



Public Housing Association of Residents (PHAR)

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Accomplishments 2011-2012

PHAR accomplished a great deal in terms of community education, leadership development and organizing. Highlights of recent accomplishments include the following:

1. *Improving facilities and assuring residents are informed about their rights and responsibilities.*

- **Crescent Hall Elevator Maintenance and Fire Safety:** PHAR worked extensively with residents of this high-rise apartment building for elderly people and residents with disabilities. In 2011 the company changed the service providers, and elevator function improved, but continues to have sporadic problems which have highlighted the need for improved evacuation and safety measures for residents especially for elderly residents those with disabilities. PHAR continued to advocate for those improvements including a revision of the fire evacuation plan. Additional resident testimonies occurred in September, 2012, and were followed by an extensive public accountability report from the elevator company. This brought to light a communication problem between CRHA and the elevator company.
- **Resident Education and Neighborhood-building activities:** Every neighborhood has been doorknocked at least 6 times with information and/or opportunities for involvement. Celebrations to build resident/neighborhood unity occurred at Madison Avenue, Westhaven, Crescent Halls, with a Youth Forum and through a Father's Day celebration in collaboration with Friendship Court. Additional community meetings were held at Sixth Street, Michie Drive, and Riverside Avenue. PHAR also conducted outreach and educational sessions to provide residents with accurate information about their rights and responsibilities, including
 - Community service hour requirements and
 - Maintenance policies, procedures, and charges.
- **CRHA Policies:** PHAR proposed an overhaul of the CRHA No Trespass (Barment) policy, and has steadily advocated for fairness and corrections to current policies and procedures. The policy is expected to be updated in October. PHAR also informed residents and provided input into the Annual Plan process. We also conducted outreach to ensure residents were aware of the opportunities to meet with CRHA staff and give input.
- **Capital Improvement:** PHAR has gained inclusion in the capital improvement process bringing resident concerns gathered through doorknocking, surveys, and community meetings advocating for comprehensive solutions to
 - Mold
 - Playground Repair and Maintenance
- **Utility Overcharges:** PHAR members gathered stores and submitted a petition to CRHA with information that overcharges to tenant utility costs, in violation of HUD standards, were occurring in many units. We are currently working with the Legal Aid Justice Center to remedy this problem.

2. *PHAR was involved in several national and local initiatives related to public housing residents, civic participation and remedies to poverty.*

- **PHAR supports vulnerable residents and raises public awareness about injustice:** PHAR turned out to protest the unfair eviction of a vulnerable senior citizen who had made her home in a public housing neighborhood for over 20 years. Follow-up public testimonies were provided by several residents and supporters to dozens of people who turned out for the Housing Authority monthly meeting. PHAR won a 30-day eviction moratorium, during which time the CRHA eviction policies will be reviewed and compliance will be improved.

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- **PHAR Platform created policy change:** PHAR leaders proposed an advocacy platform and won significant victories addressing three areas: Supporting and improving public housing communities, increasing programs for low-income youth and expanding re-entry opportunities for ex-offenders. PHAR is currently following up with policies concerning eviction prevention, use of community centers, implementation of the federal Earned Income Disregard policy and major changes to the Barment policy.
- **The PHAR Internship Program** graduated five interns in May 2011, and is preparing to graduate a new class with 11 interns. Hundreds of additional residents benefit from the community education, outreach, organizing and advocacy provided through the Internship Program each year. Interns are engaged in a six-month curriculum covering a wide variety of topics, including Understanding Your Lease, How Public Housing Works, Community Organizing, Strategic Planning, Media, Speech Crafting, etc.
- **PHAR residents turned-out for local community events, including the start of Bank-On Charlottesville**, an initiative that will provide financial training for low income citizens, access to low-interest loans helping people avoid payday loans and car-title loans, and affordable banking services. PHAR leaders and supporters continue to assist with the planning for this new program. PHAR interns also attended a reception for the delegation from **Winneba**, Charlottesville's sister city. Residents and Advisory Council members dominated the **Human Rights** Task Force meeting in September 2012 urging implementation of a Commission with enforcement powers.

HUD ROSS Service Coordination Program assists residents in gaining jobs, education, services: PHAR received funding from HUD to implement service coordination for public housing residents over a three year period. There were only 4 sites selected in the state, the other 3 are housing authorities, PHAR is the only resident's association to be selected. Funding provides for Service Coordination and administrative expenses to assist with outreach to PHAR members and to convene service providers from the community to assist with the identified needs of our residents. The Service Coordinators are members of the American Association of Service coordinators. This program is increasing access to services including employment, education, financial literacy, behavioral health and substance abuse services and services for people with disabilities and seniors to assist them in independent living and aging in place. To date, residents supported through this program have accomplished the following:

- One resident PHAR recruited for the Certified Nursing Assistance Program graduated with a 94 on the final exam, and another resident enrolled in the program,
- A resident who had not been employed for seven years recently started a new job, and two additional residents have become employed,
- A team meeting to coordinate a Resident to become a part of the Earned Income Disregard Program so she is on the pathway to determine her own self-sufficiency.
- Residents are enrolled in the GED class through Adult Education, and
- Four elderly residents have received free Medi-mate emergency call buttons, due to a negotiation between PHAR, the Department of Social Services and Martha Jefferson Hospital.
- **PHAR was highlighted in the Summer 2011 "Tenant Talk" Newsletter of the National Low Income Housing Coalition speaking out about the City's** Section 3 program. Section 3 ensures jobs and other economic opportunities for low-income people when HUD funds housing and community development projects. The Section 3 program was started after PHAR leaders learned about the issue at a National Low-Income Housing Coalition conference, and shared information with city officials.
- **PHAR recruited national low-income housing leaders** to provide workshops at Virginia's Statewide Legal Aid conference. Several PHAR Board members and interns attended the workshops. A delegation of approximately 10 PHAR leaders and supporters also attended the National Low-Income Housing Coalition Conference, learning about national policies and model resident involvement programs. PHAR's Vice Chair was a conference panelist, providing resident organizing information to dozens of public housing leaders and HUD officials.