



Summer 2022
Volume 1, Issue 2

THE Key Wester

a seasonal newsletter for residents of the



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA



KEY WEST HOUSING AUTHORITY AWARDED \$2,500,000 GRANT

The Key West Housing Authority was recently awarded a major grant of \$2,500,000 to significantly upgrade electrical distribution and to replace both a transformer and the backup generator at the Henry V. Haskins Senior Citizens Plaza. The federal grant would not have been possible without the tremendous effort of Congressman Carlos Gimenez and his dedicated staff and the support received from the Housing Authority Board of Directors, the Key West City Commission, the Board of County Commissioners, and Keys Energy.

KWHA Executive Director Mr. Sterling stated, "While the current transformer and existing generator are in place and functioning properly, they are dated and close to the equipment's life expectancy. We thought it best to be proactive and apply for the Federally funded Economic Development Initiative Grant so that we do not encounter disruption in service to our residents in the face of an emergency that could arise with older equipment." The generator is in place so that in the event of a sustained power outage, the property's many senior residents would be able to use the elevator and have power for respirators, oxygen generators, and for the refrigeration of food and vital medicines.

The five-story Senior Citizen Plaza comprises 199 units with approximately 230 residents.

HISTORICAL REMEMBRANCE

The ribbon cutting ceremony for the Senior Citizen's Plaza (SCP), located at 1400 Kennedy Drive, was announced in the November 1, 1972 issue of the Key West Citizen Newspaper.

Senior Plaza To Open

KEY WEST — The ribbon cutting ceremony for the 200-unit senior citizen plaza will be held Nov. 12 at 2 p.m.,

it was announced Tuesday. Located on Kennedy Drive near Searstown, the low rental high rise plaza consists of 80 one-bedroom apartments for couples and 119 efficiencies for individu-

als. Although most of the units have been reserved, senior citizens age 62 and over, who need housing should submit an application to the Key West Housing Authority.

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HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

- Independence Day—July 4th
(KWHA Offices Closed)
- Parents' Day—July 24th
- Purple Heart Day—August 7th
- Tisha B'Av—August 7th
- Senior Citizens Day—August 21st
- Women's Equality Day—August 26th
- Labor Day—September 5th
(KWHA Offices Closed)
- Patriot Day—September 11th

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hurricane season started on June 1, and by June 3, we were all experiencing several days of tropical storm conditions. I certainly pray that wasn't any indication of how this year will be! However, like the old stoic proverb says, hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

Updated KWHa hurricane preparation packets went out to all residents during the first week of June. If you have not received your packet, please contact your housing manager. You should have also received one during your move-in orientation. These packets provide vital information, including how to operate shutters (for those residents residing in units with shutters), how to register for the special needs registry, and where to evacuate

locally in the case of a Category 1 or 2 storm. Remember, Monroe County will be closed in the case of a Category 3, 4, or 5 hurricane, and evacuation is mandatory.

Preparation and planning is so important, whether you opt to shelter in place or to evacuate. The Florida Division of Emergency Management provides a great tool on their website to help you create a custom plan that meets you and your family's needs. I highly recommend that you check it out:

<https://apps.floridadisaster.org/getaplan/>

If you need any assistance before or after a storm, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office, your property manager, or the maintenance department.

In service,

Randy Sterling

“Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained.” - Marie Curie

FROM THE DESK OF CHANDRA TYNES—DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

I'd like to start with a big thank you to Heidi Golightly of Keys to Be the Change who led a team of volunteer youth with a grounds clean-up at the George Allen Apts. The place looked great and we appreciate their efforts. Please do not litter and be sure to secure your trash and place it in the appropriate dumpsters. We all need to do our part to keep our communities clean.

I am also pleased to announce that the new kitchen cabinets and countertops for our Robert Gabriel residents are nearly complete. Thanks to all the residents for their patience and thanks to staff and Garcia Jones Building Contractor for making it happen.

The fencing project at George Allen is complete and new trees and plants will be next. Many thanks to City Commissioner Mary Lou Hoover for her help and guidance with the landscaping.

The staff and residents of the Senior Citizens Plaza and Poinciana Gardens are very excited with the new senior exercise program led by professional fitness instructor Kimmie Labrada.

A big thank you to Mr. Gary, our Resident Activities Coordinator. He led the scholarship program this year, which awarded a total of \$2,400 to four students. I'd also like to thank Gulf Atlantic Bank for sponsoring two additional \$500 scholarships for two students.

Summertime is a magical time for our children. I would like to take a moment to ask all parents to keep splash pools out of walkways and please make sure that they are put away in the evenings.

Happy Summer, and thanks to all of you for taking pride in your homes,

Chandra



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Ms. Andrea Dean



Photo of Ms. Andrea Dean

Interview by Peter Batty

Andrea started working for the Housing Authority when she was 21 years old. She has worked in the Section 8 program, the Maintenance Department, and as a courier, and she now serves as the main receptionist at the Administrative Offices at 1400 Kennedy Drive. This background gives Andrea a wide range of knowledge about the agency. She says that she really enjoys her job as a receptionist because the work is very interesting and she gets to meet a lot of people. I was able to interview her as she was fielding telephone calls and greeting people who came into the lobby. Andrea was bright and cheerful, and I was amazed at her proficiency and friendliness.

How long have you worked for the Housing Authority? *Thirteen years.*

Where are you from? *I was born and raised in Key West and graduated from Key West High School in 2006.*

Do you have any pets? *I have two Pit Bulls, and I love them both.*

What are your hobbies and favorite things to do? *I enjoy playing video games and love fishing under the Boca Chica Bridge. Oh, and I really like getting tattoos!*

Do you have a favorite vacation spot? *Folly Beach, South Carolina for sure! And my dream destination is Alaska. I want to one day live off the land!*

If you could change anything about Key West, what would it be? *We need more activities for children. I remember when we had miniature golf and go-carts over on the Boulevard. It would be nice if we could have something like that again for the kids.*

What do you like most about your job? *I love working for the KWHa, it's truly like one big family. Some of the people that I have met over the years have been as close to me as my mom or my grandfather.*

Want a job like Andrea's? Check out the job opportunities on page 3 of this newsletter or on our website at www.kwha.org!

Get free at-home COVID-19 tests

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order a 3rd round of free at-home tests. Order yours today by visiting www.covid.gov/tests. This latest round will include eight (8) tests.

Need help placing an order for your at-home tests?

Call **1-800-232-0233** (TTY **1-888-720-7489**).

KWHA Awards \$3400 in Scholarships to Graduating High School Seniors

At the KWHA Board of Commissioners' June meeting, six housing resident high school seniors were awarded scholarships. The funds will assist the graduates with their plans for college.

Four of the scholarships were sponsored by the KWHA and two were sponsored by Gulf Atlantic Bank. The total funding this year was nearly triple of what was offered in years past.

In addition, Gulf Atlantic Bank has pledged to double their sponsorship for next year's graduating Class of 2023.



Photos of each of the scholarship recipients with Commissioner Mobley, Vice-Chairman Dean, and Chairman Parks.

Back-To-School Sales Tax Holiday

Monday, July 25, 2022 through Sunday, August 7, 2022

During the sales tax holiday period, tax is not due on the retail sale of:

- Clothing, footwear, and certain accessories with a sales price of \$100 or less per item
- Certain school supplies with a sales price of \$50 or less per item,
- Learning aids and jigsaw puzzles with a sales price of \$30 or less
- Personal computers and certain computer-related accessories with a sales price of \$1,500 or less, when purchased for noncommercial home or personal use



JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE KEY WEST HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Housing Authority of the City of Key West, Florida is dedicated to providing excellent customer service and assistance to its tenants, applicants, and landlords by employing and retaining a highly qualified and well-trained staff that supports its mission.

Current Employment Openings:

Administration & Marketing Coordinator - F/T - Poinciana Gardens Senior Living Complex

Cook - F/T - Poinciana Gardens Senior Living Complex

Med Tech - F/T - Poinciana Gardens Senior Living Complex

Receptionist/Cashier - F/T George Allen Rental Office

Food Server - F/T - Poinciana Gardens Senior Living Complex

How To Apply:

To apply for a position with the KWHA, submit a completed Application for Employment, a completed Criminal-Traffic Background Authorization Form, and a signed job description for the position you are applying for.

Via Email:

Mary Martinez
Human Resources & Risk Management Manager
MartinezM@kwaha.org

Via Postal Service:

The Housing Authority of the City of Key West, Florida
Attn: Human Resources
1400 Kennedy Drive
Key West, FL 33040

Hand Delivery:

The Housing Authority of the City of Key West, Florida
Administration Building
Main Entrance
1400 Kennedy Drive
Key West, FL 33040



The Housing Authority would like to acknowledge

GULF ATLANTIC BANK

for their generous donation to supplement our resident scholarship program. One deserving female student and one deserving male student were awarded \$500.00 each to help them pursue education after high school.

PEST CONTROL SCHEDULE



Fort Village—
3rd Wednesday of each month

George Allen Apartments—
2nd Wednesday of each month

Jack T. Murray Senior Complex—
2nd Wednesday of each month

Lang Milian Apartments—
2nd Wednesday of each month

Poinciana Gardens—
4th Wednesday of each month

Robert Gabriel Apartments—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Senior Citizen's Plaza—
4th Wednesday of each month

Please report any pest control issues, including bed bugs, to your property manager or to the Maintenance Department.

Do your part! Clean often: wipe down counters, sweep floors, take out the garbage, and keep food in sealed containers.

LOOKING BACK—MOVING FORWARD

Spring was a very busy season for the Housing Authority! Below are just a few of the highlights:

- ◆ A KHWHA contractor began installation of new kitchen cabinets and countertops for all of the units of the Robert Gabriel Apartments that had outdated and worn kitchens.
- ◆ The KWHHA contracted with an assisted living facility consultant to provide consulting, marketing, and management services for the Frank P. Toppino Poinciana Gardens Senior Living Complex.
- ◆ Executive Director Sterling secured approval from the KWHHA Board of Commissioners to undertake the redevelopment of the Lang Milian Apartments through HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration or Section 18 Disposition Programs.
- ◆ The Board awarded a mid-year emergency 3-percent cost of living adjustment for all staff to partially offset soaring inflation (the fastest annualized acceleration in the price of consumer goods since February 1982!).
- ◆ Occupancy & Admissions (O&A) staff led a Section 8 eligibility determination meeting, helping a total of 19 invited families with their applications.
- ◆ Executive Director Randy Sterling reimplemented the "Employee of the Quarter" recognition. Property Manager Ms. Kenya Strachan was selected and she was presented with a plaque and a check. Congratulations, Kenya!!!
- ◆ Major concrete spalling concrete repair was started at the Washington Street Apartments. Other small improvements to the property include new mailboxes, sidewalk repair, and new address numbering hardware.

Although Spring was busy, we have **A LOT** more in store. A few major projects in the works right now include the installation of brand new playground equipment for the Robert Gabriel Apartments—Site C and the Lang Milian Apartments (open to all public housing residents), concrete spalling repair and new balconies for a portion of the Senior Citizen Plaza, the completion of the George Allen laundry room, and perimeter fencing for the Robert Gabriel Site A property.

RESIDENT ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES WITH MR. GARY



SUMMER PROGRAM & FIELD TRIPS! 1-week SUMMER CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS are available (first come/first served) through our community partners for the Key West Art & Historical Society's ArtCamp, & Reef Relief's Coral Camp.

"CHRISTMAS IN JULY" kicks off ENROLLMENT for our 2022-2023 FREE AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM! Space is limited so call soon to enroll your child. The program is Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:45 pm - 7 pm at the Lang Milian Apts. at 301 White Street. We provide homework assistance, structured activities, & a snack program for elementary & middle school students. Program activities continue during school holidays too! While supplies last, "Christmas in July presents" given away to enrolled students & their siblings.

MUSEUMS! If you participate in the *SNAP program*, your family can enjoy free tours at the Custom House, Key West Lighthouse, Fort East Martello Tower, & the Tennessee Williams Museum. For more information, visit museums4all.org/.

WILLIAMS HALL FREE CLASSES FOR KWHHA RESIDENTS! Fitness, Sewing, Quilting, Social Dance, & more! Williams Hall is located at 729 Fleming Street. Call Mr. Gary for instructions & the free code to register.

THE BASILICA SCHOOL in Key West provides children of the lower Florida Keys an affordable, quality Catholic Education in a Christ-Centered learning environment. Tuition assistance, financial aid and state vouchers are available to meet the specific needs of each student. New enrollments are welcome February 2023, but there are limited spots. For more information, visit <https://basilicaschoolkeywest.com/> or call 305-294-1031.

TAKE STOCK IN CHILDREN SCHOLARSHIP enrollment begins for 7th grade students when school starts in August. Deadline for application is in early September.

Contact Gary Young directly at youngg@kwha.org or call (305) 240-1334 for resident activity information for children, teens, families, and seniors. Please leave your name, address, and phone number.