

Moving to Work





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Lifting Chester Up Together

If you ask anyone who has ever lived in public housing what the secret is to moving out and up, they will tell you it takes two factors: a drive to be your best version of yourself, and the opportunity to be the best version of yourself. In Chester, we have plenty of residents who care and want to be the best versions of themselves – the challenge has been finding the opportunities.

That is something that the staff at the Chester Housing Authority realized, and it's something they have worked tirelessly for years to address. Their hard work has come to fruition in recent years, and their upward trends have continued through 2018.

Most housing authorities would be satisfied with reduced incidents of crime, a consistently high performing Housing Choice Voucher Program, and balanced books. And while CHA celebrates these achievements, they don't stop there. This year, they worked exceptionally hard to make sure they are not only providing for their residents, but also uplifting them.

The launch of the Resident Training Academy (RTA) in February is an example of this. The fact that housing authority residents have the opportunity to take free onsite and online courses to qualify for certifications in the health care and technology fields is outstanding. By providing education to almost 100 residents in the first year alone, CHA is pushing Chester citizens to achieve the personal and professional advancement they seek.

CHA recognizes that when Chester residents are provided with the opportunity to make something of themselves, they do. And once they've made it, they remember to pay it forward and help their fellow community members. The best example of this is Pam and Darren Dickerson. They started their catering business in Darren's hometown of Chester, and when it was time to expand, he went right back to his roots at CHA. Their Red Brick Café will not only nourish the bodies of Chester residents but also the souls of those who are striving for more, as they plan to hire residents and train them in culinary arts.

Darren went from living in the William Penn development to operating his own catering business out of that very same property- and then he reached back and extended a hand to his fellow Chester comrades. And that's when real change happens.

During this summer's first State of the City Address in conjunction with the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, I gave a presentation titled "It All Starts Here." Chester's renaissance starts within ourselves, within our people, and within our institutions – of which the CHA is most important.

I look forward to continuing to work with Steve Fischer, his staff and the Board of Commissioners to keep providing opportunities to lift our residents and city up.



Thaddeus Kirkland
Mayor

Message from the Executive Director

We call this year's report **Moving to Work** because we took major steps in 2018 pushing residents do just that. With the exception of our seniors, residents tend to live at Chester Housing Authority developments for three to four years before moving up and out. Our new Resident Training Academy is designed to help those striving for more. The Academy quickly showed success in employment development and was recognized for innovation at a housing conference in State College.

There were so many highlights in 2018 but for me the high point came during ceremonies outside our headquarters, in appreciation of our recent period of accomplishment.

"The Judge," as she was reverently known, was duly recognized for her 20-year oversight of the CHA. On April 18, 2018, our headquarters was named the Norma L. Shapiro Building in a touching ceremony. Marking history that day, we also paid homage to four courageous women who sparked the lawsuit leading to the downfall of the former Housing Authority, paving the way to a magnificent transformation. Yvonne Carrington, Barbara Muhammad, Emma Thompson and the late Ernestine Tilghman were memorialized in bronze, emotions running high.

Just after the close of our fiscal year, a lot of hard work and creativity would result in the establishment of the Red Brick Café located on the periphery of the William Penn Homes around the same time came the attainment of accreditation for the CHA. After Seattle, Washington and Akron, Ohio, we are only the third Housing Authority in the country to be so designated. Our staff just earned a major endorsement so congratulations to them!

Apart from the ingenuity needed to create so much offshoot programming, you also need to keep your basic house in order. That we did as our inventory of about 2,500 units of affordable, quality housing was maintained in an exemplary manner; those units consisting of Public Housing, Housing Choice and First-time Homeownership.

The Judge and the receivership taught us many things. Always push forward, mindful of those we serve. That will benefit them, us and the greater Chester community. In that regard, I would be remiss if I did not point to the encouragement and support we have received from a dedicated governing board led by Sheila Church and Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland.

Steven A. Fischer
Executive Director



Resident Training Academy Moving Residents to Work



CHA launched its new Resident Training Academy (RTA), offering free onsite and online courses for residents. RTA provides low-income residents with preparation to pursue occupations in the health care and technology fields, both of which pay well and are expected to experience labor shortages and be in high demand in the coming years.

The program became popular with 38 CHA residents getting jobs.

RTA health care training leads to certificates in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Blood Borne Pathogens and Ergonomics.

Other courses focus on increasing residents' knowledge of software used in business and

introduces them to online technology such as job boards, digital marketing, blogs, video blogs (vlogs) and email marketing.

The courses provide residents with immediate rewards and boost their resumes. Since the courses are online, residents have the convenience to maintain family responsibilities.

Creative Education Opportunities (CEO) Academy of Chester County created the program in partnership with CHA. CEO also runs job fairs at CHA to recruit residents to area companies.

Out of the Academy, run by Marrea Walker-Smith, grew summer camps and the Red Brick Café initiative.

New CHA Restaurant Serves as Training Site

Chester's newest restaurant is located in an unlikely place - Chester Housing Authority's William Penn Homes. The property's community center has been converted into the Red Brick Café, which held its grand opening in October.

Pam and Darren Dickerson, who have operated a catering company in Chester since 1996, are rolling their catering business into the Red Brick Café.

Pam brings that southern cooking style with her. Darren, a 16-year military veteran and former William Penn resident, does the rest - building the structures, fixing appliances and helping in any way he can.

More than 100 people enthusiastically opened the café after a summer of hard work and preparation. CHA Housing Director Norman Wise and Executive Assistant Quineice Harris worked hand-in-hand with the café operators to bring the business plan and opening night event to reality.

The Dickersons plan to hire employees from inside the community and train them. The training opportunity was a compelling reason for the housing authority to encourage this venture. Residents will be able to earn the industry standard ServeSafe certificates, gain training and jump start their careers in culinary arts.



Darren says he suggested the restaurant be named Red Brick Café because when he grew up at William Penn, folks in the community called the site the red brick (because all the buildings were red brick). "It just fits," he says.

Housing Programs

Housing Choice Voucher Program

The Chester Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) - which has been called a stabilizing force in the City of Chester - achieved high performer status for the 11th consecutive year. The program serves more than 1,500 very low and extremely low-income households in Chester and surrounding communities. The agency is meeting its mission of providing quality housing, making the most of the funds provided, and helping families find homes in better neighborhoods.

Utilization: Due to reduced funding, CHA was unable to issue new vouchers from the waiting list in FY 2018. CHA anticipates that the waiting list will reopen in January 2019 and new households will be able to apply to the program.

Owner Participation: Leasing goals could not be met without the investors CHA works with who provide decent, safe, and sanitary units. Although leasing was limited due to the funding shortfall, new owner participation continued in FY 2018, with 12 new owners purchasing property in Chester this year. We also appreciate the continued support of the more than 800 investors who have participated over the past decade. Several were acknowledged at an investor's event in May for their contributions to the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Property Management Endorsement

Residents of Wellington Ridge and Chatham Senior Village saw a change at their properties in 2018 as CHA assumed management from Pennrose Properties.

Pennrose had managed the sites since they opened more than 15 years ago, but this year ceded that responsibility. CHA took over and immediately began addressing short-term and long-term improvements to improve satisfaction and safety.



Attaining Self-Sufficiency: Eighteen households left the program this year due to increased income. That's a substantial increase from 2017 where only eight left for the same reason. On the other hand, 241 households reported zero income at some time during FY 2018.

Household Demographics: The average household income among wage earners rose about four percent from \$16,969 to \$17,681. The average remains substantially less than what a family needs to meet the self-sufficiency annual income of \$48,400 for our area. About 33 percent of the households served are on fixed incomes due to age or disability.

With the consistent and dedicated leadership of Mary Militello for the last 15 years, the CHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program has earned the trust and esteem of clients and investors alike. That in large part is due to the chemistry Mary has nurtured among her staff, many new this past year.



Wellington Ridge and Chatham Senior Village sites were re-built during an era when the federal government was funding the replacement of aging and obsolete public housing "projects." CHA was under court receivership at the time, and the current CHA administration was not yet completely in place, so a private company was chosen as the property manager.

CHA taking over management of the sites is another indication of how far the agency has come in these 15 years.

Mold is the New Lead

National attention has been brought to the topic of mold in housing. The CHA has taken this seriously and has put resources behind keeping residents healthy. Over the past three years, CHA spent the following on mold eradication. Notice the uptick:

2016	2017	2018
\$24,000	\$89,000	\$90,000

CHA Farm Continues Growth



The unique Ruth Bennett Community Farm grew some more in 2018.

The farm partnered with the Food Trust to operate a bi-weekly stand from June through November. During this time, more than 3,500 pounds of food was grown and sold. Food Trust staff also provided cooking demonstrations, meal planning tips, nutritional information and “Food Bucks” to market shoppers.

These Bucks could be redeemed immediately for items sold at the market. Participation at the market increased by more than 50 percent from last year, and an average of 125 residents from both the Bennett Homes and the greater Chester community shop at the market, including children of all ages.

Beginning Farmer team/training: Five adults worked at the farm part-time this season, lending their expertise in running community farm stands, food security projects and youth programming. In exchange, they continued to learn about sustainable urban agriculture from the systems in place at the Bennett Farm. They also received specific training in cut flower production this season.

This season, we’ve been lucky to have help from Joe Joe, a 14-year old Bennett resident. In addition to getting excited about organic agriculture, learning about environmental sustainability, and helping with general farm tasks, he’s done an exceptional job helping at the farm stand, interacting with community members and yes, enjoying a paycheck.

Volunteers: Many volunteers helped power the farm this season. The farm partnered with Youthworks, and over 300 volunteers (mostly high schoolers) lent a hand with various farm projects. Two of the largest projects they helped accomplish:

Flowers

Over 300 bouquets and arrangements from the farm have been sold at the farm stand through Philly Foodworks, an online farmer’s market based in Philadelphia, and through special events. Flower production, harvesting, and post-harvest handling are part of the on-farm training that the Philly Beginning Farmers and youth receive.



Healthier You

The Chester Housing Authority put a lot into the prominent Philadelphia conference held this year at the University of the Sciences. CHA Executive Director Steven Fischer was co-chair with Kristin Ball-Motley of Healthcare Solutions at the opening ceremonies. Here he is addressing 300-strong.



CHA Headquarters Building Rededicated in Honor of Judge Norma Shapiro

One of the great highlights of 2018 came in April when CHA's headquarters building was re-named for the late Norma L. Shapiro. Judge Shapiro oversaw the agency during its 20-year receivership, guiding it from the ruins of indifference and corruption to an outstanding organization answerable to the citizens it serves.

The ceremony also paid tribute to the four courageous women who, frustrated with the horrendous mismanagement of the city's public housing, led a class action lawsuit against the CHA, the City of Chester and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. The residents - Yvonne Carrington, Barbara Muhammad, Ella Thompson and Ernestine Tilghman - persevered in federal court until they achieved wide-ranging change.

Judge Shapiro's three sons attended and unveiled the building's new plaque. The three surviving



plaintiffs also attended and pulled the curtain off a second bronze plaque, this one telling their story of triumph. It is positioned at the building's front entrance, making it the first thing visitors see.

CHA Surveillance Cameras Proving Extremely Effective

How effective are surveillance cameras in reducing crime? To judge by results at Chester Housing Authority's William Penn Homes - extremely effective.

The cameras were installed by January. Every month since has seen far fewer reported crime incidents compared to the same month last year.

The huge drop-off first appeared in April when there were only five incidents compared to 41 the previous April. Overall, from January through August there were 91 calls to police compared to 278 during the same period last year. That's a reduction of two thirds!



Overall, crime was down across CHA sites. One very noteworthy reduction came in illegal drug activity. There were no arrests for drugs this year at CHA compared to 14 the previous year.

Statewide Support for CHA Legal Victory

The Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies (PAHRA) recognized CHA and its legal department in 2018 for the previous year's victory protecting tenants' privacy rights by presenting CHA with a check for \$20,000 to defray a portion of the approximately \$220,000 in legal costs.

In the case itself, Chester Township Solicitor Stephen Polaha filed a Right to Know request so that he could publish the home addresses of all Housing Choice Voucher Program clients living in rental properties in Chester Township (which is different than Chester City). Commonwealth Court sided with CHA and determined clients should not have a "scarlet letter" placed upon them.

Chester Housing Authority By the Numbers

Financials

ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	1,777,854
Cash, restricted	2,902,398
Accounts Receivable, net	182,163
Prepaid expenses	77,744
Assets held for sale	7,962
Capital Assets, net	32,973,534
Notes Receivable	32,098,777
Total Assets	\$70,020,432

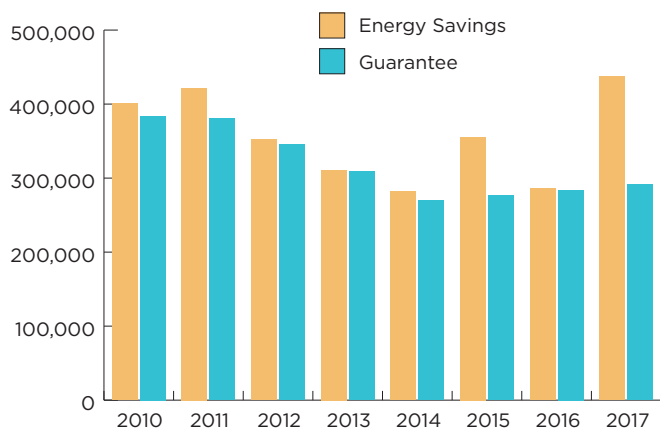
LIABILITIES	
Accounts Payable	205,748
Accrued Compensated Absences	409,981
Other Liabilities and Accruals	344,344
Notes Payable, Capitol Projects	2,453,363
Total Liabilities	\$3,413,436

NET ASSETS	
Invested in Capital Assets	31,755,630
Restricted Net Assets	34,797,896
Unrestricted Net Assets	53,470
Total Net Assets	\$66,606,996
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$70,020,432

REVENUE	
Federal Assistance	22,537,731
Rental Income	1,399,240
Interest Revenue	8,641
Other Revenue	561,084
Gain on Disposal of Asset	275,150
Total Revenue	\$24,781,846

EXPENSES	
Administrative Costs	2,147,041
Resident Services	124,638
Utilities	1,266,364
Maintenance	1,799,783
Protective Services	790,609
Insurance Premiums	401,977
General Costs	1,387,790
Housing Assistance Payments	16,264,279
Depreciation and Amortization	3,873,389
Interest Expense	109,084
Total Expenses	\$28,164,954
Net Income (Loss)	\$(3,383,108)

Energy Program Yields Major Savings



An energy saving program begun in 2010 paid the largest dividends yet in 2017, the most recent year calculated. Under HUD's energy performance contracting program, the housing authority was able to finance major upgrades to plumbing and heating systems. In 2017, CHA enjoyed an almost \$145,000 net savings. That's the most energy money saved in the eight-year history of the program!

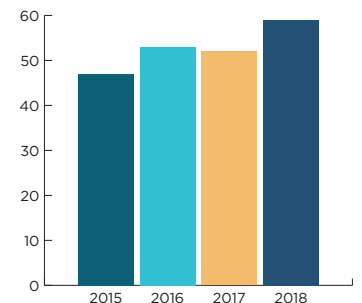
Accreditation

CHA demonstrated its leadership on the national stage by winning accreditation from the Affordable Housing Accreditation Board. Only two other housing authorities had previously earned this accreditation.

AHAB's 50-page final report features projects such as the expanded community garden, resident job training academy, conversion of community center to a restaurant, legal victory to protect client identities, and partnership with local art gallery. It also lauded its diligent governance.

Stable Workforce

CHA spent many years cutting costs and bringing efficiency to the housing authority's operations. The agency was able to add employees back to its ranks in 2016 and has continued to keep its employee numbers stable, with a slight increase in 2018.

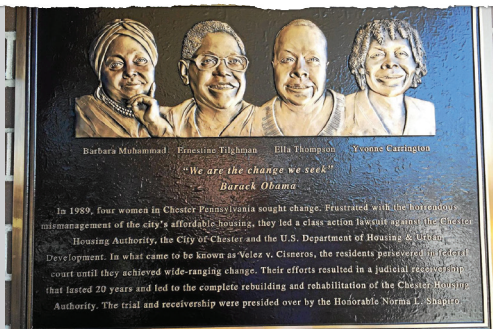


Chester Housing Authority In The News



Chester housing headquarters named after federal judge

April 3, 2018



Chester Housing Authority gives William Penn Homes \$200K security camera upgrade

March 13, 2018



For 18 years she lived in Chester's housing projects. Now she's returned to inspire

February 25, 2018



Gallery provides art works for Chester public housing

April 9, 2018



Chester Housing Authority takes control of two sites from private firm

March 26, 2018



Lights, cameras, no action! New cameras at public housing hope to deter crime

April 15, 2018





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