



# THE RESIDENT

## E-NEWSLETTER

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

- » **National Resident Services and Resident Leaders' Conference**  
September 22-25, 2010 | Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI  
[http://narsaah.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=21&Itemid=4](http://narsaah.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=21&Itemid=4)
- » **Protect Your Identity Week**  
October 17-23, 2010 (nationwide)  
Contact your local National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) or Better Business Bureau (BBB) for local events.  
<http://www.protectyouridnow.org/>
- » **Watch for the Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) Service Coordinators Notice of Funding Availability.**  
The grants are awarded to PHAs, resident organizations or non-profit organizations acting on behalf of residents to encourage and promote self-sufficiency among residents.  
[http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/program\\_offices/administration/grants/fundsavail](http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/program_offices/administration/grants/fundsavail)

## Saving Public Housing

*By Sandra B. Henriquez, Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

Change is hard. But when it comes to public housing, change is desperately needed.

For 13 years, I ran the Boston Housing Authority. Every day, I saw for myself how irreplaceable public housing resources are. But I also saw something else: the current system fails too many people. I saw how public housing can isolate residents and segregate the neighborhoods they live in from the jobs, schools and opportunities they need to succeed.

Today, 6 million Americans pay more than half their incomes for housing. Family homelessness is on the rise. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of affordable homes are being lost every year. In the last 15 years alone, the country has lost 150,000 units from its stock of public and assisted affordable housing to sale or demolition.

Unfortunately, this "hidden housing crisis" is about to get worse. Recovering from our recent economic crisis is pushing the Federal government to tighten its belt, yet at the same time America's Public Housing program is facing a \$30 billion backlog of unmet capital needs that demands immediate attention.

Put simply, our country needs the affordable homes public housing provides more than ever – but if we don't act now, we will lose them forever.

That's why the Obama Administration has proposed a strategy to preserve and enhance America's public housing system and transform the way the Federal government provides rental assistance to more than 4.5 million of our most vulnerable families.

Virtually everyone agrees that the current system is failing, yet for some, change is not only hard – it's unsettling. So, allow me to highlight some of the key components of the Administration's proposal, PETRA:

*cont'd*

## Welcome

Dear Resident,



Welcome to the first edition of Resident E-Newsletter, a monthly newsletter created by HUD to share helpful information and resources with you, our residents. One of our goals in the Office of Public and Indian Housing is to increase access to, and knowledge of, affordable housing.

This first edition features an inspiring article about a Rochester (NY) Housing Authority resident who used available resources to improve her family's self-sufficiency. It also introduces one of the hot topics at HUD, the Preservation, Enhancement, and Transformation of Rental Assistance Act of 2010 (PETRA), and how this will improve the lives of HUD housing residents. We have also included a column about events and conferences you may like to attend, and, since hot weather continues in many parts of the country in September, a few helpful tips on beating the heat and saving energy.

In upcoming editions, you will find articles and information about energy conservation, resident organizing, rent calculations, tenant rights and responsibilities, Section 3 employment opportunities, and more.

We welcome you as our customer and partner in this undertaking and look forward to your questions, requests for information, and feedback. Feel free to suggest topics you want to have covered. You may reach us at 1-800-955-2232 or send an email to [pihirc@firstpic.org](mailto:pihirc@firstpic.org). Please put the name of this newsletter, Resident E-Newsletter, in the subject line so we can better serve you.

Sandra B. Henriquez  
Assistant Secretary for  
Public and Indian Housing

1. **Preserving publicly-owned housing for generations to come.** For years, we've seen public housing agencies lose affordable units for essentially the same reason: because they can't access the capital and other resources that everyone else who builds and maintains affordable housing can. PETRA would allow public housing authorities to repair and rehabilitate older public housing units with the same flexible funding tools we already use to develop new affordable housing; doing so would mean local agencies and owners will be able to leverage some \$25 billion in new resources for our most vulnerable populations. Indeed, by ensuring city and state governments, the private sector, local not-for-profits, and all the other partners that have emerged in housing finance in recent decades work together as a broad coalition with a real stake in public housing's success, PETRA will preserve publicly-owned housing for generations to come.
2. **Preventing foreclosures from harming residents of public housing.** As we emerge from our ongoing housing crisis, some fear that allowing public housing properties to tap their accumulated equity value to meet their capital needs might put these affordable resources in jeopardy. To be clear: foreclosures should happen very rarely – far less frequently than publicly-owned units are lost today. Nevertheless, PETRA contains an unprecedented combination of policies to minimize the risk of foreclosures – putting in place strengthened tenant protections and requiring that the property continue to operate like public housing, with all leases, contracts, and use agreements remaining in effect and binding.
3. **Strengthening the commitment to "One-for-One" replacement.** President Obama and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan are all too aware that previous changes to public housing policy have often resulted in loss of affordable units. They are determined not to allow that to happen again – in this Administration or any other. That's why PETRA will make law the one-for-one replacement of properties that choose to be a part of this new system. Specifically, it requires PHAs that propose to redevelop properties (as opposed to simply renovating and repairing existing units) to locate any "off-site" units in diverse neighborhoods of opportunity. The only exception the law would allow is in housing markets that consistently have plenty of units available at rents that are affordable to even the least well-off families. Only once it is clear that residents can use vouchers to find good quality affordable housing would a local agency or owner be permitted to replace units with tenant-based vouchers. Because it is far more expensive to maintain older public properties in the few cities and towns with these conditions, this exception will allow our programs to help more families live in better-condition housing.
4. **Maintaining the same affordability and targeting requirements.** Of all the things about our public housing system that need to change, the one thing that shouldn't change is the people it helps and the amount they are required to pay. That's why PETRA will ensure assistance will continue to be targeted to the neediest families by maintaining all the targeting and affordability requirements of the U.S. Housing Act. Most importantly, residents will continue to pay no more than 30% of their income towards rent.

I have been in the affordable housing business since 1972, in both the public and private sectors. I've seen how we can harness the resources of the private market to further the important mission of public housing. Were I still the director of the Boston Housing Authority, I would tell you that PETRA provides precisely the tools I'd need to preserve affordable homes for the families who depended on me – and to connect those homes to the opportunities and choices in life those families need.

I've had some people ask me, "Why now?" My answer has been, "if not now, when?" I do not want to wait until we have lost another 50,000-75,000 affordable homes. My response also has been, "if not us, who?" President Obama has personal experience working on the South Side of Chicago to increase affordable housing. No president in our history better understands that public housing is the platform for stability and opportunity in communities that need it the most. And Shaun Donovan – the architect of New York City's innovative plan to build and preserve 165,000 affordable homes – brings the most experience – and success – preserving affordable housing ever to the job of HUD Secretary. Together, they represent our best hope to lead communities across the country to preserve, enhance and transform America's stock of public and affordable housing.

We continue to work on PETRA with Congress, residents and the other stakeholders who know public housing best. As we have shown throughout the process of developing this legislation, this Administration not only welcomes public input and constructive feedback when it comes to facing big challenges – we absolutely need it to get the solutions right.

But with all the challenges facing us, it is clear that this President, this Housing Secretary and this proposal represent our best chance to save public housing. Let's seize it.

*This article was originally posted on the Huffington Post on June 8, 2010. To find out more about the Obama Administration's 21st century strategy to provide affordable housing to America's most vulnerable families, go to: [www.HUD.gov/TRA](http://www.HUD.gov/TRA)*



The Shropshire in Lexington, KY, has a total of 32 public housing and Low Income Tax Credit rental apartments. (Photo: HUD)

## Rochester Housing Authority Resident Success Story



Meet Egeria Terry and her family. In 2003, this family moved into a public housing unit in Rochester, NY. In 2006, Egeria entered the Rochester Housing Authority's Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program. She wanted a better life for her children and herself, and she wanted to show her mother that she could obtain a 4-year college degree in the field of her choice. She quickly found out how difficult it could be. Every day she faced mounting bills, not enough resources to pay for the childcare she needed, or enough money to put gas in her car to get her to and from classes.

Egeria went to the Resident Services Department of the Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) for help. Together with her case manager Lynette McGee, Egeria was able to map out a plan for success. The FSS Contract of Participation clearly sets out the steps a client needs to take to reach their goals. The case manager keeps in regular contact with the client to ensure they are following the steps and making progress, and helps to problem solve when a bump in the road might slow things down.

Egeria immediately studied for, and obtained, her Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) certification so she could get to work and bring some money into her household to pay her bills. Lynette referred Egeria to a money management program to ensure that she had the know-how to manage her new income. While her husband studied for his Commercial Driver's License, Egeria worked and attended classes part time. Throughout Egeria's FSS contract, RHA was able to assist with transportation, childcare, tuition, and even uniform replacement – thanks to funds from their Resident Opportunity and Self Sufficiency (ROSS) grants.

In January 2009, Egeria earned her Nursing degree from Roberts Wesleyan College, obtained her certification as a Registered Nurse and was offered a nursing job at Rochester Psychiatric Center. As a result of the partnership between Egeria, the Resident Services Department, Rochester Housing Authority, and her case manager, she was able to live up to one of her favorite sayings: "Success doesn't come to you ... you go to it."

# TIPS

## Keeping Cool On Hot Days

The calendar says September, but many parts of the country are still hot. Here are some suggestions for keeping cool and saving energy during hot days.

If you have a window air conditioner, make sure to use a fan with it to spread the cool air throughout your apartment. If you have an air conditioner unit that has a filter, make sure to change the filter so the unit will work better at cooling off your apartment.

There are a number of ways to keep cool without air conditioning. The goal is to minimize the sources of heat in your apartment and remove built-up heat from inside. Here are a few ways:

- A portable fan can keep the air circulating and produce a small cooling effect.
- Turn off sources of heat such as ovens, kitchen appliances, lamps, ceiling lights, and computers. Use these in the early morning or evening, when it is cooler.
- In the evening, open windows to allow cross circulation of cooler evening air through the rooms.
- In the morning, when the sun hits the building, close windows, blinds, shades, and curtains closed throughout the day until it is cooler outside.

Here are some additional ways to personally keep cool and comfortable:

- Drink lots of cold drinks, especially water, and avoid sugary drinks.
- Try to eat smaller meals.
- Take a cold shower or bath.
- If you can, go swimming.
- Keep inside or in the shade when the sun is at its hottest between 11 am and 3 pm.

## Contact us:

### Public and Indian Housing Information Resource Center (PIH IRC)

2614 Chapel Lake Drive  
Gambrills, MD 21054

**Toll free number:** 1-800-955-2232

**Fax number:** 1-443-302-2084

**E-mail:** [pihirc@firstpic.org](mailto:pihirc@firstpic.org)

(Put "Resident E-Newsletter" in subject line)

## HELP CORNER

**Free access to computers!** Many of our newsletters link to valuable information on the Internet. If you do not have access to a computer or the Internet, your PHA or local public library may have a computer lab. Some PHAs have Neighborhood Networks computer labs for residents. To find the one nearest to you, ask your PHA. The Web site for the Neighborhood Networks is:  
<http://www.neighborhoodnetworks.org>