



WINTER 2025
Volume 4, Issue 4

THE Key Wester

a seasonal newsletter for residents of the



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the ED	2
Employee Spotlight	2
Last-Minute Holiday Shopping Tips: How to Get it Done with Less Stress	3
Good to Know!	3
Pest Control Schedule	4
Looking Back	4
Mr. Gary's Corner	4


IMPORTANT DATES

Christmas Break—December 25 & 26
(KWA Offices Closed)

New Years Break—January 1 & 2
(KWA Offices Closed)

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—January 19
(KWA Offices Closed)

Groundhog Day—February 2

Valentines Day—February 14 

Presidents Day—February 16
(KWA Offices Closed)

Daylight Savings Starts—March 8

Pi Day—March 14



Saint Patrick's Day—March 17



Keys Choral Arts Performs for KWA Residents

On Tuesday, December 16, residents of Senior Citizens Plaza enjoyed a lively and joyful performance by Keys Choral Arts, a volunteer organization dedicated to showcasing the art of choral singing through community-based performances. The event brought great energy and smiles, and everyone had a wonderful time!



Delivering Holiday Cheer, One Tree at a Time

Our dedicated grounds crew took a brief pause from their busy schedule to smile for the camera, standing proudly before one of the many Christmas trees they distributed to residents this week. While their usual work involves cleaning out vacancies and keeping our properties looking nice, last week their mission was simply to bring joy. Thank you to the team for going the extra mile to make this holiday season brighter for our community!

HISTORICAL REMEMBRANCE

Robert Gabriel (—died 1922)

Mr. Robert Gabriel represented Monroe County in the Florida House of Representatives in 1879 and served four years on the Key West City Commission (1905-1909). In addition, he was employed as a United States customs inspector. Mr. Gabriel lived at 1125 Thomas Street in the Bahama Village Neighborhood, a 12-block area surrounded by Whitehead Street, Louisa Street, Fort Street, and Amelia Street. He lived there until his death on October 18, 1922. The Robert Gabriel Apartments were named for him by the Key West Housing Authority in 1958.



Columbia.....	CHARLES A. FINLEY.....	Lake City.
Leon.....	W. H. FORD.....	Tallahassee.
Clay.....	A. W. FOWLER.....	Middleburg.
Leon.....	S. W. FRAZIER.....	Tallahassee.
Hillsborough.....	J. J. FRIERSON.....	Alafia.
Monroe.....	ROBERT GABRIEL.....	Key West.
Washington.....	W. R. GAINER.....	Economa.
Suwannee.....	R. H. GARDNER.....	Live Oak.
Marion.....	J. D. GOSS.....	Ocala.
Franklin.....	H. I. GRADY.....	Arushicola.

General Acts & Resolutions Adopted by the Legislature of Florida.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Residents,

Over the last twelve months we celebrated new beginnings, but also mourned profound losses together. Earlier this year, we lost a pillar of the community, long-time Board Member Frank Toppino. His wisdom, generosity, and genuine care for the well-being of our residents helped shape the community we live in today. While we miss his presence at the table, we are comforted knowing that his spirit lives on in the lives he touched. We also take a moment of silence to honor the residents we have lost this year. Our community is tight-knit, and the loss of a neighbor is felt by us all. Whether they were a friendly face in the hallway, a voice on the porch, or a long-time friend, they were part of the fabric of our daily lives.

While we look back, we also look forward. I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest residents and say, "Welcome home. We are glad you are here." I am also excited to introduce several new employees who have joined our team this year. You may have already seen them in the rental offices or out with the maintenance crews. Please feel free to say hello and introduce yourselves when you see them.

As we close the chapter on this year, let us hold our loved ones close and check in on our neighbors. May the coming year bring you health and peace. From my family to yours, and on behalf of the entire staff and Board of Commissioners, I wish you a safe holiday season and a Happy New Year.

In service, *Randy Sterling*



“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”

- Maya Angelou (American poet, memoirist, and actress)



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

John “JJ” Eller

Custodian at Henry V. Haskins Senior Citizens Plaza (SCP)



Interview by Peter Batty

JJ was born and raised in Key West and is proud to be a second-generation Conch. He truly loves living in his hometown. A 1996 graduate of Key West High School, JJ has been employed by the Housing Authority for nearly six years. Since joining the agency, he has worked exclusively at the Senior Citizens Plaza, where he greatly enjoys his role and the supportive work environment.

In addition to fulfilling his responsibilities as a custodian, JJ spends much of his day assisting and engaging with residents. He finds great satisfaction in helping others and believes SCP is a wonderful place for seniors to live. Bringing comfort and ease to residents' daily lives is a source of genuine joy for him.

Outside of work, JJ and his aunt, Joan Higgs, serve as directors of “Cooking with Love” at the Metropolitan Community Church, where they help provide meals to some of the most vulnerable members of the community. JJ is proud to give back and support those in need.

JJ enjoys spending time with his dog, a pit bull named Genesis, and has a passion for cooking, which is no surprise, as he holds a degree in Culinary Arts. His favorite restaurant in Key West is Only Wood on Caroline Street.

While JJ wishes there were less traffic in Key West and is saddened that many friends have had to leave due to the high cost of living, he remains deeply connected to the island. Key West is his home, and he truly believes it is a wonderful place to live.

Do you want to join our awesome team?

Check out the job opportunities on page 3 of this newsletter or on our website at www.kwha.org!



Last-Minute Holiday Shopping Tips: How to Get It All Done with Less Stress

The holiday season is upon us, and if you still haven't crossed everything off your shopping list, you're not alone! With busy schedules and the whirlwind of the season, it's easy for shopping to get pushed to the last minute. Don't panic—here are some smart tips to help you finish your holiday shopping without the stress.

Prioritize with a List

Before you dive into any store (online or in person), write down exactly what you need. This list should include the people you're shopping for, gift ideas, and a budget. Prioritizing your most important purchases can help you avoid impulse buys and keep you focused.

Consider Digital Gifts

Digital gifts are an excellent solution when you're truly pressed for time. E-gift cards, subscriptions, or downloadable products like audiobooks, streaming services, or apps make thoughtful and instant gifts. They're perfect for long-distance friends and family or anyone who appreciates experiences over material items.



Get Creative with Gift Cards



Gift cards are not just last-minute saviors—they can be personal and thoughtful if presented well. Try pairing a gift card with a small, related item. For example, a coffee shop gift card with a cute mug or a bookshop gift card with a handwritten note about your favorite reads can add a personal touch.

Use Local Shops and Small Businesses

Don't forget about local boutiques, markets, or small businesses. Often, you can find unique, handcrafted gifts without the shipping delays of online giants. Plus, you'll be supporting your community!

DIY and Homemade Gifts

If time is really tight, consider making a DIY gift. It could be as simple as baking a batch of cookies, creating a personalized photo album, or making your own gift baskets with small, thoughtful items. These types of gifts often have the most heart and can feel extra special because of the effort you put in.

Embrace the Power of Wrapping

Even if your gift is last-minute, presentation matters. A nicely wrapped gift can make a simple item feel more polished and thoughtful. Stock up on gift bags, tissue paper, and festive ribbons, which can quickly elevate any present.

Stay Calm and Enjoy the Season



Lastly, remember that holiday shopping doesn't have to be stressful. Keep perspective and try to enjoy the process. At the end of the day, the holidays are about spending time with loved ones, and the best gifts come from the heart.

With these tips, you can finish your holiday shopping with ease and maybe even have time left over to relax and enjoy a holiday movie!

GOOD TO KNOW!

The Monroe County Public Library at 700 Fleming Street in Key West offers Computer Classes every Tuesday & Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.! Topics include Basic Microsoft Word & Resume Formatting. Stop by their front desk or call 305-292-3595 to sign up for an upcoming class.



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, & landlords by employing and retaining a highly qualified and well-trained staff that supports its mission.

Current Employment Openings (as of 12/22/2025):

- Carpenter (F/T)
- Electrician (F/T)
- Grounds Caretaker (F/T)
- Housing Assistant (F/T)
- Maintenance Mechanic (F/T)

How To Apply:

To apply for a position with the Key West Housing Authority, please submit a completed Application for Employment, a completed Criminal & Traffic Background Authorization Form, & a signed job description for the position you are applying for.

Via Email:

Kathy Wright
WrightK@kwha.org

Via Postal or Hand Delivery:

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

PEST CONTROL SCHEDULE



Fort Village—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Garden View Apartments—
1st 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—
2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month

Robert Gabriel Apartments—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Roosevelt C. Sands, Jr. Affordable Housing Complex—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Senior Citizen Plaza—
4th Wednesday of each month

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

ATTENTION

Housing Authority High School Seniors!

It is almost time to apply for vocational training or college scholarships for your education next year. The Housing Authority has scholarship opportunities for student tenants who live in our communities! Don't wait. Call Mr. Gary for more information.



Visit the Monroe County Sheriff's Office Animal Farm free of charge the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month from 1 – 3 pm at the Sheriff's Office Headquarters on College Rd. For more info, call (305) 293-7300.



Attention Residents of Senior Citizen Plaza & Jack T. Murray Senior Complex: Our community partner, **Guidance Care Center**, provides transportation to the Publix and Winn Dixie shopping centers. Please speak to your Housing Manager for details, and sign up by calling Mr. Gary!
(305) 304-5568

LOOKING BACK

Fall was no time to fall behind! Below are just a few of the exciting things that happened the past few months:

- ◆ Hosted a Monster Bash Halloween party for the residents of Senior Citizen Plaza.
- ◆ Staff served a Thanksgiving Dinner cooked by Deluna's Cafe to the residents at Senior Citizen Plaza. In December, staff served a Christmas Dinner and Santa Clause took photos with the residents.
- ◆ Began work on a new fire alarm system at Senior Citizen Plaza.
- ◆ Finished replacing the shingle roofs with metal roofs for the George Allen Apartments.
- ◆ Issued an Invitation for Bids for general construction services for new construction of 54 new residential units at Poinciana Plaza.
- ◆ Awarded a contract for concrete repair, new stucco, and new paint at Poinciana Plaza.
- ◆ Welcomed a new member to the KWAH Board of Commissioners, Mr. Charles Major!

RESIDENT ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

WITH MR. GARY

"It's okay not to know. It's not okay to not try."

Neil deGrasse Tyson—American Astrophysicist & Author

Merry Christmas everyone! 'Tis the season to be jolly, fa la la la la, la la la la. In celebration of the Christmas spirit, I want to acknowledge all our wonderful residents, I have observed, who have been kind and generous to neighbors during this holiday season!

Merry Christmas 🎄 Happy Hanukkah Happy Kwanza 🌿 Happy New Year



The New Year brings NEW opportunities to read more, learn new things, and celebrate personal resolutions to make our lives better in 2026.



ATTENTION Housing Authority Senior Citizens!

If you reside at SCP, Poinciana Gardens, or Jack T. Murray Senior Complex, you are invited to participate in attending Impromptu Classical Concerts for FREE in January through March 2026. Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren are welcome to join! For more info, check out their website at keywestimpromptu.org, and call Mr. Gary at 305-304-5568. The KWAH may also be able to assist with transportation.

Gary Young
Contact Info
youngg@kwha.org
or
(305) 304-5568



Thank you to Williams Hall for hosting their 6th annual 12 Days of Christmas Program in partnership with Saint Mary's Basilica & KWAH. This program brought a little extra joy to 24 families and over 40 children this season.

Your Housing Authority offers a FREE after school program for families who reside at Lang Milian, George Allen, Robert Gabriel & Fort Village. Elementary and Middle School students have fun during play activities and receive assistance with homework, reading, & math. Check out our new Computer Lab!



Call Mr. Gary TODAY! at (305) 304-5568 and schedule an Open House visit to our classroom at Building 13-G, Lang Milian Apartments, 301 White Street near the new playground!