

Employee of the Year

Barbara O'Connor

Barbara O'Connor has been employed with the agency since the early 90's, serving in a number of capacities before being promoted to Assistant Chief Procurement Officer. Barbara is a dedicated, diligent employee, who always seeks out creative, and timely solutions to the Authority's most pressing procurement needs. More recently, Barbara has taken a leadership role and has been instrumental in the execution of diverse, high-profile projects at the agency. These projects include security camera and keyless entry system upgrades, sign development for the agency's re-branding initiatives, and exhibit curation for the Authority's soon to be unveiled historical exhibit. Barbara is known for her easy going demeanor and her ability to work with all staff members. We recognize Barbara for her hard work in procurement, and her commitment to seeing the historic exhibit to completion.



Message from the Executive Director

Thank you to our community partners, residents, and staff for your support of the Lowell Housing Authority in 2018. We are grateful for all your efforts and your commitment to ensuring the Authority continues to deliver the highest quality housing and support services for low income families.



Lowell Housing Authority's Annual Recognition Awards

2019

“Building Success”

A Foundation for Stability and Opportunity

Residents of the Year

*Presentation of the flag by the
Lowell High School ROTC Honor Guard*

Meeting Called to Order & Report of Outgoing Chairperson

Election of the Board of Commissioner Officers

The Board of Commissioners

Report of the Chairperson

Chairperson Vanna Howard

Report of the Executive Director

Gary K. Wallace

Presentation of the Annual Recognition Awards

Chairperson Vanna Howard & Executive Director Gary K. Wallace present awards to the residents, community partners and the employee of the year

Meeting Business

The Board of Commissioners



Brian Sparrow, Public Housing Resident of the Year

Brian Sparrow is a resident of City View Towers. Mr. Sparrow has been an active member of the City View Towers Tenant Council for several years. In 2017, Mr. Sparrow pioneered Tech Talk, a video tutorial series that provides tech support services to residents living in Lowell Housing Authority properties. Mr. Sparrow has been a strong advocate for bridging the digital divide among the Authority's elderly population and works closely with the Executive Office to conduct resident technology outreach. Mr. Sparrow's efforts have been instrumental in identifying technology trends among the agency's elderly population, and his video tutorials are among the most popular media content shared with agency audiences.

Natasha Leigh Rivera, FSS Participant for Public Housing Program

Natasha Leigh Rivera is a Public Housing resident who joined the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) in 2016, and is scheduled to complete her Contract in March 2021. Upon joining the FSS Program, Ms. Rivera was adamant about increasing her earnings in order to bring her desire to own a home to fruition. Ms. Rivera presently holds three positions of employment with local Human Service agencies, in addition to having been trained as a seasonal Tax Preparer. Ms. Rivera also completed the Real Estate Salesperson's Course, successfully secured her State licensure in August 2018, and is affiliated with a local Real Estate firm. Ms. Rivera has maintained a positive Credit Rating, accrued personal Savings and accrued over \$5,000.00 in her FSS Escrow Account as a result of increasing her earnings. Ms. Rivera is currently receiving Homeownership guidance through the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA) and hopes to purchase a multi-family home for herself and her two children, ages 2 and 14 in the Spring of 2019.

Victoria Perez, FSS Participant for Housing Choice Voucher Program

Victoria Perez is a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participant, who joined the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program in 2012, and is scheduled to complete her Contract in May 2019. Upon joining the FSS Program, Ms. Perez was highly motivated to secure employment, having been laid off from her previous position of five years with a local Property Management firm. Ms. Perez secured a Leasing Consultant position with Housing Management Resources in 2014 where she remains employed today. Ms. Perez has successfully improved her Credit Rating, accrued personal Savings, purchased a new vehicle and remained committed to achieving her life-long dream of Homeownership. Ms. Perez has accrued over \$40,000.00 in her FSS Escrow Account as a result of her determination and hard work towards increasing her earnings. Ms. Perez is looking forward to purchasing a single-family home in the Spring of 2019 where she can establish family traditions and create memories with her three children, ages 10, 13 and 15.

A Look



Left to right from top: • Ashley Joyce and Jerry Beausoleil pose for a picture during South Common Village's holiday party • An LHA Learning Zone participant holds up her winning poster from a Fire Safety Poster Contest held by the HAI Group this past fall • Michelle Dinan, FSS Director, holds up the "biggest" holiday wishes the LHA has ever received from the Learning Zone • Vanna Howard of Lowell Community Health Center joined the Board of Commissioners this past summer • Learning Zone participants plant seeds during an exercise, provided courtesy of Kids in Tech • A Summer Youth Activities Program participant gets a wet and wild ride during a day trip to Canobie Lake Park • Dewey Archambault Towers becomes City View Towers as part of a larger re-branding initiative to re-name LHA properties

Back at 2018



Left to right from top: • Barbara Bond, former resident and "Chief Researcher" for the LHA's historical exhibit project, takes a nostalgic visit to her old apartment at North Common Village • An image of Belvidere Heights taken during an effort to capture current images of our properties for the LHA's new website • Gary Wallace, Executive Director, and Adam Garvey, Chief Financial Officer, accept two Awards of Merit at the NAHRO conference in San Francisco this past summer • The LHA, in partnership with the Merrimack Valley Food Bank became an approved food site, serving 3 meals a day to residents in two LHA communities • LHA Learning Zone Participants pose for a group photo during a field trip to iRobot, provided courtesy of Kids in Tech • Kiddos went back to school in style with new backpacks filled with school supplies distributed by the LHA



Community Partner Awards

Greater Lowell Community Foundation

Since 1997, The Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF), has been dedicated to improving the lives of people in the Greater Lowell and Merrimack Valley by addressing the social, educational, economic, environmental, and cultural needs of the community. Through their generosity, GLCF has been a strong supporter of Lowell Housing Authority programs and services. In 2016, the Foundation awarded the agency a \$3,500 grant to fund Traveling Science Workshops hosted by the Discovery Museum of Acton to further enhance STEM curriculum. These mobile presentations afforded a highly interactive learning experience for participants in the LHA's Learning Zone After-School program. This February, GLCF assisted the agency in funding a new project called Tech Savvy Seniors. This exciting new initiative offers a peer-to-peer approach to learning. The program seeks to expand technology support services for elderly residents to include on-site seminars for residents living in the LHA's elderly developments to ensure that while the agency embraces new technology to drive our mission, no resident will be left behind. These creative programs would not have been possible without the support of GLCF, and we are truly grateful for their belief in our mission.

Northeast Legal Aid

Northeast Legal Aid's mission is to help low-income and elderly people of Massachusetts obtain justice and empowerment through skillful, creative, and persistent advocacy for systematic change and high-quality representation. Northeast Legal Aid has worked in the Lowell Community for over 30 years, advocating for residents during times of crises, and collaborating with the agency to resolve issues to reach mutually beneficial agreements to serve our residents. In early 2018, Stephanie Balandis of Northeast Legal Aid agreed to write a letter of support in the Authority's quest for Mainstream Vouchers. We were successful in being awarded 28 Vouchers for disabled individuals. Ms. Balandis's letter outlined the collaborative relationship the LHA has developed with her staff in providing reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities. We are most grateful for her support and wish to recognize the work of Northeast Legal Aid.

Greater Boston Food Bank

Food insecurity is a prevalent concern amongst the low-income, elderly population, with many faced with the decision to either purchase necessary prescriptions or the basic nutritional staples. The Greater Boston Food Bank's Brown Bag program operates at 15 partner sites and provides free supplemental groceries to more than 8,500 seniors in need each month. In 2015, the Greater Boston Food Bank partnered with the Lowell Housing Authority to provide elderly residents with access to the Brown Bag Meal Program. Residents in need are provided with a monthly delivery of nutritious food. To date, over 200 LHA households participate in this offering at our South Common, City View Towers, Francis Gatehouse and Belvidere Heights developments. In 2017, the Open Pantry of Greater Lowell in partnership with the GBFB assumed handling of new enrollments and monthly distributions at South Common and during Spring 2018, at City View Towers. A monthly Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) was also made available to the residents under age 60 and within the established income limits who reside at both our Concord River Mill and Centralville Gardens developments. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a federal program designed to help low-income seniors access healthy food provided by USDA. GBFB creates welcoming CSFP distributions by partnering with senior-focused organizations that are trusted in the community.

Board of Commissioners

Vanna Howard, Chairperson

Commissioner Vanna Howard is currently employed as a communications director for the Lowell Community Health Center's Advancement Department. She currently serves as a Commissioner of the Asian American Commission, and serves or has held membership in a number of Lowell community organizations. Howard possesses experience in nonprofit community outreach, public relations, event planning, and fundraising.

Philip L. Shea, Vice Chairperson

Philip Shea is a proud Lowell native with a lifetime of accomplishments. Shea grew up in Lowell's public housing at 82 Lewis Street in the Acre's North Common Village, was educated in the Lowell Public School System and later attained an accounting degree at Bentley College. Shea holds the distinction of being the only Lowell elected official to serve in the Lowell City Council, the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and the State Senate. Shea finished his career as Chief Financial Officer under Secretary William Galvin. Throughout his career, Shea was instrumental in developing federal, state and local partnerships to revitalize Lowell, and is widely recognized for his leadership and mentoring of young public servants to ensure they reach their full potential.

Joanie Bernes, Commissioner

Joanie Bernes is the Lowell Housing Authority's Tenant Representative on the Board of Commissioners. Joanie has held various positions throughout her professional career including hospitality, and customer service, and was part owner of a small business. Joanie is an active participant of the City View Towers Tenant Council, and a volunteer with Community Teamwork Inc.

Matthew Marr, Commissioner

Matt Marr is a lifelong resident of the City of Lowell, and current resident of the Centerville section of the city. He comes to the Authority with 15 years of experience in masonry construction. Mr. Marr currently serves as an Executive Officer for the Massachusetts Bricklayers and Allied Craftsman, Massachusetts Local 3, and a delegate for the Central Labor Council. Since 2004, Mr. Marr has also been a member of the Greater Lowell Technical High School Advisory Board Committee.

Robert McMahon, Commissioner

Robert McMahon is a veteran and former resident of the Housing Authority's Shaughnessy Terrace Development. Mr. McMahon has always had a strong commitment to public service, and has been involved in a number of number of philanthropic endeavors including the Kaitlin Kazanjian Foundation and St. Patrick's Church. He served as the Union Representative on the Board for his first term and now is serving his second term as the Governor's appointment to the Board.