involvement program with case management services funded by the Children's Board of Hillsborough County awarded on Oct. 1, 2018. Two case managers were assigned a caseload of 35 families each, with another bilingual case manager in the process of being hired for providing services to at least 105 families at Robles Park Village and C. Blythe Andrews. In order to be eligible for the program, participants needed to live on one of the property sites and be a parent of a child in elementary school, grades K-5. Village Link-Up partners with each child's school to promote parent involvement through parent conferences, workshops, and Parent Teacher Associations.

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110 YouthBuild Graduation Ceremony

The Tampa Housing Authority's first cohort of the YouthBuild (YB) Program completion ceremony was set for April 2020. However, COVID-19 restrictions required both a postponement and additional innovation. Over the course of several meetings, staff devised an event that would provide the students with a memorable experience while keeping everyone safe — a drive-through graduation ceremony, which served 15 students.

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111 Safe At Home Virtual Initiatives

Resident Services Corporation (RSC), a non-profit affiliate of the Housing Authority of DeKalb County

(HADC), enhances the lives of the local community by providing targeted and collaborative initiatives that promote resilience factors to help participants from youth to seniors overcome major challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. In April 2020, HADC implemented The Safe at Home Initiative, which provided online access to educational opportunities, vocational training, financial counseling, trainings, mental health, and various supportive services. In addition, their virtual programming provided school-aged children with the tools and resources required to safely learn while at home from a computer, tablet, or smart phone.

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112 Temporary C19 "Stay at Home" Homeless Wait List Preference Referral Program

The Housing Authority of Champaign (HACC) implemented the Temporary C19 "Stay at Home" Homeless Wait List Preference Referral Program mid-May 2020, not long after the COVID-19 pandemic began. The goal of the program is to house the homeless population, reducing the number of clients in homeless shelters in hopes to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases.

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113 Project Achieve

Working together with an area mental health services provider, the Randolph County Housing Authority developed an innovative program to link clients struggling with mental health issues, with the services needed to help them achieve a healthy and stable housing experience. Project Achieve brought licensed mental health counselors and life coaches on-site to meet with residents in a neutral, non-threatening environment. Project Achieve has given residents the opportunity to address their mental health needs rather

than focusing solely on the various stressors associated with the potential loss of their housing assistance.

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114 Lifeforce Development Institute

Research shows that the people most likely to be hired for available jobs have what employers call "soft skills," non-technical but important skills such as time management, communication, and conflict resolution. Soft skills are one of the most challenging things to teach, and lack of them is the most common reason for not hiring, not promoting, and low-performance evaluations. These skills form the basis of the Lifeforce Development Institute's curriculum, which addresses the workforce's foundational skill gap with a 12-week, hands-on learning program covering job and career readiness skills and targets the community's workforce goals.

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Courtesy of Rockford Housing Authority

115 Section 3 Promotion and Resident Awareness

The Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) developed a robust Section 3 training program. Focusing within their agency, they train Section 3 qualified individuals in day-to-day operations of the RHA. The participants can train in all PHA departments including finance, maintenance, human services, housing choice voucher, and property management. To promote this program and to allow for a greater audience reach, RHA developed a Section 3 portal. This portal has been vital to connecting Section 3 residents to jobs, education, and training opportunities, not only from RHA but also from contractors servicing their properties.

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116 A Partnership that Puts Youth-Focused Programming Where It's Needed Most

While Brookmill Court, one of Fort Wayne Housing Authority's (FWHA) larger family communities, features onsite childcare and a preschool, it lacked any structured programming for children age 6 and older. As a board member of the Boys and Girls Club, FWHA Executive Director George Guy saw an opportunity in the ways Brookmill Court kids could benefit from the nonprofit organization's programs. FWHA partnered with the Boys and Girls Club to apply successfully for a \$25,000 Community Development Block Grant, which will cover the cost of a club serving children and teens ages 6 to 16 at the complex for one year.

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117 Acknowledging Graduates' Achievements While Adhering to Social Distancing Guidelines

COVID-19 took a toll on recent high school graduates, who saw many of their traditions, plans, and celebrations be completely uprooted over the course of the past year. In order to help graduates feel heard, valued, and celebrated, the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Wayne (FWHA) Social Services department organized a Drive-Thru graduation event to acknowledge their accomplishments, while making sure to adhere to proper social distancing guidelines. This event helped provide a sense of encouragement to their graduates during a period of adjustment towards their "new normal."

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118 Increasing Awareness of Local Resources via the Career and Enrichment Services Newsletter

While PHAs strive to help all able families to achieve self-sufficiency, FSS programs in particular go the extra mile to ensure tenants have as many resources as possible to help them reach their goals. Providing these resources proved to be a unique challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Wayne's (FWHA) Social Services department developed an innovative solution with their monthly newsletter. By compiling information from a variety of local sources, this newsletter successfully helped FSS participants navigate an increasingly complex world while providing them with the resources they need to continue moving themselves forward.

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119 Making Job Searches, Training and Transportation a TREAT to Individuals

The Fort Wayne Housing Authority (FWHA) Social Services Department strives to help its participants overcome barriers that can interfere with their ability to become truly self-sufficient. One frequently overlooked barrier to self-sufficiency is access to reliable transportation. FWHA had the opportunity to utilize Housing Opportunities Program (HOP) funding to implement the TREAT (Transportation Readiness Employment and Training) program, which ensures that participants' baseline transportation needs are met. This program has been coupled with a variety of services focused on better equipping participants for work and its periphery, including soft skills and financial literacy. Taken in tandem, these resources helped participants maintain a path to self-sufficiency.

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120 Huppee Community Garden and Free Farmers Market

The Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority partnered with a local non-profit, Growing Food Growing Health, to design and install a community garden at Edgewood Homes. Local teenage Full Circle Youth Program participants were hired to maintain the garden during the COVID-19 shutdown, garnering important employment and life skills along the way. The garden provided free fresh produce to tenants during the pandemic, which was distributed weekly through a farmers market at Edgewood Homes. Growing Food Growing Health recruited other local farmers and organizations to donate produce and bread as well.

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Courtesy of Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority

121 To the Hoop: Basketball and Art

Full Circle Youth Program staff partnered with local non-profits Van Go and the Landen Lucas Foundation to take public housing youths' ideas about their community and bring them to life on six repurposed basketball backboards. Themes selected by public housing youth were Growth, Diversity, Community, and Family. Beautiful pieces of functional art were installed at Edgewood Homes in the fall of 2020 to create a sense of community pride, provide leadership opportunities for youth, and inspire physical activity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, colorful and inviting spaces for outdoor exercise are especially important for public housing youth.

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Courtesy of Lawrence-Douglas County Housing Authority

122 Senior Food Supply and Delivery to Prevent COVID-19

In response to the threat posed by COVID-19, the Wichita Housing Authority (WHA) swiftly implemented a bi-weekly food distribution program at four senior multi-family properties within their portfolio. The program, started with seed funding from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, maintained access to nutritious food and reduced the risk of exposure to COVID-19 that happens during grocery store visits. CARES Act funding supported continuation of the program and enabled additional programming for elderly tenants and clients within the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Programs. Since program inception in May 2020, more than 2,500 food box deliveries have been made to elderly tenants and clients.

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123 The Mobile Food Pantry

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To address the challenge of food insecurity, a new van was purchased for the Resident Services Program and is now used as "The Mobile Food Pantry." The van was purchased with funds from the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act. Through partnerships and commitments with local churches and organizations, The Mobile Food Pantry remains stocked with non-perishable food items that are donated on a bi-weekly basis. These donations allow the program to continue with no cost to the agency.

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Nominated for Excellence/Small/Medium Agency

124 Portland Housing Authority Foster Youth to Independence Program

Every year in the US 20,000 plus youth age out of foster care; of those, about 25% experience homelessness. In Maine, 2,100 plus children live in foster care, including 131 ages 17-20. In Portland alone, the Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter provides a safe space for 25 youth nightly. The Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program of Portland combines strategic staffing and existing community resources into a phased, supportive delivery model for HUD FYI vouchers, one that focuses on addressing two drivers of negative youth outcomes, housing and financial instability, and creating pathways for economic mobility. Since launching in 2020, the program has housed 30 individuals and refers one to four new youth monthly.

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125 Stable Homes Stable Schools

The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority's (MPHA) Stable Homes Stable Schools program was inspired by a sobering statistic: one out of 15 elementary students who attends Minneapolis Public Schools experiences homelessness. Stable Homes Stable Schools provided direct rental assistance to those families through a powerful partnership. School social workers connected with families in need. The City of Minneapolis, MPHA, and a local philanthropy funded one-time and ongoing rental assistance, administered by MPHA. The YMCA supported the family's housing search, connecting them to a web of supportive services, and helped families re-engage with their children's classrooms. Since 2019, Stable Homes has now reached more than 2,600 children and counting.

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126 Cooking Matters

Food insecurity, diet-related diseases, and social isolation are just a few of the challenges the senior population of Hall Towers at Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA) struggle with. Through a new partnership with a local food bank, the Cooking Matters program met for six weeks focusing on healthy eating on a limited budget. Participants then enjoy preparing a healthy meal together. Participants reported improvements in their ability to read food labels, increased healthy cooking at home, and overall improved nutritional knowledge.

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127 COVID-19 Rapid Response

The Housing Authority of the City of Wilmington, NC (WHA) has been deeply impacted by the effects of the global pandemic. Low-income individuals are often less equipped to mitigate the risks associated with the virus. Financial impacts have included loss of household income because of a business closure, loss of work hours or wages, layoffs, or out-of-the pocket medical expenses related to COVID-19. WHA responded in a variety of manners to work to serve their residents during this difficult time including partnering with the New Hanover County Public Health Department to provide COVID-19 testing in affordable housing neighborhoods and access to the vaccine for at-risk populations.

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128 Academic Learning Pods

Academic Learning Pods (ALPs) or community based learning environments, were created to support remote learning and meet the needs of those at-risk, unsheltered, and without internet access during the suspension of in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ALPs are socially-distanced places for students to participate in remote schooling with adult supervision, enrichment activities, and meals for students in grades K-8.

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Courtesy of Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority

129 CMHA COVID-19 Resident Action Team

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) created the COVID-19 Resident Action Team to assist with sanitizing the buildings and common spaces during the pandemic. The Resident Action Team consists of a group of residents hired to work 20 hours a week.

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130 CMHA Scranton Castle Pilot Program

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) implemented a pilot program to ensure that residents have the tools and resources needed to address some of the barriers they face and better their lives. The digital inclusion initiative was a partnership with

DigitalC who provided all Scranton Castle seniors with discounted Internet access, RET3 provided the laptops and ASC3 Digital Literacy Training Center facilitated the digital literacy classes. CMHA also partnered with community organizations to address the need for quality food access, as well as hosting meal distributions.

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Courtesy of Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority

131 Bridging the Digital Divide

In December 2019, residents of the Allegheny County Housing Authority participated in a low-cost digital literacy class, consisting of four two-hour sessions that focused on computer and internet basics. At the end of the program, each resident was awarded a free laptop computer. Residents were able to learn the basic skills needed to operate a computer and safely navigate the internet. This was a huge step towards not only bridging the digital divide, but also towards self-sufficiency.

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132 Gateway Birthday Bash and Bingo

The Allegheny County Housing Authority Communities of Dumplin Hall, Carver Hall, General Braddock Towers, Sharpsburg, Ohio Valley Towers, and Gateway Healthcare partnered to celebrate the residents with community games. The event also provided the residents with a way to stay engaged in understanding their healthcare enrollment options, take advantage of their current healthcare benefits, and participate in an enjoyable environment which helped them learn to stay healthy as they mature in age. The event featured a healthy living-themed game of bingo, birthday celebrations, food, fun, and the warmth of community togetherness. Residents always ask, "When are we doing this again?"

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133 Remote Learning Centers

When COVID-19 brought the entire city to a halt, many children from lower-income families did not make the transition to virtual classes. The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) partnered with the School District of Philadelphia, the Boys and Girls Club, and the City to establish safe and secure remote learning centers, some of which were set up in community rooms of PHA's housing developments. The 10 remote learning centers provided a familiar place where students had access to reliable highspeed Internet and, at some locations, lab monitors to help with computer issues or other challenges. PHA also tracked down students to give them free Chromebooks and hotspots from the school district.

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Courtesy of Philadelphia Housing Authority

134 Creating Partnerships to Bridge Health Disparities and Combat Isolation

The COVID-19 pandemic isolated people both from the resources they need and their friends, families, and neighbors. It also widened health disparities and had a significant impact on residents' wellbeing, creating an immediate need for support and action. To address these needs, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) partnered with the Duquesne University School of Pharmacy to host pop-up health clinics in HACP communities and Manchester Citizens Council to create safe, socially distanced, community environments for residents to see their friends and neighbors.

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135 Virtual Job Fair: Overcoming Hurdles to Connect Residents to Employment

In the past, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) hosted an in-person job fair to connect residents with regional employment opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic forced HACP's Resident Employment Program and Human Resources Department to develop new strategies to ensure HACP could continue to connect residents with employers and empower them to self-sufficiency.

Their solution: a virtual job fair with booths for employers, where job seekers and employers could speak directly with one another to discuss career opportunities. More than 70 people attended the fair, and at least 10 found employment directly from the online event, making it a model for future events.

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136 CFHA COVID Testing Initiative 2020

In 2020, the Central Falls Housing Authority (CFHA) sought to protect public housing residents and community members against COVID-19 by facilitating a testing initiative. The series of tests were conducted at two public housing complexes in Central Falls, which allowed residents with limited transportation options a chance to obtain a test just outside their front doors. The program has been an incredibly useful tool to protect Central Falls from the spread of infection. Additionally, it has dictated the agency's response for the health of their public housing residents and community.

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137 Boredom Buster Bags

Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA), recognizing residents were struggling with social isolation, anxiety, depression, helplessness, and high levels of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, turned to alternative ways to minimize the social isolation of social distancing. Finding safe and meaningful ways to provide residents creative and stress-reducing activities became the focus of their RSC office as stay-at-home orders continued. Their solution was to distribute Boredom Buster Bags, comprised of a variety of therapeutic games and tools, health and safety information, and other goodies for residents to use while socially distancing.

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Courtesy of Lincoln Housing Authority

138 The Community Cares: Creating Unconventional Pathways for Service Delivery

Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA) recognized the need for services and supports within its community during the Covid-19 pandemic. LHA coordinated resident volunteers and community donations to assist with meeting resident needs with regard to grocery shopping, medical transportation, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for residents. Over 500 cloth face masks were distributed free of charge to residents. Additionally, the agency facilitated and utilized resident volunteers to meet the needs of the most vulnerable community members.

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139 The Community Gardens at Newport Housing Authority

In spite of the immense challenges of COVID-19, the Newport Housing Authority was fortunate for its partnership with the Aquidneck Community Table (ACT) who built and managed two new gardens in the neighborhood. The first was at the Big Blue Bike Barn and the second was at the Park Holm Senior Center, both wonderful new additions to the garden previously created at the Florence Gray Center. The gardens produced a bounty of fresh vegetables, which were donated to families in need. ACT is committed to building a healthy food system, accessible to all, especially to those most in need, and the community gardens are transforming the food paradigm for the community they jointly serve.

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Courtesy of Newport Housing Authority

140 The Big Blue Bike Barn

Community collaboration is the heartbeat of The Big Blue Bike Barn. A previously empty lot on Newport Housing Authority land is now a public space for biking, hiking, gathering and growing. It is a place of pride for neighborhood residents and a place of fun for all who use it. Bike-happy kids love to visit it, arriving and departing with enthusiasm. A spirit of independence is provided in the newly created recreational space where young people can be curious, adventurous, healthy and safe.

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Courtesy of Newport Housing Authority

141 The Neighbor Next Door Volunteers

As was the case throughout the nation, the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted the Newport Housing Authority's seniors, particularly those in high density communities. As the positivity rate continued to rise and mandatory or advisory stay-at-home orders were issued, the battle against food insecurity was never more wide-spread. Resident volunteers generously collaborated with the agency and emergency food services to personally deliver meals to their neighbors on a daily basis during the public health emergency. The Neighbor Next Door Volunteers ensured those most vulnerable, who were already impacted by food insecurity and social isolation, would not go hungry.

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142 5 Reasons Why You Should Participate in the 2020 Census!

Columbia Housing launched the "5 Reasons Why You Should Participate in the 2020 Census!" initiative to not only encourage, but ensure, its families participated in the 2020 Census. Achieving a complete count during the 2020 Census required innovation and creativity from Columbia Housing and its community partners. Innovative virtual and socially distanced events resulted in an increased participation rate.

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143 Celebrate Sunday

At the onset of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19, there was an abrupt disruption in the delivery of food services. Columbia Housing understood the importance of ensuring that its families would not be impacted by COVID-19 food insecurity. Since food insecurity and poor nutrition are associated with several chronic illnesses that put people at higher risk for the more severe complications of COVID-19, the food access crisis threatened to exacerbate the already glaring disparities in health outcomes for vulnerable people. Columbia Housing, in partnership with the Tanner Foundation, launched Celebrate Sunday to address food insecurity. Contact-free deliveries of catered food were delivered on Saturday evenings with all the components for a typical Sunday dinner for a family of four. More than a thousand families received a total of 4,400 Celebrate Sunday meals.

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144 CH Reads

"Reading gives us someplace to go when we have to stay where we are," is a famous quote by Mason Cooley. Public health officials warned Americans to stay home as much as possible and avoid close contact with others as the country faced a global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Several residents, already lacking strong reading skills, were further at risk of being isolated and forced to adapt to virtual lifestyle changes that required a level of reading proficiency to successfully navigate. To strategically engage residents and promote literacy, Columbia Housing partnered with United Way of the Midlands to launch CH Reads.

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145 CH Votes

The Columbia Housing Votes campaign, commonly known as CH Votes, is a non-partisan activity solely designed for the purposes of voter registration, education, and mobilization for families served by Columbia Housing. Columbia Housing has actively engaged residents in the voting process for decades. CH Votes, places a brand around what Columbia Housing has and will continue to do to engage its residents in exercising their civic duty of voting in all local, state, and national elections. Voting is a vital part of our democracy and Columbia Housing works to ensure all of its families know their rights, make a plan, and exercise their right to vote in 2020 and beyond.

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146 COMET Transportation to the Polls

Transportation to the polls can be a huge barrier for people with disabilities and limited disposable income. Launching COMET's free and COVID-19 safe

Transportation to the Polls is a successful platform engaging Columbia Housing's residents in exercising their civic duty of voting. COMET Transportation to the Polls was a partnership between Columbia Housing and Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority, which used a combination of free special bus routes, the Dial-A-Ride (DART) transportation system, and personalized transportation requests through its Reflex Transportation Program.

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147 Fall Festival — Housing America Day

What better way to show residents that you care than to show them that you care! Taking decisive actions to protect, strengthen, and amplify the principle of putting residents first was embraced by all in Columbia Housing's Fall Festival - Housing America Day initiative, which included activities for children and adults, information on available services from community partners and entertainment. This resident-focused community-wide celebration and City of Columbia's proclamation of Housing America Day further signified Columbia Housing's promise to provide quality affordable housing, which creates opportunities for families to live, work, and thrive to their fullest potential.

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148 Flu Shots for Seniors

The influenza virus, more commonly known as the flu, is a serious illness that can infect anyone, but it is extremely harmful to adults 65 years and older, who account for most hospitalizations and deaths from the flu. Seniors are at the greatest risk, due in part to changes in immune defenses with increasing age. In response to the emergent need to get its

senior resident population vaccinated for the highly contagious seasonal virus, Columbia Housing partnered with Prisma Health to launch Flu Shots for Seniors.

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149 Food Boxes to the Rescue

As food insecurity headlines resounded across the country, Columbia Housing deployed an intervention strategy that would mitigate hunger and lack of access to food through the delivery of 20-pound boxes of nutritious healthy food options to its public housing residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with The Ray Tanner Foundation and the Senn Brothers, Columbia Housing launched the initiative, Food Boxes to the Rescue.

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Courtesy of Columbia Housing

150 Get Out the Vote Parade

The Get Out The Vote Parade was the grand finale of the Columbia Housing Votes campaign, also known as CH Votes. CH Votes was a 12-week non-partisan activity solely designed for the purposes of voter registration, education, and mobilization for families served by Columbia Housing. The Get Out The Vote Parade, was held on Oct. 31, 2020, at the Latimer Manor public

housing community—an official Polling Precinct for Ward 19. As the parade began, residents stood on their porches and waved as Columbia Housing staff, community partners, and candidates for public office paraded through the Latimer Manor public housing community. Many of the children in the Latimer Manor public housing community wore costumes, creating a festive, fun-filled, and socially distanced atmosphere.

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151 Grassroots Mask-Making Project

Public health officials announced early on in the COVID-19 pandemic that wearing a cloth or fabric face covering when entering public spaces is an effective way to prevent the spread of the virus. To ensure Columbia Housing's families had adequate face coverings, Columbia Housing launched the Grassroots Mask-Making Project. The Grassroots Mask-Making Project enlisted the support of residents, seamstresses, mom and pop shops, micro-businesses, and small community businesses for the creation of cloth face coverings. Through the partnerships, 6,000 face coverings were issued to Columbia Housing's residents.

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152 Healthy Seniors

Staying healthy during the pandemic is particularly important for seniors and those at increased risk of severe illness. Columbia Housing's Healthy Seniors initiative is a partnership with the largest healthcare system, Prisma Health in South Carolina, designed to provide convenient access and meet the healthcare needs of its 300 plus senior resident population residing in its four high rise communities.

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153 Homeownership Goes Virtual

Columbia Housing is committed to building and preserving healthy neighborhoods and communities through the promotion of homeownership throughout Columbia, S.C. After an abrupt and unanticipated conclusion of its in-person homeownership program due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Columbia Housing launched Homeownership Goes Virtual. The Homeownership Goes Virtual initiative promotes sustainable homeownership by providing home buying, budgeting, credit, and home and yard maintenance educational opportunities for Columbia Housing's residents, program participants, and the general public.

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154 Home-Spot, Hot Spot

Having access to technology is now more crucial than ever. Columbia Housing, in partnership with Richland Library, launched the Home-Spot, Hot Spot due to increased resident concerns regarding the absence of high-speed Internet or broadband access within the communities. The partnership enabled the circulation of WiFi hotspots, allowing residents to stay connected. Residents are now able to learn and complete schoolwork, contact loved ones remotely, and utilize basic services that have moved to digital platforms.

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155 Housing Choice Voucher Program Briefings Goes Virtual

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were acutely felt by people facing housing instability at a time when the ability to be safely and affordably housed was integral to the health and safety of us all. Columbia Housing's Housing Choice Voucher Program Briefings Goes Virtual initiative provided a gateway to continue partnering with landlords in providing affordable housing options for Columbia Housing's families at a time when they needed it the most.

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156 Junior League Christmas Giveaway

For many low-income families, Christmas is the most dreaded time of the year. Some low-income families are scraping to get by on a week-to-week basis, and the expectations of having to buy gifts and create a memorable holiday for their kids, add stress and anxiety from the knowledge that they do not have the resources to make this happen. The Junior League Christmas Giveaway initiative relieves this responsibility through the distribution of toys to Columbia Housing's children in time for the holiday season. This act of kindness makes the holidays for Columbia Housing's families much warmer and brighter.

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157 Onsite COVID-19 Testing

Columbia Housing grew increasingly concerned about its seniors living in high rise apartment complexes, as that population is particularly susceptible to COVID-19. They partnered with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) to provide free COVID-19 testing to all of their families. After initializing the service, more

than 500 Columbia Housing families and staff have taken advantage of free COVID-19 testing.

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158 Online Income Change Self-Certification

With the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic, Columbia Housing like many public agencies found itself in uncharted territory. The impact of COVID-19 was challenging not only for Columbia Housing, but also for its families. Many Columbia Housing families' feared not having enough income to cover monthly rent as a result of COVID-19 temporary or permanent job loss. Launching the Online Income Change Self-Certification form for an immediate increase in rental subsidy was essential to keeping families housed during these most vulnerable times.

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159 Operation Digital Signage

Grounded in the principle of keeping residents first, Columbia Housing launched Operation Digital Signage to ensure its 300 plus senior residents residing in four elderly high-rises maintain a sense of community, feel informed and involved despite public health officials' recommendations to stay home and stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each high-rise had a professionally installed 65-inch HD monitor or TV located within a central and accessible location. Digital signs transformed the TVs into information hubs, making them the perfect communication medium in senior living.

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160 Power of Partnerships, We Are Better Together

Columbia Housing launched the Power of Partnerships, We Are Better Together initiative to address quality-of-life barriers and create opportunities for self-sufficiency for the 6,500 families it serves. Columbia Housing's 187-plus partners provide resources to seek to increase economic stability, education, healthcare, social connection, and food access, for low-wealth families. The Power of Partnerships, We Are Better Together initiative is a platform for strategic partnerships that are fundamental to improving the quality of life for Columbia Housing's families.

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161 Resident Executive Council Meetings Goes Virtual

To do its part in helping to flatten the curve during the COVID-19 pandemic, Columbia Housing canceled all of its in-person Resident Executive Council Meetings. Having an obligation to continue to provide residents with safe meeting space, they launched the Resident Executive Council Meetings Goes Virtual since putting residents first and maintaining an open dialogue with its families was paramount.

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162 Resident Fire Education and Safety Classes

Fire safety training is of the utmost importance to ensuring the safety of residents in the event of a disaster. In November 2019, Columbia Housing, in partnership with the Columbia-Richland Fire and Rescue Department, launched the Resident Fire Education and Safety initiative to increase staff and residents' knowledge of Fire Safety. Residents and staff are reminded of best practices to avoid creating a fire risk and the measures to take in the event a fire happens.

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163 Senior Social Engagement Program

Columbia Housing experienced a growing number of seniors living alone in its senior housing developments and social Isolation has become an increased concern. Particularly during this unprecedented time. Research has linked social isolation to increased risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, depression, cognitive decline, and premature mortality. To ensure Columbia Housing's seniors continue to live a socially stimulating lifestyle, it launched the Senior Social Engagement Program, which enlisted the support of its 187 partners for the delivery of social isolation prevention services that promoted the psychological, physical, and cognitive health of its senior population.

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164 Virtual Resident Training Series

Out of an emergent need to enhance the quality of life of its residents and connect residents to educational resources, despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Columbia Housing launched the Virtual Resident Training Series program. The program allowed Columbia Housing to leverage resources from community partners who were subject-matter experts to deliver a COVID-19 friendly series of virtual workshops that foster economic independence and self-sufficiency.

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165 Youth Employment Program Goes Virtual

In previous years, Columbia Housing's Youth Employment Program provided its youth with valuable work experience. In 2020, the program's fate was uncertain with the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Columbia Housing and its partner, the Columbia Urban League, sprang into action and provided an opportunity for youth to receive virtual work experience opportunities, thus the Youth Employment Program Goes Virtual was launched.

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166 Zooming to the Polls

Zooming to the Polls is a component of the Columbia Housing Votes campaign (CH Votes), a non-partisan activity solely designed for the purposes of voter registration, education, and mobilization for families served by Columbia Housing. Zooming to the Polls is a virtual platform that gave families space where they could communicate directly with experts to ensure they were knowledgeable about the voting process and to make a voting plan that would best fit their individual situation. It consisted of the following topics: voter registration, absentee voting, voter after incarceration and homeless voting, ballot education, meeting the candidates, empowering young voters, and SC celebs get-out-the-vote.

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Courtesy of Columbia Housing

167 Prince Hall Homework Club

In September 2020, Spartanburg Housing implemented Homework Club to assist children who lived in the Prince Hall Apartments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to ongoing communication with parents and the local school district, they understood many students were having difficulties adjusting to virtual and hybrid learning. Students were falling behind on assignments and were not attending online classes. In response, Spartanburg Housing created a space in the Prince Hall community room to support students. Homework assistance was provided twice a week for two hours each session by staff and community volunteers to help the students get back on track. Due to the pandemic and CDC guidelines, support was limited to 12 to 15 students a day due to social distancing.

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Courtesy of Spartanburg Housing

168 ESL and GED Classes

The Housing Authority of the City of Del Rio collaborated with the Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) to help bridge the gap for education, by offering the General Education Development (GED) and the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

Both programs have been operational since October 2019. The classes help fulfill the agency's mission, which is "to provide inclusive affordable housing opportunities to low income individuals, building a platform for improving quality of life and achieving self-sufficiency." The housing authority worked with SWTJC to continue to offer these programs until the 20 participants become self-sufficient.

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Small/Medium Agency

169 School Bus Shelters

The Housing Authority of the City of Del Rio formally opened two school bus shelters on Feb. 25, 2020. The school bus shelters, which serve San Jose Housing Development's residents' children and children from the neighborhood, were built to eliminate barriers for students waiting for the bus pick-up and to shelter them during weather changes. Not only did the residents' children benefit from the first-ever built school bus shelters in the city of Del Rio, but the shelters also strengthened relationships with the community and the city.

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170 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

The Housing Authority of the City of Del Rio was the first in Del Rio, Texas to initiate the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offered by the IRS

RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES

since 1985. VITA provides free income tax preparation assistance to residents of Del Rio and its surrounding areas to anyone who makes less than \$56,000 a year. All volunteers, whether they are staff of the housing authority or other volunteers from the community who come in contact with any tax information, are IRS Certified. In 2020, the Housing Authority of the City of Del Rio celebrated its 35th year and a proclamation from the City of Del Rio was presented to the Housing Authority for its continued service to the community.

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171 Breaking the Digital Divide in the Public Housing Program

The Harlingen Housing Authority partnered with ConnectHomeUSA, T-Mobile and the Harlingen Affordable Housing Corporation to bridge the digital divide amongst their public housing residents. Together they provided each family with a hot spot, enabling affordable access to high speed internet.

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Nominated for Excellence



Courtesy of Harlingen Housing Authority

172 The Los Vecinos Tenant Association Academic Scholarship

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To help those who lacked financial resources to attend college, university or training programs, the Los Vecinos Tenant Association Academic Scholarship was developed to promote post secondary education for graduating seniors and help pay for their studies. It's funded by the Tenant Association and community members in partnership with the Harlingen Affordable Housing Corporation. Graduating seniors from the Harlingen Housing Authority at Los Vecinos may apply for this funding. The Tenant Association and the Executive Director review the applications submitted and select the awardees based on grade point average, community service, club participations, and achievements.

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Courtesy of Houston Housing Authority

173 Breaking Bread Together Apart

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) established Breaking Bread Together Apart to ensure isolated, food-insecure, low-income households had access to healthy food and adequate nutrition on a daily basis during the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with a network of community partners, the HHA's Breaking Bread Together Apart program distributed over 132,000 healthy meals to approximately 2,000 low-income households.

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174 HHA Says Yes to the Census

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) established "HHA Says Yes to the Census" in collaboration with the U. S. Census Bureau to educate and raise awareness in hard to count populations and communities to engage and participate in the 2020 Census. The HHA, U. S. Census Bureau, City of Houston, elected officials, resident leadership, property management, key stakeholders, community organizations and partners forged cross-sector collaborations and identified solutions to increase engagement and participation among residents, the community, and partners to ensure an accurate count and increase low response rates.

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175 Protection and Hope: Houston Resident Provides Custom Masks For Community

The health and safety of residents and employees at the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) have always been a priority. When COVID-19 started to change Houstonian's lives with mask requirements, HHA took action to continue to protect their residents and employees. They discovered a resident in Cuney Homes who shifted her business (Alluring Ice) to meet the high demand for masks. The collaboration resulted in HHA supporting residents and employees and creating a video to showcase Alluring Ice's talents and initiative during a challenging time. Because the video received positive social media engagement, HHA plans to spotlight more residents' stories and successes.

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176 Centralized HOPE Distribution

The San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) facilitates the San Antonio Food Bank (SAFB) HOPE commodities program. Due to COVID-19 modifications to the delivery of the food, resources were needed to address health and safety issues. With the assistance and partnership efforts of SAHA and SAFB the process was altered and HOPE distributions changed from a site-based model to centralized bulk delivery with contactless, door-to-door delivery. These changes allowed SAHA to continue meeting the nutritional needs of seniors and residents with disabilities while protecting the health of these high-risk individuals.

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177 ConnectHomeSA Computer Distribution

The San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) provides a variety of educational and digital literacy support to its over 57,000 public housing and Housing Choice Voucher participants. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting demands for virtual schooling and work, SAHA rapidly developed a program to collect donated computers and technological equipment and provide them to residents in need. Through SAHA's ConnectHomeSA digital literacy program and its nonprofit Education Investment Foundation (EIF), more than 200 student residents were awarded free, refurbished computers.

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178 COVID-19 Emergency Food Assistance

In response to the twin crises of COVID-19 and widespread job loss, the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) rapidly developed and implemented new forms of food assistance for public housing residents with the greatest needs. Since its inception in March 2020, SAHA's Emergency Food Assistance has safely provided tens of thousands of pounds of food to residents who would not otherwise qualify for any other type of food assistance under existing nutrition programs.

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179 Food Distribution During Covid

During the pandemic, one systemic issue became prevalent; food security within low-income populations. Throughout the country companies, institutions, private citizens, and many other groups came together to help ensure neighbors, friends, and strangers were fed. Eco Centro and the San Antonio Housing Authority's (SAHA) sustainability department partnered to get families the food they needed. The sustainability department contacted property managers and had them fill out forms for food boxes to be delivered. Boxes were picked up by SAHA, and volunteers from a distribution center, and then distributed door-to-door with little to no contact to ensure safe delivery for at-risk residents.

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Courtesy of San Antonio Housing Authority

180 Meals on Wheels Weekend Delivery

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) identified access to food as a concern for their residents. In partnership with Meals on Wheels (MOW), they developed a program to address their underserved properties. SAHA identified four properties that, due to size and occupancy, had limited site based food service programs available. Then both SAHA and MOW developed a program that would provide meals for all residents living at the designated sites.

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181 The Education Investment Foundation's (EIF) Back-to-School Drive-Through Event

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing requirements, all traditional San Antonio Housing Authority annual resident events were canceled. To continue traditional education-related events, the Education Investment Foundation (EIF) implemented a series of curbside events throughout the month of August, 2020. Since they were unable to host annual back-to-school fairs at their public housing properties they hosted a "drive-thru" curbside school supply distribution at their headquarters.

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Nominated for Excellence

182 Pre-School Reading Corner "The Corner Library"

Recognizing a need for pre-school children to have access to books and learning materials, the Housing Authority of the County of Hidalgo created the Corner Library. Children who live at Villa Sandoval Longoria development actively use the library to sit and read, color or draw while their parent is meeting with office staff.

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Courtesy of Housing Authority of the County of Hidalgo

Adaptive Reuse: 59, 60

Affordable Housing: 63, 70, 83, 88, 90

See also: Elderly Housing; Homeownershop Programs; Mixed-Income Development; and Veterans Housing.

Agency Administration: 20, 27, 34, 35

See also: Landlord Relations; Staff Development and

Training; Technology.

Affordable Housing: 8

Annual Report: 8, 33

Arts Program: 121

Back-to-School Programs: 181

Beautification: 78

Business: 74, 151, 175

Census Initiative: 142, 174

Communications: 14, 16, 18, 19, 23, 31, 33, 44, 51,

55, 159

Community Revitalization: 72, 81, 90, 140

Comprehensive Services: See under specific services: Community Centers/Buildings; Educational Programs; Elderly—Social Services; Homeownership; Job Readiness/Training Programs; Self-Sufficiency Programs; Senior Activities; Youth Programs.

Computer Use: 130, 131

COVID-19: 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 25, 26, 29, 32, 34, 42, 43, 45, 55, 67, 71, 79, 87, 95, 111, 117, 122, 123, 127, 128, 129, 134 136, 137, 138, 141, 143, 149, 151, 157, 158, 159, 163, 167, 173, 175, 177, 176, 178, 179,

180, 181

Crime Prevention: 38

Customer Service: 24

Data Collection: 8

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: 2, 48, 74

Donations: 123, 156, 177

Early Childhood Development Programs: 86, 182

Educational Programs: 6, 109, 128, 167, 168 See a/so: **Job Readiness/Training Programs; Self-**

Sufficiency Programs; Youth Programs.

Elderly Housing: 58, 61, 68

Elderly Programs: 126, 130, 132, 163

Elderly — **Social Services:** *122, 148, 152, 163*

Electronic Communication: 36, 39, 40, 41, 46, 55

Emergency Preparedness: 5, 11, 34

Employment Programs: 93, 98, 108, 129, 135, 165

Fair Housing: 94

Fairs: 135, 147

Family Self-Sufficiency: 91, 99, 104, 118

Financial Counseling Programs: 91, 106, 170

Fire Safety: 162

Food Programs: 75, 81, 87, 103, 107, 120, 122, 123,

126, 139, 143 149, 173, 176, 178, 179, 180

Foster Youth: 10, 62, 97, 124

Fundraising: 28

Gardening Programs: 75, 81, 120, 139

Geographic Information Systems Mapping: 21

Green Buildings/Programs: 3, 58

Health Care: 127, 132, 134, 136, 138, 148, 152, 157, 175

Holiday Programs: *156*

Homelessness: 6, 59, 64, 71, 84, 96, 112, 125

Homeownership Counseling: 153

Housing Choice Vouchers: 12, 13, 22, 51, 65, 155

Housing for Special Needs: 10, 62, 84, 97, 124

Independent Living: 61

Infill Lots: 72, 88

Innovative Financing: 58, 68

Internet/WiFi: 128, 131, 154, 171

Job Readiness Programs: 50, 93, 108, 114, 119

Job Training Programs: 115

Landlords: 26

Leadership: 17, 94, 101

Literary Programs: 105, 144, 182

Maintenance: 25, 54, 77

Marketing: 30, 52

Mental Health Program: 66, 113, 137

Mentoring Programs: 100

Mixed-Income Development: 57, 60

Mixed Use Development: 73

Modernization: 76, 77, 78, 79, 83, 89

Modular Construction: 84

Moving to Work: 12

New Construction: 61, 72 Newsletter: 1, 46, 118

Notice of Funding Availability: 7

Online Applictions/Forms: 7, 39, 41, 44, 158

Parenting Programs: 109

Playground: 82

Police, Interaction with: 38

Public/Private Partnerships: 9, 10, 49, 54, 62, 66, 67, 70, 73, 75, 81, 86, 87, 97, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 116, 122, 125, 130, 134, 139, 141, 149, 143, 144, 146, 152, 160, 171, 176, 179, 180

Public Relations: 30, 52
Recreation Programs: 140

Renovation: 80

Rent/Deposit/Mortgage Assistance: 9, 67, 102, 125

Rental Assistance Demonstration: 69

Resident Concerns: 14, 31

Resident Councils/Advisory Boards: 161

Resident Recognition: 110, 117

Resident Services: 76, 95, 111, 118, 127, 129, 137, 138,

141, 147, 170

See also: Educational Programs; Elderly — Social Services; Financial Counseling Programs; Gardening Programs; Health Care; Homeownership Programs; Job Readiness/Training Programs; Self-Sufficiency Programs; Youth Programs.

Revitalization: 63, 85

Scholarship Programs: 92, 172

Section 3: 74, 115

Self-Sufficiency: 49, 50, 115, 119, 160, 164

Shelter Plus Care: 96 Social Media: 42, 45, 53

Sports Program: 121

Staff Development and Training: 17, 43

Staff Programs: 1, 19, 28, 39, 48

Staff Recognition: 37 **STEM Programs:** 100

Strategic Plan: 2

Supportive Housing: 59, 66, 68, 80

Sustainability: 3, 58, 89

Technology: 23, 33, 35, 154 159, 177

See also: Computer Use; Electronic Communication;

Internet/WiFi; Websites.

Teen Programs: 120

Telework Plan/Program: *4, 11, 15, 43, 71*

Transit Oriented Development: 85
Transportation Programs: 119, 146

University/Housing Authority Collaboration: 6, 86,

134, 168

Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing: 64

Videos: 22, 52, 53, 175

Virtual Meetings, Programs, Training: 13, 16, 18, 29, 32, 42, 43, 51, 104, 111, 133, 135, 153, 155, 161,

164, 165, 166

Volunteers, use of: 138, 141, 170

Voter Registration/Information: 145, 146, 150, 166

Waiting List: 22, 112

Websites: 40, 44, 47, 55, 56, 91

Young Adult Programs: 101

Youth Programs: 82, 100, 109, 116, 121, 125, 128,

165, 167, 169, 181

See also: Educational Programs; Job Readiness/ Training Programs; Literacy Programs; Sports

Programs.



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