



# Building BLOCK

**From the Executive  
Director Steven Fischer:**

Summer, 2020

## Chester Housing Authority's Response to COVID-19

In the wake of the disruption caused by the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), the CHA moved swiftly to make necessary changes and implement new precautions to its daily procedures to make sure residents, staff and others remained safe, informed, and connected. The Housing Authority has stayed committed to maintaining the quality of the housing provided to residents.

A list of directives taken are as follows:

- Started free biweekly food distribution at Ruth Bennett Community Farm to ensure residents have access to fresh produce
- Established "Building Community" video series to facilitate discussions remotely due to social distancing requirements
- Adjusted rent payments based on resident's employment status
- Started sharing information on resources via our CHA social media pages
- Transitioned Red Brick Café to handle take-out orders only
- Continued to schedule resident move-ins with social distancing in mind
- Voucher programs continuing inspections
- Maintenance staff continuing work orders
- Police services continue to run
- Trash collection reduced from three days to two

In addition to these actions, we have also worked hard to transition those who can work from home.



Ulysses Slaughter, project manager, and Steve Fischer, executive director, taking part in a video call where they discuss the actions the Housing Authority has taken amidst the pandemic. You can find this video on our new Chester Housing Authority YouTube channel!

COVID-19 has taken over our lives so the past seven months have pretty much been all about that. To our knowledge, our communities have fared well but not without exception. Our thoughts are with those who have contracted the virus as we hope for their full recovery.

The Bennett Farm being a reliable community resource, we turned it into a free food distribution site. Boxes of fresh, organic produce have been available and picked up there by mask wearing, distanced consumers every two weeks since April.

COVID-19 notwithstanding, we did conduct other business. In this issue you can read about scholarships awarded to CHA residents, a Congressional visit, a radiation detection project and our Building Community video series.

Nader Almadbooh and Kaidan Fullerton, the editors of this newsletter, developed an introduction to computer coding. While on the subjects of education and COVID-19, please see that we have included vital information from the Chester-Upland School District (CUSD) about the upcoming school year. Please join me in welcoming to Chester, Dr. Carol Birks, the newly appointed Superintendent.

 [Facebook.com/chesterhousingauthority](https://www.facebook.com/chesterhousingauthority)

 [@chesterhousingauthority](https://www.instagram.com/chesterhousingauthority)



The Bennett Farm provides 100-120 produce boxes to members of the community!

We will be practicing strict social distancing rules for pick-up. Everyone will need to stand 6 feet apart at marks we put on the sidewalk. Violators of these rules will be asked to leave.

### Ruth Bennett Farm’s Produce Boxes

Our staff at the Ruth Bennett Community Farm are providing free produce boxes to community members!

**Every other Thursday through October, 12pm-2pm:**

August 13th, August 27th

September 10th, September 24th

October 8th, October 22nd

Plus a Thanksgiving Distribution on Tuesday, November 24th

**These boxes will include a variety of seasonal and local produce, such as:**

Salad greens/spinach, kale + collards, root vegetables like carrots, beets and turnips, onions + potatoes (white and sweet), fruit (apples, blueberries, peaches), and eggs



*“It expands and provides nutritional advice, it employs kids, it provides a community focus”*

### Congresswoman Scanlon Visits the Farm

On July 16th, we got to welcome Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon to Bennett Farm. Her first visit, which took place last September, was on invitation from the Housing Authority. This time she returned at her request in order to survey the food distribution efforts during a tour of the area. During the visit, Scanlon gave a small speech where she spoke highly of the farm’s performance amidst the pandemic. Executive

Director Steve Fischer also gave a statement during the event where he said that the bolstered federal funding to the Housing Authority allowed it to work efficiently through the pandemic. Thanks to said funding, as well as a grant from the Foundation for Delaware County the farm was able to offer free produce to Chester residents.

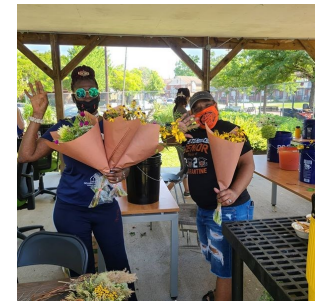


A bouquet made from fresh flowers grown at Ruth Bennett Community Farm!

### Bennett Farm Flower Workshop

The Bennett Community Farm has been known for producing flowers for entrepreneurial training and for sale. On July 21st, Farm Manager Natania Schaumburg, hosted a workshop to teach others how to set up a cut-flower bouquets. During the workshop, she showcased the systems that have been working for the Bennett Farm over the past three years. By the end of the workshop, participants made small

bouquets to take home. They also took with them a great educational experience on topics such as variety selection and timing; field support techniques like staking and netting; harvest tips; post-harvest handling and crop rotation.



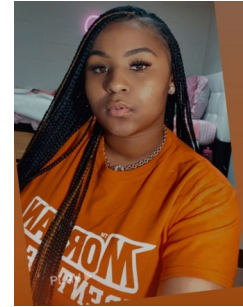
### Housing Authority Awards Making A Difference (M.A.D) Scholarship

Steve Fischer had the pleasure of presenting the recipients with their \$1,000 scholarship check during a ceremony on the 14th of July. The M.A.D scholarship was founded last year as a way to assist college enrolled residents who show strong academic success and involvement in extracurricular activities. Now in its second year, the Housing Authority was able to increase its number of scholarships from one to three! Thomas Jarrett is a rising senior majoring in social work at West Chester University.

Dai'Shona Jones is a rising junior majoring in psychology while also serving as a resident assistant at Morgan State University in Baltimore Maryland. Ciani Hodges is majoring in English at Neumann University with plans to take the LSAT and attend law school. We wish these young bright students the best in their future endeavors; look out next Spring for our next application cycle!

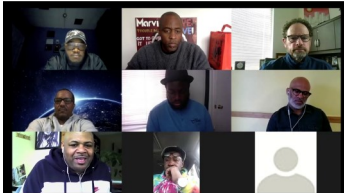


Thomas Jarrett (left) and Ciani Hodges (middle) being presented with their \$1,000 scholarship checks during the M.A.D ceremony



Dai'Shona Jones was not able to attend the ceremony in person

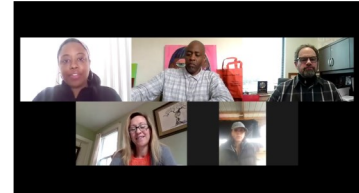
### Chester Housing Authority's Building Community Series



A group of Chester fathers get together for a special episode of the Building Community series. They discuss and explore what it means for fathers to comfort in times of crisis.

Building Community is a new online video series, started in April, where we talk about a variety of subjects. The episodes produced so far feature discussions on topics such as the impact of making healthy choices, finding comfort in times of crisis, getting empowered with facts, and the importance of voting. The purpose of the series is to facilitate discussions on targeted issues led by Steve Fischer and Ulysses Slaughter,

with other members of the community. We urge everyone to check out the Building Community series; the episodes are posted on the CHA's Facebook page and YouTube channel. Do you have an idea for our next conversation? If so please reach out to us on Facebook and we would love to talk about it in our next video!



Farm Manager Natania Schaumburg, Maya Stewart, and Dr. Pauline Thompson joins us on this episode of the Building Community series to provide insight on the impact that making healthy choices can have on your mental and physical well-being.

### Radiation Detection Coming to Chester



Catherine Mohr, a Swarthmore student, has designed a device that's capable of measuring ambient radiation levels and is going to test it in the City of Chester. Radiation is usually associated with nuclear waste; however, there are other more common sources of radiation that exist around us and that we encounter on regular basis. Catherine's work has resulted in multiple designs of her device, one of which is



wearable. This is particularly interesting because the wearable device allows it to keep track of the locations a person goes to and then correlate the date with the amount of radiation measured at the same locations. The data that the device collects can then be used to create a radiation map of Chester allowing for the discovery of any abnormal radiation levels and their locations. In the past,

a high radiation level has been discovered in some Chester landfills. "It's the people's right to know" Catherine mentioned on an interview with the Chester Housing Authority. Catherine has spent a semester in Japan in which she refined her project. She designed her device with the hope that it will help make our environment safer and allow people to identify radiation sources in their communities.

This Newsletter was written by  
CHA summer interns, Kaidan  
Fullerton and Nader  
Almadbooh, from Swarthmore  
College



Kaidan

Nader

## J. Lewis Crozer Library

The J. Lewis Crozer Library building may be closed to patrons because of Covid-19 restrictions, but many library services are still available for Chester residents. Library patrons can request books and other materials for curbside pickup. Call the Library at 610-494-3454 or email the staff at [crozerlibrary@delcolibraries.org](mailto:crozerlibrary@delcolibraries.org). If you do not have a library card, you can request one by sending an email to [support@delcolibraries.org](mailto:support@delcolibraries.org)

Library programs are still happening as well, but online, not in person. Here are August's programs:

- Story Time with Miss Montana on Mondays at 1 p.m. (PreK – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade)
- Beyond Legos Read Aloud (on Tuesdays at 1 p.m.) and Building Challenge (on Wednesdays anytime via video)
- Technology Tips Video Series – new video released every Thursday

Register for these programs at our Events calendar at [www.crozerlibrary.org](http://www.crozerlibrary.org)

**Coming Fall 2020 – Stay tuned for more information:**

Children's Programs: Library Unplugged

Adult Programs: Important Healthcare Topics for Our Community

## A Note From the New Superintendent

Chester Upland School District is proud to announce that school begins on September 1, 2020. Dr. Carol D. Birks, Superintendent of Schools for Chester Upland, encourages the entire Chester community to Zoom IN, All IN For Education.

- Chester Upland School District is planning robust ongoing training for families and teachers to ensure that everyone has the tools needed to ZOOM IN, All In For Education.
- Schools will have ZOOM IN, All In For Education orientation sessions for families the week of August 24, 2020. Specific dates/times will be provided by the schools. During the sessions, parents will receive professional learning on how to access Zoom and Google Classroom and other platforms that will be used to support the instructional program.
- ZOOM IN Technology Learning Centers will be established to provide training to families beginning the week of August 31. More information will be provided in the near future.
- During the week of August 24, 2020, all students that need a device to ZOOM IN will be able to receive one so that all students are prepared for the start of school.
- Internet connectivity will be provided for families to remove any barriers for students to ZOOM IN daily.
- All schools will serve as food distribution sites so children continue to receive nutritious breakfast and lunch. Chester Upland School District will also continue to serve as a Philabundance distribution site. More information regarding specific dates and times will be provided soon.

We are looking forward to a great school year! We are committed to providing families with supports so that all students login every day and ZOOM IN to learning. Please remember to Zoom In All in For Education.

## Introduction to Computer Coding Course Developed by CHA Interns

This summer's CHA interns, Kaidan and Nader, are working together with the CHA to create a free online computer science course. After having done extensive research about the City of Chester, they discovered an overall lack of Computer Science education. "Growing up in places where there was no exposure to computer science (CS), Nader and I thought that offering an online course in CS would be greatly beneficial to the community in Chester. Computer Science is such an incredible field that's highly demanded by almost all industries around the world" said Kaidan when asked about this project. "The guiding

principle behind our work is accessibility" said Nader when asked about what's special about their course "Our course is being designed in a way that makes it accessible by literally anyone with an internet connection; No fancy equipment, computers, or computer programs are needed. Anyone with a phone, tablet, or computer can take our course to the fullest extent from their web browser and for free". The course will have its own web page where all its content is going to be neatly arranged. Any internet user can access the webpage and start learning computer science from pre-recorded videos that Kaidan and Nader had prepared. The course covers a

wide range of concepts and provides a multitude of example questions and exercises. Kaidan and Nader started working on this project in the Summer of 2020 as "Chester Community Fellows". They partnered with the CHA through the Lang Center at Swarthmore College. They have done great work since they have started and are continuing to do so. Make sure to give the course a try when it is out soon!

