



Public Housing

Resident Network

PHRN is pleased to announce it has received another round of the HUD Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Grant. PHRN is nearing the end of its first ROSS Grant awarded in 1999. The grant, which is \$80,000 per year for three years, allows the Network to provide free technical support, training and help with capacity building for public housing residents statewide.

"This grant has been awarded at an important time for public housing residents," said Courtney Anderson, PHRN Coordinator. "I think being given the grant again says a lot about the work the Coalition has been doing to assist in the empowerment of public housing residents. It also demonstrates HUD's commitment to seeing that public housing residents are educated about their rights, empowered and organized."

For the past few years under the current ROSS Grant, hundreds of public housing residents have been given free assistance in a variety of ways. For example, residents in Hartford, Stamford and New Haven have been given technical support and training as residents in all three cities are facing possible HOPE VI redevelopment. Since 2000, PHRN has assisted more than 30 resident organizations statewide with direct capacity building assistance. More than 100 public housing residents received training at the Connecticut Housing Coalition's annual conference in October. PHRN has provided more than 10 direct training workshops since 2000 and continues to reach out to residents in other ways such as the newsletter and other technical support.

Under the next ROSS funding period, PHRN will concentrate on growing its statewide resident board. Also, plans are underway to develop a multipurpose website which will allow members to download training and other resource materials.

A look at what's inside:

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After a year of training and reorganization, New Haven's citywide resident organization VOICES recently held its board elections. Soon, it will hold elections for officers.

VOICES has been going through the yearlong process of reorganizing by training its resident leaders and rewriting its bylaws. Also, PHRN has assisted over the past year with forming new resident organizations and helping to strengthen existing ones. The group also made some major modifications to its bylaws that helped to insure that the needs of all residents were being met. Some of the significant changes were:

- Seats were added to the board to represent New Haven's Section 8 and scattered sites residents.
- Instead of only the presidents of developments automatically becoming VOICES board members, anyone in the development can run for the VOICES board.
- Those running for a seat on the VOICES board must now get supporting signatures from a certain percentage of the number of residents who live in those developments.

Is your named spelled right on our address label?
 Do we have your correct mailing address?
 Have you changed your phone number lately?
 Do you now have email?

Give us a call and let us know!

The Connecticut Housing Coalition held its annual conference in October 2002. More than 100 public housing residents turned out for the conference, which featured a number of workshops, including two trainings geared specifically toward public housing residents.

HOPE VI: A Resident's View looked at the promises and pitfalls of public housing revitalization. Residents Organizing for Power was a nuts and bolts training geared toward building strong resident organizations in federal public housing developments.

Also new to the conference, PHRN held a smaller session with residents the night before the conference. At that meeting, residents discussed strengthening PHRN as a statewide



network. Another follow-up training is being planned for March to include more residents.

For more information about March's meeting, please contact Courtney Anderson, PHRN Coordinator at (860) 563-2943 (Hartford area) or toll free at 1-888-415-2564.

Work Responsibility Act

A provision of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act signed by former President Clinton in 1998 has returned. Previously, the act had a provision that would require many public housing residents to do Community Service. Residents nationwide rallied against this provision successfully, but it has now been approved for the HUD fiscal 2003 budget.

What does this mean for residents? Adult members of households must participate for at least eight hours a month in community service or economic self-sufficiency training. However, some people are exempt. Elderly persons, disabled person or persons already working would not be required to participate in community service. Also, persons exempt from work requirements under State Welfare-to-Work programs or persons receiving assistance under a State program that have not been found to be in noncompliance with such a program are exempt. Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) are to refuse to renew the resident's 12-month lease for failure to satisfy this requirement. However, a housing authority must notify everyone about whether or not they are exempt. More information about the community service requirement will be in our next newsletter.

Who We Are & What We Do

The Public Housing Resident Network provides a variety of assistance to residents of public housing in Connecticut. The Network informs residents of new and important state and federal policy information and is a source of mutual support for residents.

Founded in the fall of 1996, the Network is an informal organization open to participation from any public housing resident - whether elected leadership or interested resident. We welcome requests for services from residents and public housing authorities. The services we provide are free of charge to the residents and we encourage you to attend our Network meetings.

This newsletter is published on the alternate months. Contact us to be put on our mailing list. All we ask in return is your participation and interest!

◆Have you filled out a PHRN membership card? If not, call us to get one! Our toll free number is: 1-888-415-2564.

Update on Connecticut's State or Moderate Rental Developments

There may be change afoot for the state's public housing developments. The future of state-sponsored family public housing in communities such as East Hartford, Hartford, Meriden, New Britain, New London and Stamford is in question. Although the details vary from community to community, it's fair to say that the local housing authorities that are administering these state developments are struggling with the challenge of how to sustain the properties with no help in sight from the state.

The developments were built with support from the state moderate rental program over the past fifty plus years. Unlike federal public housing, the housing authorities receive no subsidy to make up for the difference between what residents pay in rent and what it actually costs to manage the property day-to-day. The result is that many of these properties have become run-down and in need of significant physical repair. Some of the developments suffer from higher vacancy rates than the federal public housing. And, residents in the state public housing are not able to benefit from the same resources, such as community centers and computer labs, as their neighbors living in federal developments.

Some housing authorities have worked with residents, local public officials and community leaders to develop plans to change the face of their state public housing developments (parallel to a federal HOPE VI process). The local approaches differ, but most everyone involved agrees that new solutions must be pursued. Ideas include: privatization of the housing; bringing in mixed-income or part homeownership to the community; partial or full demolition; getting the state to help subsidize the units; bringing in federal resources, such as Section 8 vouchers; and, handing the properties back over to the state.

Whatever direction things take, state public housing could very well be at risk. Residents must be organized in their response and push to be effective stakeholders at the table when discussing the future of their housing. The Public Housing Resident Network (PHRN) has provided information and technical support to residents facing the challenge of preserving or changing their state public housing developments. PHRN will also be monitoring activity up at the state Capitol, to make sure that any proposed changes in law will protect not only the residents currently living in state public housing, but also maintain as much affordable housing as possible into the future.

If you live in state public housing and would like to get involved in working to preserve affordable housing options for families in Connecticut, please contact Lynne Ide at (860) 563-2943, or toll free outside of the Hartford calling area (888) 415-2564.

Advice Column

Question:

I live in a state public housing development. My friends who live in federal public housing seem to get a lot more resources from the housing authority. What can be done to change this?

Answer:

There are a lot of resources available from HUD for residents living in federal public housing. The state offers no such resources for state public housing — no money for resident councils, community centers, training programs, etc. You can work with your housing authority and other community organizations to develop a creative plan to bring in private money and support. There are some housing authorities that have done a good job at that. Feel free to contact PHRN for suggestions.

PHRN is seeking proposals from qualified individuals and firms to develop its website. The Network has a very limited budget for this project. We are seeking someone to develop the initial website with graphics and train one or two CHC staff members on maintaining the website. We are looking for this website to be a source for public housing residents to download training information and references. The site should have a member-only section requiring a password for special downloads and will have multiple pages to it. We request that the website be developed using Microsoft Frontpage.

PHRN provides technical support, capacity building assistance and training to public housing residents throughout Connecticut. We are funded largely by a grant from the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Submit proposals with full cost analysis, estimates of hours necessary to develop the site, along with three references of websites developed and their website links to: Connecticut Housing Coalition, Attn: Courtney Anderson, 30 Jordan Lane, Wethersfield, CT 06109. Proposals must be **RECEIVED** no later than 5 pm, on Friday, March 28, 2003. PHRN encourages minorities, individuals and public housing residents with website development experience to apply. For additional information, you may call Courtney Anderson, PHRN Coordinator at 860-563-2943 (in the Hartford area) or toll free at 1-888-415-2564.

Website Developer Wanted

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