

The HOME Edition

Volume 3, Issue 2
Second Quarter 2010

HUD Secretary Tours Kennedy Place



From left, Tim Seckinger, Shaun Donovan, Commissioner Myron Cloyd, U.S. Representatives Sheila Jackson Lee and Al Green.

Shaun Donovan, the U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development (HUD), along with other federal and local officials, toured the construction site and saw progress at Kennedy Place on August 2.

Houston Housing Authority Interim President & CEO Tim Seckinger led Donovan, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Al Green and others on a tour of Kennedy Place. After the tour, James Noteware, City of Houston Director, Housing & Community Development, welcomed Donovan on behalf of Mayor Annise Parker. HHA Board Chair David Minberg also welcomed Donovan, other visitors from the HUD Region and Houston offices, elected city officials, Congresswoman Jackson Lee and Congressman Green. Minberg also recognized and thanked the Board of Commissioners and HHA staff for their contributions to making the Kennedy Place redevelopment possible. Also attending and recognized for their support were Stephanie Gaston, Kennedy Place Resident Council President; Sheila Johnson, Vice President; and Annette Wright, Parliamentarian.

In his remarks, Donovan recognized the value of the stimulus funds in helping to rebuild Kennedy Place in the historic Fifth Ward and in creating and saving jobs. Also speaking were Noteware, Congresswoman Jackson Lee and Congressman Green, all of whom stressed the importance of communities and agencies working together to stabilize neighborhoods.

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Our Mission:
To improve lives by providing quality, affordable housing options and promoting education and economic self-sufficiency.

Kennedy Place, continued from page 1

Residents are expected to begin moving into the 108 new Kennedy Place homes in December. Kennedy Place is being rebuilt with \$7.8 million in federal stimulus funds and other funds and will provide families, elderly and other individuals with affordable and market-rate homes compatible with new housing being constructed in the area.



Don Babers, HUD Regional Administrator, Region VI, visits with Resident Council officers Stephanie Gaston (from left), Sheila Johnson and Annette Wright.

Modernization of Kelly Village Units Begins

Although the Houston Housing Authority was not awarded funding for the HOPE VI grant to redevelop Kelly Village and the surrounding community, HHA is proceeding with Phase X modernization and site improvements, which includes modernization of two currently vacant buildings (16 units). The Board of Commissioners awarded a contract to White Oak Builders for this project at the June Board meeting. Construction began in August and is expected to be completed in early December.

Modernization includes laying new storm sewer lines, completely gutting and rebuilding the interiors and completing exterior modernization to match the other buildings. The new units will include Energy Star-rated appliances and low-e energy-efficient windows.

When finished, HHA will have completed modernizing 270 of the total 333 units at Kelly Village, in addition to

the community, administration and day-care center built in 2005. Under Section 3 Employment Requirements, White Oak Builders is offering temporary jobs to residents of Kelly Village and the surrounding area. Interested applicants should call HHA Client Services at 713.260.0726.



Mayor Parker Appoints New Commissioner



Mayor Annise Parker appointed Lance Gilliam, a commercial real estate veteran and community leader, to the HHA Board of Commissioners in July. His term will run through January 31, 2012.

“I’ve known Lance for many years. With his strong business credentials and passion for the city of Houston, I believe he will be an asset to the Houston Housing Authority Board,” said Mayor Parker.

Gilliam is the managing director for Moody Rabin Interests, a local commercial real estate brokerage and

management firm. He also is a member of the Urban Land Institute and serves on the Children’s Museum of Houston’s board of directors and executive committee and is the president-elect. He also serves as a board member of the Harris County Public Improvement District No. 10b and previously served on the board of the Urban League of Houston. Gilliam earned a Bachelor of Business Administration from Southern Methodist University.

“Mayor Parker made an excellent choice,” said HHA Interim President & CEO Tim Seckinger. “Lance Gilliam is a welcome addition to our Board of Commissioners. His experience and insight will be invaluable as HHA addresses the challenges of the next decade.”

Kimm Perez “Graduates” to New Home and Job



Kimm Perez visits her new home site during construction (top). It was completed in February 2010.

The inspiring story of Kimm M. Perez’s journey from pregnant high-school teen to earning associate’s, bachelor’s and master’s degrees continues. Now with her professional counselor and sex offender treatment licensures, she recently accepted a new position with the Mental Health & Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County, where she is using her education and experience to work with inmates at the Harris County Jail while also pursuing her doctorate in psychology. These transitions stemmed from the help of the HHA Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency program, which also assisted her in buying a new home.

Kimm, who began the FSS program while a resident of the Housing Authority’s Oxford Place Apartments, has been featured in the HHA 2007 annual report and on the agency’s website. “The most valuable information I received from the program was help on how to get started,” Kimm said. “The first person I worked with in the FSS program assisted me with preparing the required documents needed to apply for graduate school. I also got connected with Dress for

Success and its related support group, Professional Women’s Group.”

While enrolled in the program, Kimm also received the continued financial assistance from the Housing Authority that allowed her to save most of her salary instead of paying towards a rent increase when she began earning more. With the FSS program’s help to complete the rigorous application process for the City of Houston down payment assistance program, she received those funds, and Kimm and 19-year-old daughter Cali moved into their new home earlier this year in Trinity Gardens in northeast Houston.

The FSS program provided Kimm (and all who are enrolled) one-on-one case-management services to help achieve independent financial goals. Even with the support and assistance of this program, it wasn’t always an easy road for Kimm to get where she is today. “The hardest part to overcome is asking for help,” she said. “It’s a mistake to think that you have to do everything yourself.”

She reflects back on how she kept focus on her long-term goals. “I kept telling myself this is not where I want to be; I want things to be better than this.” Kimm’s advice? “Ask for help and use your resources. It’s sometimes hard to do, but ask yourself, ‘who do I know who can help?’”

Two FSS Graduates Purchase New Homes

Two Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency Program participants recently graduated from the program and received their escrow checks, which went towards the purchase of newly built homes! They also achieved education and employment goals they set when they enrolled in the program.

Chanda Derrow, a former resident of Allen Parkway Village, entered the FSS program in June 2008 and recently moved into her new home. While in the program, she graduated from the University of Houston with a degree in Accounting and obtained financially rewarding positions within the accounting field.

Sharlonda Partee, also a former resident of Allen Parkway Village, recently moved into a new home in Humble. She enrolled in the program in June 2008, and after receiving



Chief of Staff Steve Mikelman presents escrow checks to Chanda Derrow (left photo) and Sharlonda Partee.

job placement assistance, was hired by the U.S. Census Bureau in November 2008. She was soon promoted to Recruiting Manager and worked with HHA to hire other residents for the Bureau.

Around the Houston Housing Authority

Seniors Updated on Hurricane Preparedness

Several hurricane-preparedness sessions were held at HHA senior developments during the second quarter, including one by Channel 39 meteorologist Keith Monahan at Lyerly senior apartments (below). Bobby Murphy, HHA Safety and Risk Management Coordinator, also included hurricane preparedness information as part of the Life & Safety Training presentations at Bellerive, Lyerly and Telephone Road senior communities, as well as to HHA staff at the Fountain View office.



As part of Monahan's presentation to about 30 residents at Lyerly, he stressed the importance of preparation and monitoring weather reports. He discussed creating a disaster plan and how to assemble a disaster kit containing essential supplies such as flashlights with extra batteries, a battery-operated radio, and dry food and water for three days. Monahan also demonstrated how to track a storm using a chart and answered residents' questions.

Murphy reviewed the guidelines for having non-perishable food items, drinkable water, safety kits, prescriptions and other essentials on hand in case of a power outage or the need to evacuate. At Bellerive, the presentation was translated into Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese.

Francisco Frias — Class of December 2010!



Cuney Homes resident Francisco Frias was surprised last September when Mayor Bill White and other high-profile volunteers knocked on his door. Francisco was one of hundreds of students who had dropped out of school and received a visit by the volunteers, including new HISD Superintendent Terry Grier and Yates High School Principal Ronald Mumphrey, to encourage them to go back to school to graduate. They offered Francisco encouragement to enroll in a new program at Yates to assist him in completing school.

As a result, Francisco enrolled in Yates' EAGLE Academy (Educational Access for Graduation and Lifelong Excellence), and now has only three classes to complete this semester to graduate in December. The Academy offers flexible class hours on weekdays and the weekend, which allows students to continue working if needed.

Francisco says he didn't know about this option to go to school at nights and on weekends until the visit. And now he wants to be a good example for his 12-year-old brother to encourage him to stay in school and get his diploma. Francisco has plans after graduation — he says he will either attend a technical school or enlist in the Army or Marines.

The Houston Housing Authority congratulates Francisco on his plan to graduate this year. For more information on the HISD EAGLE Academy, call 713.748.5400 or HHA Client Services at 713.260.0717.

Houston Food Bank Partners Provide Food to Seniors

Senior residents at Historic Oaks at Allen Parkway Village (below) and Bellerive are receiving boxes of food, including canned vegetables and fruits, cheese and more from the Houston Food Bank. The ongoing program began this year and will deliver food to the seniors at these communities once a month.



Girls Empowered at Girl Scout Camp

Girls at Wilmington Place (below), Clayton Homes, Kelly Village and Oxford Place learned how they can make a difference in their communities at a Girl Empowerment Camp led by the Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council. From the importance of doing good things for others to learning about nature, the girls participated in esteem-building and craft activities at the camp.





Residents Share Suggestions for Healthy Eating, Living

In the first-quarter issue of *The Home Edition*, we asked residents to share

their tips on keeping their families healthy. Below are several suggestions that were received – and we welcome more! Please keep the suggestions coming for the next newsletter by contacting Gilda Jackson (713.260.0732 or at gjackson@housingforhouston.com) in HHA’s Client Services Department.

Norma Basurto, Fulton Village: *“For families to eat healthy, it is important to get everyone involved. Everyone should participate in selecting foods, shopping and learning different and creative ways to prepare food. Get kids involved in helping to prepare meals like salads; let them help set the dinner table and prepare favorite meals to learn and educate them about healthy choices.”*

Carolyn Jones, Clayton Homes: *“It is important for parents to be role models for their children by making healthy choices and preparing and eating healthy, nutritional meals on a daily basis. Parents should encourage their children and family to eat less sugar and more fruit and drink plenty of water. Parents should also motivate and encourage their families to be active; start a family fitness group, parents and children exercising together – get up and get moving together.”*

Robert Broussard, Bellerive Senior Apartments: *“It is important to prepare food differently; limit the amount of fried food, sugar and salt intake. Be sure to exercise regularly and get adequate amount of rest. Stay active; don’t stay isolated. Get out and get involved.”*

Summer Lunch Program Serves Hundreds of Children

HHA partnered with the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department to provide free nutritious lunches and afternoon snacks for hundreds of children at 14 of its communities from June 1 through August 13. And what did the children think about it?

Eight-year-old Damion Jackson said, “I like the Community Center because it’s fun and the food is delicious.” Fifteen-year-old Kathy Williams also enjoyed the food. “I like the apple juice – it’s really good! And the strawberry cookies are delicious.” Five-year-old Dajanie Watson said he likes the food, too and “I can share.” Eleven-year-old Deleon Mercy, 10-year-old Kanatia Langston and nine-year-old Javion Fisher agreed that the food is delicious and “we love to come and play the fun games!”

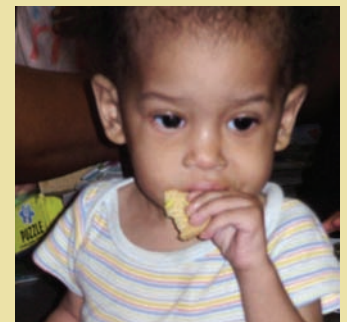
Resident Council Officers Elected

Public Housing residents elected new Resident Council officers in May and June to serve their communities. Thanks to all residents who accepted nominations for leadership. The League of Women Voters assisted with the elections at nine communities.

Resident Council presidents are listed below. The full list of officers for each community can be found in the Resident Council office.

- Bellerive – His Ling Tan Wu*
- Clayton Homes – Shonta East*
- Cuney Homes – Diane Sheffield*
- Forest Green – Bobbie Figures*
- Fulton Village – Cecilia Garza*
- HOAPV – Mae Farrow*
- Irvinton Village – Shelia Smith*
- Kelly Village – Mary Yarbrough*
- Kennedy Place – Stephanie Gaston*
- Lincoln Park – Charlie Stephens*
- Long Drive – Samaria Haywood*
- Lyerly – Russell Sutton*
- Oxford Place – Phillis Wilson*
- Telephone Road – Ulis Watson Jr.*
- Victory Place – Rochelle Hudson*
- Wilmington House – Anna Gary*

Ewing Apartments and Heatherbrook Apartments are still looking for someone to fill the president position. If you are interested and at least 18 years old and in good standing, please contact Cheryl Rivers, 713.260.0714, or at crivers@housingforhouston.com.



Children at Wilmington House enjoy the free lunches, snacks and playing with friends in the community center.

Senior Residents Celebrate 97+ Birthdays

Among many senior Houstonians who live at Houston Housing Authority communities are six that hold a special place of honor – those who are 97 and older! Nery Gonzalez, who celebrated her 102nd birthday with a line-dancing party at Bellerive Senior Apartments, is the most senior HHA resident. Others in the group are Severa Flores, 100, at Clayton Homes; Aurelia Alvarez, 98, at Lyerly; and three 97-year-olds – Du Huang at Bellerive, Maria Rodriguez at Bellerive and Herman Scott at Telephone Road.



Friends and family helped **Nery Gonzalez** officially celebrate her 102nd birthday shortly after her March birthday. Mrs. Gonzalez, who was a fourth-grade teacher in Cuba, emigrated with her husband to New York City in 1968 to join family, then moved to Houston a

couple of years later. Her husband passed away in 1981 and she moved to Bellerive in 1983. Her granddaughter said Mrs. Gonzalez enjoyed going on the field trips offered to residents when she was “younger” and able to get around easier. And according to her granddaughter, Mrs. Gonzalez credits her longevity to “many boyfriends”!



Born in a passenger-train car that was her family’s home near Mart, Texas, 100-year-old **Severa Flores** was a New Year’s Eve baby in 1909. Her father was working for the railroad company then, and non-moving train cars often served as the workers’ homes. She and her

husband later moved near Laredo, Texas, before she moved to Houston in 1958.

Mrs. Flores moved to Clayton Homes in 1982. She has always been very independent and enjoys keeping things spotlessly clean, says her family – cleaning even when things don’t need cleaning. Her son said his mother is a serious person who says her clean life – no smoking and no drinking – has allowed her to live to 100. “She was always willing to sacrifice everything for her children,” he said.

Aurelia Alvarez was born and spent most of her life working on the family farm near San Antonio and taking care of her parents after they became unable to care for themselves. After her mother died at 104 years of age, Miss Alvarez moved to Houston to join a larger church group and began taking care of children. She moved to

Lyerly in 1995 and enjoys her friends and activities there. She celebrated her 98th birthday in March.



Miss Alvarez loves to read and she still crochets. She said she often asks herself why she’s lived so long, but thinks maybe it’s because she doesn’t own a television or radio – so she does not have the everyday stress of listening to the world events – or perhaps because she has been eating avocados daily for many years!

Du Huang, who celebrated her 97th birthday in August, made the long trip from Shanghai, China, to Houston in 1981 after her husband died to live with her sister. A Bellerive resident since 2000, she still has family in China.



Mrs. Huang stays active at Bellerive, reading everything she can, and she never misses her weekly mahjong game with her friends, although she says she doesn’t win as much as she used to! One of the ways Mrs. Huang says she’s stayed healthy is that she did not smoke, and she has never weighed too much, since that is hard on her legs.

Bellerive is also home to another resident who emigrated from Cuba, **Maria Rodriguez**, who marked her 97th birthday in June. Her children had already come to live with relatives in Miami in 1968, when she left Cuba in the early ‘70s.



Mrs. Rodriguez, who was a widow then, first emigrated to Spain, which was the only way she could leave Cuba after the Castro regime assumed power, then she moved to Miami.

In her earlier years, she loved to sew. Now she enjoys her friends at Bellerive, and she often stays with her daughter who lives in Sugar Land. How has she stayed in good health? “I have taken care of myself,” she said, “and members of my family have lived a long time.”

Herman Scott, a resident of Telephone Road Senior Apartments for almost eight years, celebrated his 97th birthday in May. He credits his long life to his Christian foundation instilled by his mother. His advice for young people? “Focus on what is available to you. Avoid looking over the fence at the other fellow and take care of your own business.”



Three HHA Vice Presidents Named



Mark Thiele Sherri Sengsouvanha Bobken Simonians

Three vice president positions have been filled at the Housing Authority recently: Mark Thiele, Housing Choice Voucher Program; Sherri Sengsouvanha, Housing Operations; and Bobken Simonians, Real Estate Investments & Development.

Mark was the program director for the Harris County Disaster Housing Assistance Program for Hurricane Ike (DHAP-Ike) after serving as housing director and program director for Harris County DHAP-Katrina and Rita. He has participated in a wide variety of consulting engagements including the Road Home program, the housing recovery program in South Louisiana and Texas following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Sherri, who previously worked as Director, Real Estate Investments & Development (REID), rejoined HHA in August. She originally joined HHA in 2009 from the Rockford (Illinois) Housing Authority where she was Deputy Executive Director for Development.

Bobken has a long history of working in financial, real estate and public housing organizations, including serving as HHA REID Vice President from 2006 to 2008. He is a former Director of Housing for the City of Los Angeles. He most recently worked as a consultant with the City of Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency.

Annual Plan Goes to HUD in October

The Houston Housing Authority will present its Comprehensive Five-Year Agency Plan and 2011 Annual Plan to the Board of Commissioners at its meeting on September 21. The Plan was available for inspection and public comment at four public meetings and on the HHA website for 45 days. After it is approved by the Board, it will be sent to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development by October 19.

Key changes in the 2011 Plan include:

- HHA intends to have all waiting lists be site-based.

Fraud Investigations Help Ensure Safety of Communities

As part of the HHA commitment to provide safe, secure communities, the agency's Fraud Investigation Division, with the participation of Precinct 6 Constable's office, regularly responds to reports from residents, property management and neighbors of possible security and fraud issues. "Residents and managers know best what is going on at their properties, and we depend on them to let us know when they see something that should be investigated," said Cordell Lindsey, Fraud Investigator. "Keeping our residents safe and protecting HHA property is our priority, so we have a zero tolerance operation in place. And we get many thanks from our residents."

Not only does the division respond to fraud and security issues, it also performs criminal background checks on individuals before they move into Public Housing and Section 8 properties and annually thereafter as part of the recertification eligibility process.

During the second quarter 2010, the Fraud Investigation Division completed these activities:

- Cases investigated: 105
- Clients terminated due to fraud: 27
- Criminal background checks: 6,051
- Program terminations and rejections: 239

To report suspected program abuse you may:

- Call the Fraud Hotline at 713.260.0724
- Fax the information to 713.260.0828, attention Fraud/Compliance
- Mail written allegations to the address listed on page 8, Attn: Fraud/Compliance
- Select "Fraud Program Abuse" on the Contact Us page at www.housingforhouston.com

- HHA will reoccupy Kennedy Place in 2011.
- HHA intends to implement its Truancy Program to ensure youth living in its properties are attending school. It will be added to the tenant obligations in the lease.
- HHA will require tenants to submit work orders in writing.
- HHA will undertake improvements at Lyerly Apartments, Cuney Homes, Kelly Village and Wilmington House.

No significant changes are included for the Housing Choice Voucher Program Administration Plan.



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HOUSING AUTHORITY

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Lance Gilliam, *Commissioner*
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Interim President & CEO

Important Telephone Numbers

HHA Administration:
713.260.0500
Public Housing Operations:
713.260.0701
**Section 8 Housing Choice
Voucher Program Call Center:**
713.260.0600
Customer Service Hotline:
713.260.0377
Fraud Hotline: 713.260.0724
Neighborhood Resource Center:
713.655.1940
City of Houston Service Helpline:
311
United Way Helpline: 211

SEPTEMBER
National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15)
Better Breakfast Month

9/23 First day of autumn
9/26 National Good Neighbor Day

OCTOBER
National Disability Employment Awareness Month
Diversity Awareness Month
National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Domestic Violence Awareness Month
National AIDS Awareness Month

10/5 National Night Out
10/11 Columbus Day – HHA offices closed
10/15 Community Recognition Luncheon
10/31 Halloween

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Comments, articles and photographs are welcomed for *The Home Edition* newsletter. All submissions must have a name and a phone number to be considered. Due to space limitations, the editor reserves the right to reject or edit copy as necessary.

Email submissions to smcmichael@housingforhouston.com

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