



THE RESIDENT NEWSLETTER

Spring 2014 | www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/

Brewer Housing Authority Supports Resident Self-Sufficiency with New Jobs Center

By Karen Smith, Brewer Housing Authority

Since 1992, the Brewer Housing Authority (BHA) in Brewer, Maine has offered public housing residents opportunities to become financially independent. The housing authority continued their commitment to self-sufficiency in December 2013, with a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Brewer Community Center/Jean Lyford Child Care Center. Through the center, residents can now participate in education and job training activities in their own backyard.

The Brewer Housing Authority received a \$2.4 million grant from HUD to construct an education and job training community facility. The PHA was one of five successful applicants from a pool of 58.

Public housing residents were able to provide input for the design of the center to ensure it would meet their needs. During the process, transportation was identified as the primary barrier to attaining employment and/or participating in self-sufficiency activities; they also cited affordable child care as an issue. To address these concerns, project planners built the community center on BHA's land and partnered with Penquis Child Development to provide affordable child care, on-site.

"I have enjoyed working with the Resident Advisory Board, the contractor, and our partner agencies to see this project become a reality," said Gordon L. Stitham, Executive Director for BHA. "We anticipate the Brewer Community Center will become an integral part of the community, and look forward to seeing residents utilize the classrooms to improve their education and job skills."

Residents will have access to computer technology and classes in the computer lab; which is equipped with 12 computer stations for adults. Additionally, BHA has partnered with Bangor Adult & Community Education and Eastern Maine Community College (EMCC) to provide residents with the resources and services necessary to obtain the level of education they need to move forward with their goals. Bangor



Students in one of the new classrooms at the Brewer Community Center

Adult Education will offer classes in Basic Adult Education, college transition, and the college preparation CAFE (College Access for Everyone) program, as well as college level courses.



Similarly, Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC) will provide a 60 hour 'WorkReady' credential program that will give residents the soft skills and computer skills necessary to compete in today's local labor market. 'WorkReady' is a practical work training program that is endorsed by local Maine businesses and employers; they have a job placement rate of 75% to 85%.

"I am so glad this facility is here," said a student in the center's CAFE program. "I dropped out of high school twice because I did not feel like I fit in. I feel so comfortable taking classes here. The instructors are very caring and take the time to work with students when they need help."

The Jean Lyford Child Care Center was included as a part of the project after residents expressed a need for local child care.

The Brewer Community Center will provide residents, as well as, individuals from the surrounding community, with the education and job training

activities they need to compete for a 'livable wage' job in the local labor market. By offering education and job training activities on site, BHA has helped to improve the quality of life for residents in public housing.

Ask The Resident

Q: I live in HUD elderly/disabled housing and am really worried about living with second hand smoke. In my development, residents are allowed to smoke inside their individual units—not just on the building's property. As you can imagine, this often results in cigarette smoke drifting into nonsmoking units. I've tried to lobby for our development to go smoke free, but I've only succeeded in becoming unpopular with my neighbors (smokers outnumber nonsmokers in our building). Do you have any ideas on how I can more effectively try and bring more smoke-free options to my building?

A: We think it is great that you want to improve the health of your development by having cleaner air, fewer possible fires, and less asthma in the community; but personal behavior is really hard to change. The important thing is that you don't have to lead the charge, alone. The first thing I'd suggest is reaching out to your PHA staff to see what ideas they may have. Additionally, if your PHA has a resident council; present your concerns to them and let the council be the face of these ideas. Let them know you're open to different models of smoke-free housing which include creating smoke-free buildings or areas within a building, if the whole development doesn't seem possible. Also, check out HUD's [Smoke-Free housing Toolkit](#). It has ideas and materials for organizing to support smoke-free housing.

Finally, talk with your property manager—especially if smoke is coming into your unit. You could even direct them to [this HUD webpage](#) with resources on going smoke-free for property managers. The most important thing to know is that you don't have to do this alone.

Contact us:

E-mail: TheResident@HUD.gov

Send us your questions, comments and story ideas!

For easy to print editions or past issues of
The Resident visit the archive: <http://bit.ly/fpcBhE>



Follow us on:

<http://facebook.com/HUD>

<http://twitter.com/HUDnews>

www.hud.gov

Visit the archive: <http://bit.ly/fpcBhE>

