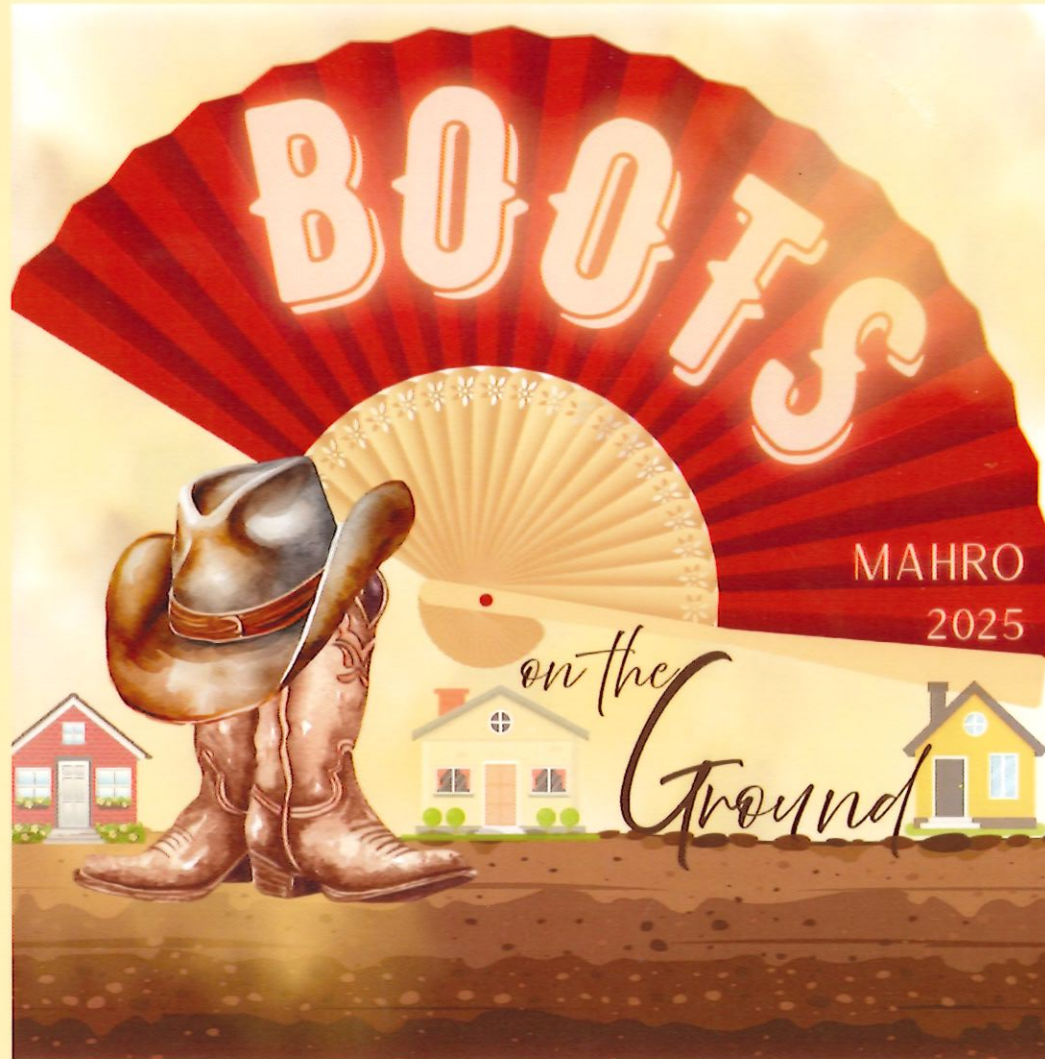




INFORMER

MISSISSIPPI ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS



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**FROM YOUR
MAHRO PRESIDENT**

Greetings MAHRO members!



**Christopher McKissick
MAHRO president**

As I write this, my final message for the Informer, my thoughts turn not to lists of accomplishments, but to the remarkable character of the people who make up MAHRO. Over the past two years, I have had a front-row seat to the unwavering dedication that defines housing professionals in Mississippi. It is this spirit—a blend of resilience, compassion, and a relentless drive to serve—that has powered our journey and will continue to be our greatest asset.

When we began our journey “TO-MAHRO,” we faced a landscape of change with new regulations and evolving challenges. Yet at every turn, I have watched our members respond not with hesitation, but with a profound commitment to learning and adaptation. I’ve seen it in the way you’ve filled our training rooms to capacity, seeking knowledge on everything from high-level commissioner duties to the intricate details of maintenance and occupancy. This collective thirst for excellence is the true story of our recent success.

More than anything, what strikes me as the most powerful sign of our strength is the collaboration that has blossomed at the local level. Seeing housing authorities join forces to organize their own trainings is a testament to the fact that MAHRO is more than just an association; it is a living network. You are not waiting for solutions; you are creating them together. This self-starting initiative is the ultimate legacy, proving that our community is empowered and deeply connected.

Our work at the association level has simply been to reflect and support that incredible energy. Launching “The Works – Housing Sweatshop” was a direct response to your belief in investing in people, ensuring that our vital front-line staff receive the development they deserve. It was born from the same principle I see in action across the state. When we lift each other up, we all rise.

As I step back into the role of a proud member, I am filled with optimism for MAHRO’s future. The leadership, expertise, and collaborative spirit are embedded deeply within this organization. The opportunity to serve as your president has been the one of the most rewarding experiences of my career. Thank you for your trust, your partnership and for making this journey so incredibly rewarding.

Chris McKissick, MAHRO president



Robert Gray — 2025 COMMISSIONER OF THE YEAR



Pictured above: Commissioner Vice President Johnny Johnson presents Commissioner of the Year award to Mr. Robert Gray from South Delta Regional Housing Authority. CONGRATULATIONS ROBERT!

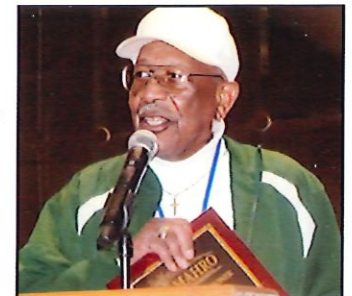
MAHRO has selected Robert D. Gray, vice-chairman of the South Delta Regional Housing Authority (SDRHA) as our commissioner of the year! Vice-chairman Gray has been a positive force throughout his career for fair and equal housing for low/moderate income citizens. He strongly encourages safe, affordable housing and has always promoted home-ownership as a means of creating wealth for the residents we serve.

Vice-chairman Gray has served on SDRHA and Shelby Housing Authority for more than 30 years combined. Serving as vice-chairman, he works along with the chairman and fellow commissioners to make sure the SDRHA stays in compliance. Gray holds a bachelor of science from Mississippi Valley State University and did his post graduate work at Texas Southern University.

Vice-chairman Gray assisted with laying the groundwork throughout the six counties served under SDRHA agency for large renovation projects throughout the authority. After five years of planning, developing and renovating, families were allowed to move into newly renovated units in 2020.

Gray works hard to serve and improve his community and serves or has served in numerous positions over the years, including manager/developer for Shelby Federal Credit Union; chairman of the Bolivar County Democratic Party, exalted ruler for the ELKS I.T. Montgomery Lodge #664, mayor of the city of Shelby, and as a member of the city of Shelby’s board of alderman.

We are proud to honor Vice-chairman Gray with this award and offer our sincere thanks for his years of service to MAHRO and the SDRHA. Congratulations on a job well-done!



2023-2025 Mahro Officers



CHRISTOPHER MCKISSICK, VICE PRESIDENT is executive director of Booneville Housing Authority. He has an associate of arts degree from Southwest Mississippi Community College and a bachelor of science from the University of Phoenix in information science. With over 14 years of IT experience, McKissack serves on the NAHRO small agency task force and on SERC's emerging leaders and small agency task force.



KATINA PACE, DIRECTOR is deputy executive director for Mississippi Regional Housing Authority VI in Jackson. Prior to joining MRHA VI, she served as vice president of the allocation division of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program for the state of Mississippi at Mississippi Home Corporation. She has over 19 years of affordable housing experience. Katina received her bachelor's degree in economics with an accounting emphasis from Tougaloo College.



KAYE JUDSON, SECRETARY/TREASURER is retired from the West Point Housing Authority. Kaye has over 34 years of experience in public housing and holds a bachelor's degree in accounting. She currently serves as secretary-treasurer of her state association. She has served on SERC's small agency task force, scholarship, housing, professional development, and education and training committees. Kaye also served on NAHRO's professional development, housing and small agency task force committees.



FELICIA JACKSON, VP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT is the assistant executive director of the Housing Authority of the city of Laurel and has 30 years of service there including numerous years as an administrative assistant. She is a co-chairperson of the South Mini Group, vice-president of professional development-MAHRO, a chairperson of education, training and resolutions committee for SERC and member of SERC's professional development committee. Jackson is a graduate of Jackson State University where she received her bachelor's degree in business administration.



SARAH LYONS, MEMBER SERVICES is the controller of the Biloxi Housing Authority. Sarah has a master of business administration degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. She brings her leadership experience to MAHRO along with 15 years of experience in the public housing industry to Biloxi. She currently serves as the vice president of MAHRO's member services committee, a MAHRO emerging leader, and MHARM advisory committee member. She is Mississippi's representative on SERC's member services and public affairs/SERCulator committees.



GLORIA BYRD, VICE PRESIDENT HOUSING is the executive director of Picayune Housing Authority. She has been serving Picayune Housing Authority for 13+ years and the past 2 years as the executive director. Gloria is currently serving MAHRO as housing committee chair, administrative practices committee chair, a member of emerging leaders committee, and professional development committee. She is also serving as a member on the SERC/NAHRO emerging leaders committee and nominating committee.



JOHNNY JOHNSON, VP COMMISSIONERS of Houston, MS has served as president of the Regional Housing Authority IV board for the past 25 years. He recently served as the president of commissioners for SERC. In 2013, he received "Commissioner of the Year" for NAHRO. Johnny is retired from the military where he was a bronze star recipient, and is a retired educator having taught in both the Mississippi and Alabama public school systems. His community service includes serving as the grand senior warden for the M.W. Stringer Grand Lodge for the state of Mississippi. He is the worshipful master for McIntosh Lodge #80, in Houston, MS. He served as president of Mississippi's personnel board, and has been a member of the hospital auxiliary board, chamber of commerce board, United Way education chairman, and the Columbus Air Force Base community council.



JASON SPENCER, FIRST PRESIDENT is the executive director of Tennessee Valley Regional Housing Authority which serves 1,245 RAD PBRA units and 1,850 HCV's located in a ten-county area in northeast Mississippi. He has 22 years of service with TVRHA in a wide variety of roles. Spencer is the president of MAHRO for 2021-2023. He is also a PHADA trustee and serves on the housing committee for PHADA. He is currently serving on the rental assistance committee, multifamily committee and asset repositioning committee for SERC-NAHRO. Spencer holds a BBA from Faulkner University and an MBA from Union University in Jackson, TN.



BEN O. WASHINGTON, SECOND PRESIDENT is the executive director of the Vicksburg Housing Authority and its non-profit Vicksburg Housing Management and Development LLC. He also serves as the executive director for the Yazoo City Housing Authority. Washington has over 15 years of experience in low-income housing and 13 years as an executive director. He is the past president for MAHRO and serves on several SERC committees. He has a bachelor of science in business administration from University of Southern Mississippi.



STACY BLACK, DIRECTOR is the executive director of the Housing Authority of the City of Winona where she has 9.5 years of service. Stacy is a MAHRO board member and a member of the MAHRO emerging leaders committee and the professional development committee. Stacy attended Jackson State University where she majored in English education.



SHARON WHITE, DIRECTOR is the executive director of the Housing Authority of the City of Water Valley and has 24 years of experience in housing. She serves as a member of the exhibitors committee. Sharon studied business at Belhaven University, and she is a certified professional housing manager by NAHRO.



JANICE HERBERT, DIRECTOR is the executive director of the Housing Authority of the City of Natchez She has 47 years of service at the housing authority including 40 years as an assistant director and four years as the executive director. She serves on the MAHRO board, is co-chairperson of the scholarship committee and serves as a member of the legislative committee. She also serves on the SERC scholarship and legislative committee, and she is a new member on the MHARM Insurance board. Herbert is a graduate of Alcorn State University with a bachelor's degree in business administration, master's degree in business administration and a master's degree in hospitality and gaming.



TABITHA SMITH, DIRECTOR is the executive director of the Tupelo Housing Authority and has 24 years of service. She currently serves as chairperson of MAHRO's administrative practices committee. She also serves as a member of MAHRO's emerging leaders committee and of SERC's administrative practices committee.



ROBERT GREATHREE, DIRECTOR is the executive director of the city of Columbus MS Housing Authority and has 27 years' experience. He is currently a member of the policy advisory committee in the Mississippi chapter, and was appointed executive director at the Columbus Housing Authority in June. Robert holds bachelor's degree in accounting from University of Southern Mississippi. He began as staff accountant and controller of Columbus Housing Authority in May, 2009. He has seven years experience concentrating in governmental accounting. With his bookkeeping and tax planning experience he has been an active board member for the Last House on the Block, a sober living environment that provides support for men completing drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.



JUDY MELLARD, POLICY ADVISORY is the executive director of the Hattiesburg Housing Authority with 21+ years of service and serves as President of their non-profit Forrestburg Housing Development Corp. She has served on several MAHRO, SERC, and NAHRO committees. She is past president of MAHRO and currently serves on the MAHRO policy advisory committee. She received her bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Southern Mississippi with an entrepreneurship emphasis. Judy is certified in public housing management.



AILRICK YOUNG, POLICY ADVISORY is the executive director of the city of Laurel, MS Housing Authority and has 27 years' experience. He is currently a member of the policy advisory committee in the Mississippi chapter, and has served as SERC past president as well as on the nominating and youth development committees. He also serves on the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) Strategic Planning Advisory Group (SPAC). He holds a bachelor's degree from University of Southern Mississippi in criminal justice.



THOMAS COLEMAN, POLICY ADVISORY is special advisor to Tennessee Valley Regional Housing Authority has over 40 years of service. Thomas is a past president and has served on the board of directors of MAHRO. He served two terms as SERC's vice president of housing and is presently a member of SERC's legislative committee. He served on the NAHRO housing committee for several years and is presently a member of the PHADA housing committee. He has a

OCCUPANCY WORKSHOP

MAHRO holds spring workshops

The Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials held the annual Occupancy Workshop in May, at the Sheraton's Refuge Hotel and Conference Center in Flowood. The Nelrod Company provided two full day sessions—Public Housing and Housing Choice Vouchers!

The sessions were designed for those new to calculating rents and for those wanting to strengthen their knowledge of income and rent determinations while learning the new HOTMA provisions. The newest HUD-provided guidance and requirements was addressed. Participants learned procedures for determining, calculating, and documenting income and rent calculations. Sample verification and tracking forms were provided. Case studies were interspersed throughout the training to reinforce the principles presented.

Hot Topics from the first two days included ethics & best practices for PHA occupancy; public housing HOTMA compliance; public housing occupancy FAQ; public housing eligibility & suitability; public housing calculating & verifying uncommon income sources; HCV HOTMA compliance; HCV occupancy FAQ;



Officer Kyle Craig with Bay Waveland Police Department, along with Gloria Byrd and Chris McKissick. Officer Craig provided a discussion on Human Trafficking.

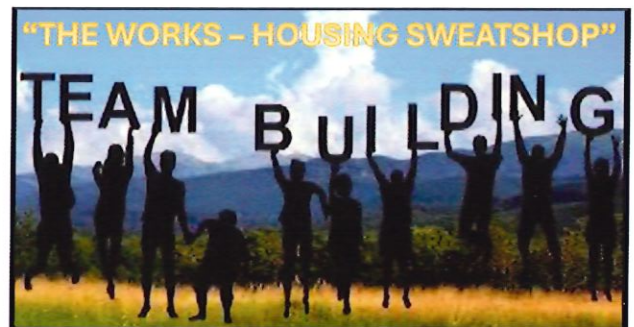


HCV eligibility; HCV calculating & verifying uncommon income sources;

The third day featured a discussion on human trafficking which included how to identify potential victims and how to properly respond to these situations.

"THE WORKS" WORKSHOP

In April, MAHRO held its first ever "The Works" training which focused on team-building for housing authorities. Attendance was strong with team members at all levels participating. Personality assessments were completed, evaluated and discussed to help each member recognize their strengths and weaknesses helping them determine how they can best contribute to their teams. The training was led by Paul Garrett, a certified trainer and consultant to the housing industry. The two-day training session concluded with round table discussions and team-building group activities



TEAM BUILDING is a process that helps a work group to evolve into a cohesive unit!

Communication

Problem Solving

Creative Thinking

Employee Bonding

MAHRO





M H A R M

MHARM INSURANCE COVERAGE

- Property
- General Liability
- Crime (*employee dishonesty, forgery and altercations, money and securities*)
- Automobile Liability and Physical Damage
- Public Officials Liability
- Worker's Compensation
- Blanket Accident Policy
- Equipment Breakdown

Become a part of the Mharm Team!

*A*s a member of MHARM your agency can benefit from an insurance program that is tailored for exposures specifically encountered by public housing agencies in Mississippi.

We are able to offer much broader liability and property coverage and keep rates favorable. This is accomplished by shared ownership and by having lower overhead cost than commercial carriers.

We have maintained exceptionally strong financial footing and have been able to keep pricing very competitive as compared with other pools and first dollar pricing. Since Mississippi public housing authority executive directors, senior staff, and commissioners make up our board of directors, we are keenly aware of and able to address problems that Mississippi public housing authorities face.

MISSISSIPPI HOUSING AUTHORITIES RISK MANAGEMENT, INC



M H A R M

MAINTENANCE CORNER

Hurricane season is here: be prepared and stay safe!

Copied from the Laurel Housing Authority resident newsletter.

As hurricane season peaks in our region, we want to ensure that you and your loved ones are safe, informed and ready for any severe weather that may come our way. Hurricane season typically runs from June 1 to November 30, with the highest likelihood of storms occurring between August and October.

We encourage everyone in our community to take a few simple but vital steps to prepare. Your safety is our top priority in the maintenance department!

Create an emergency kit in a water-proof container that includes flashlights and extra batteries, bottled water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days), non-perishable food, first-aid supplies, prescription & over-the-counter medications, important documents (ID, insurance, medical records), phone chargers and backup power sources.

Plan your evacuation route with family members. Know where you'll go if an evacuation is ordered. Talk with family members about meeting locations and contacts. If you have family members with special needs, contact your maintenance office prior to the storm to let them know what might be needed in case of an evacuation.

Follow these hurricane maintenance tips for your home.

Before the storm, clear your patio. Bring inside any chairs, plants, or objects that could blow around and cause damage. Check your windows and doors to ensure they are securely shut and locked. If you notice loose weather stripping or seals, re-report it to the maintenance office.

Unplug electronics. Though surge protectors help, unplugging devices reduces the risk of power surge damage. Keep drains clear. If you see leaves or debris around your unit, notify maintenance so we can address it quickly. Charge your phones and power banks before the storm arrives. Power outages can last hours or even days.

After the storm, report any damage to your unit immediately - especially leaks, flooding, or broken windows. Watch for hazards like downed wires, broken glass, or standing water. DO NOT attempt repairs yourself, contact your authority's maintenance team for all post-storm needs.



Johnny Randall, Maintenance

MAHRO 2025 POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

We had full participation for this year's contest. The names and PHAs of the 2025 What Home Means to Me Poster Contest winners are shown below and the 1st place winners are being forwarded to SERC for further competition.

K-5 GRADES

1st	Hattiesburg HA	Kayleigh Lee
2nd	South MS Regional HA	Leilani Walker
3rd	Picayune HA	Lillian Schaeffer

Other posters submitted, Brandon McCoy-Natchez HA, Lircoy Campbell-Biloxi HA, Jaknia Jones-West Point HA, Arin Mose-Clarksdale HA, Emilee McFadden-Okolona HA, Madison Hastings-Corinth HA, Mary Weaver-Tupelo HA, Ayden Smith-Clarksdale HA, Taylor Gore-Laurel HA, Naveah Carter, Kelsey Bell, Rylan Mack, Mason Mack, Karli Sanders, Nyla Pittman, Kennedi Woodard, Anaya Young, Ra'Niya Levison- Yazoo City HA, D'Marrion Demus- 15, Raquaun Bennett - 18- total (21)

6th-8th GRADES

1st	West Point HA	Dinero Fortson
2nd	Hattiesburg HA	Jaborri Lee
3rd	Okolona HA	DeAundre Garth

Other posters submitted, Derecia Smith-Natchez HA, Zachary Orick-Booneville HA, Braxton Thomas Laurel HA, Kylie Hasting -Corinth HA, Coltin Johnson-Picayune HA, Tryishar Dees-South Mississippi, Kristian Studaway, Zavier Davis, Caden Smith, Yazoo City HA - total (12)

9th-12th GRADES

1st	Natchez HA	Dejenae Fleming
2nd	Hattiesburg HA	Felisha Murry
3rd	Laurel HA	Kelsey Dixon

Participating HA's- Biloxi, Booneville, Clarksdale, Corinth, Hattiesburg, Laurel, Natchez, Okolona, Picayune, South Mississippi, Starkville, Tupelo, West Point, Yazoo City, with 40 posters submitted.

Prizes will be submitted at the annual Conference next month in Biloxi. Winning posters will be displayed at the conference next month.

2025 Annual Conference EXHIBITORS/PROFESSIONALS

GOLD SPONSORS



Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting

MHARM

Mississippi Housing Authorities Risk Management

MEMBER OWNED SINCE 1995



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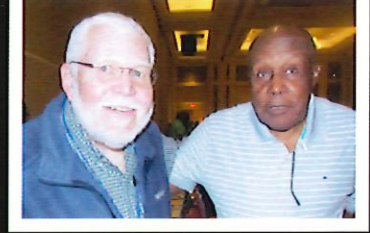
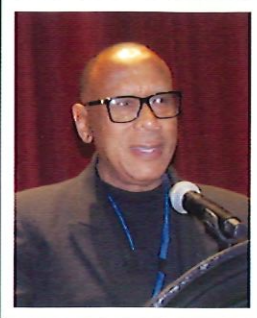
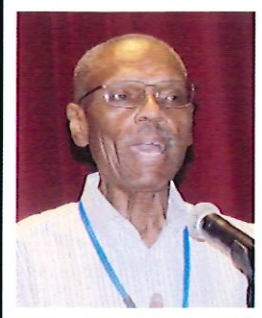
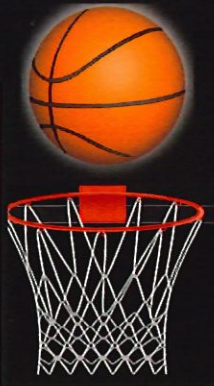


HENDERSON PEST CONTROL
Quality, Honesty, Relationships & Punctuality

MACS Commercial Heating and Air



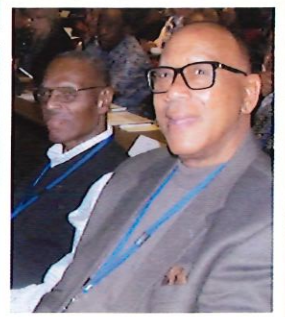
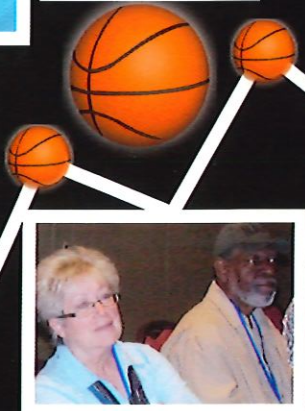
MAHRO COMMISSIONER'S CONFERENCE 2025



Commissioners, members, and vendors traveled to Biloxi's Beau Rivage for this year's conference. The ample meeting rooms and great accommodations provided at this venue are never a disappointment for our group.

Tipping off the MAHRO MADNESS event was President Chris McKissick as he introduced Vice-president of Commissioners Johnny Johnson who welcomed members and guests to Mississippi's beautiful gulf-coast. "WE PLAY TO WIN" reflected the basketball/sports dynamics theme for the conference which was filled with competitiveness and discussions of rule changes that come with each new year – and made it a lot of fun, as well!

Session Topics with Trainer Bobby R. Collins, MBA, CPM, CME, CMPO, provided interactive engagement for commissioners as they learned to be more effective in their roles while respecting the boundaries between commissioners and executive directors. The workshop helped attendees gain a much better understanding of the commissioners' roles (policy and oversight), while also exploring PHA



Continued on page 9



MAHRO COMMISSIONER'S CONFERENCE 2025

Special thanks to the conference committee for their hard work and a great conference!

Left to right: Shirmeca Currie— Laurel Housing Authority, Amy Bishop—Starkville Housing Authority, Pamela Jackson—Vicksburg Housing Authority and Felicia Jackson—Laurel Housing Authority

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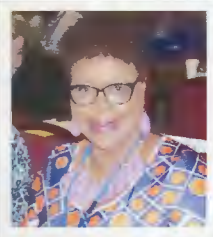


finances, operations, development, ethics and advocacy.

To keep the spirit of competition going, the group was challenged to a visual interactive game of Kahoot at work! Kahoot offered questions for quizzes, word clouds, and polls that kept the entire group engaged. The game featured unique experiences relatable to the housing industry. Each member who participated used his/her name and pin number on their personal cell phones to watch and track others as they played.

The conference also included announcing the Commissioner of the Year. This prestigious award was presented to Mr. Robert D. Gray, vice-chairman of the South Delta Regional Housing Authority.

At the afternoon session break (aka 'half-time') a smorgasbord of concessions-type food and drinks were available to participants for refreshment and energy renewal. WE PLAY TO WIN was an exciting and winning session for all who attended to learn the responsibilities of housing authority board members. It certainly isn't all fun and games as commissioners quickly find out when serving in these roles, but it is a very rewarding position necessary for providing safe, affordable housing for our residents across the state.



HALF-TIME CONCESSIONS STANDS



Refreshment time for commissioners, then back to work!



CAKE POPS, CRACKER JACKS



POPCORN



PRETZELS



SMORES AND MORE!

HUD announces regional administrator for the southeast region

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Scott Turner announced the appointment of Denise Cleveland-Leggett as the Regional Administrator for the Southeast Region (Region IV). "I am honored to welcome Denise Cleveland-Leggett back to HUD," said Secretary Turner, "As a real estate and housing policy expert, Denise has deep experience in both the nonprofit and private sectors. She will be an immense asset to our team, and I look forward to working with her to accomplish great things for Americans across the Southeast."

Cleveland-Leggett previously served as Southeast regional administrator during the first Trump administration. Before returning to HUD, she served as president and CEO of Leggett Ventures Consulting, advancing the largest mixed-use opportunity zones development project in the nation. Before her 2017 appointment, Cleveland-Leggett was a prominent corporate attorney in Atlanta, representing major healthcare clients in transactional and regulatory matters. She proudly holds a bachelor of arts from Oakwood University, a juris doctor from Boston University School of Law, and a senior managers in government certification from Harvard Kennedy School.

"I'm honored to be reappointed as regional administrator for region four by Secretary Turner," said Regional Administrator Denise Cleveland-Leggett, "The people of this great region have incredible resilience in the face of natural disasters and great appreciation for HUD's commitment to support affordable housing and localized solutions to address homelessness. I will continue to collaborate with our constituents and private partners to achieve HUD's mission."

As regional administrator for the Southeast region, Cleveland-Leggett will lead field operations across Region IV, serving Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In this role, she will support Secretary Turner in expanding access to affordable housing, promoting community revitalization, and unlocking homeownership opportunities for Americans in rural, tribal, and urban communities.



Recap of NAHRO's spring conference in Washington, D.C.

During the morning of our second day, we honored our legislators of the year, presented NAHRO's Advocate of the Year award to the Virginia Association of Housing and Community Development Officials, presented 20 Awards of Excellence, and held a discussion on housing and community development in uncertain times with NAHRO President George Guy, PHADA President Mark Gillett, CLPHA President Jeffrey Patterson, and MTW Collective Senior VP Maria Razo. We also had the honor of singing Happy Birthday to our "What Home Means to Me" calendar grand prize winner Adriana!



Day two included two sets of packed sessions on topics such as working with youth, preparing housing agencies for immigration and customs enforcement visits, housing as a human right, a Rental Assistance Demonstration overview, preparing for NAHRO's Hill Day, a homelessness panel discussion and cybersecurity for housing authorities.

We closed out a full day with our plenary afternoon session, where President Guy discussed advocacy strategies and successes with Bobby Collins, Robert Greathree, Marsha Parham-Green, Chonda Tapley and Michael Wong. Former NAHRO President Sunny Shaw spoke with presidential candidate Sean Gilbert and Senior Vice-presidential candidate Ivory Mathews.

Day three of the conference featured our annual "Day on the Hill" when all our advocates head to Capitol Hill to raise their voices for housing and community development! On day 3, we all head to Capitol Hill and raise their voices for housing and community development!



**SEPTEMBER
28-30, 2025**

Phoenix Convention Center | Phoenix, AZ



Laurel residents on the road to homeownership

Written by Laurel Housing Authority staff.

WINDSOR COURT

Kizzie Strickland has been a resident of Windsor Court for three years and ten months. She has always believed that this was a temporary housing situation for her until she could get herself in a better financial position to purchase a home. She added her life partner to her lease about a year ago, and her income caused the rent to be increased significantly. At that moment, they began to seriously work toward purchasing a home because they felt the amount was too much to pay to live in public housing. They reached out to ROSS Coordinator LaTonya Watson, and told her their plan. Watson started working with them to ensure their credit was good and that they were in a good position to purchase a home. She advised them on programs that were available for homeownership such as first-time homebuyers and grant funding that might be available through different resources and banks. In January, Watkins held a homebuyer event at the site and

representative Jennifer Sumrall from Hope Credit spoke to the residents. Watkins made sure to inform residents she knew who needed to hear this important information. Since January, the residents have been diligently working toward purchasing a home. The home buyer process is very tedious but they have been consistently working through the process. It was tough and discouraging at times but their diligence and commitment finally got them to the point of closing on a home. Congrats to these residents for not giving up on their dream of home ownership.



TATRA KEYES GAINS CERTIFICATION

Written by Laurel Housing Authority staff.

BEACON HOMES

Tatra Keyes, a resident of Beacon Homes, is working to gain more knowledge and improve herself. Keyes, who moved into the Laurel Housing Authority in 2024, told her R.O.S.S. Coordinator that self-sufficiency is her goal. She enrolled in a medical training class and has successfully completed the training. "I wanted to try something new," Keyes said, "I wanted to make a career change."

Keyes started working at Mill-creek in Magee as a behavior health assistant in October 2023. She said this new training would allow her to branch out and start a new career. Keyes, a mother of one daughter, fulfilled all the necessary course work and training requirements set by All Things Medical Training for medical assistant/phlebotomy.

"I thank God for giving me the strength to be able to achieve this," Keyes said, "I couldn't do this without Him." Keyes said completing the training is her motivation. "I felt good just knowing that I completed the course-work," she said, "This training allowed me to learn a new skill and to be able to do something different with my life." Keyes next step is the state test to obtain her license.



KEMORA GARDNER RECEIVES MAHRO SCHOLARSHIP

Kemora Gardner, a resident of Laurel Housing Authority, is a recipient of the annual MAHRO scholarship. An invitation has been extended to Miss Gardner and her mother to attend the Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials Annual Breakfast in Biloxi, MS at the Beau Rivage on August 22nd.

Kemora has been accepted to attend Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she plans to become a member of the school's marching band, dubbed "The Human Jukebox." We offer our congratulations to Kemora and wish her all the best as she pursues her degree.



Homeownership can become a reality

Residents who have thought about homeownership or who need to improve his/her credit found help during the Laurel Housing Authority's third annual homeowners event held in June.

June was National Homeownership Month and the Laurel Housing Authority partnered with the Jackson Field Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to host its annual community homeownership event.

The theme for this year's event was "Opening doors: advancing the American dream in Laurel." Realtors and representatives from financial institutions from throughout the area participated in this community event. Organizers said the event is designed to present homeownership programs to residents.

The Jackson HUD Office representatives were on hand at the event to discuss homeownership, and representatives of financial institutions provided information about credit, loans and other things people need to know about the homeownership process.



Mayor Johnny Magee, Ailrick Young, Eloria James, HUD reps.—Courtney Lyles, Felicia Jackson, Adrenace Williams, Morgan

Staff recognized at "The Works Sweatshop" training

Members of the Starkville Housing Authority Staff were recognized for their participation and team building at the MAHRO's first "The Works-Housing Sweatshop" training. The sweatshop focused on team-building skills to help strengthen the bonds among team members so that staff members can work effectively as a cohesive unit. Participants completed personality trait assessments and worked in groups to complete a variety of team-building challenges.



ABOVE: Pictured from left to right are Leo Rice, maintenance supervisor; Gayle Glenn, bookkeeper; Greg Grayer, maintenance aide; Jeremy Lee, maintenance mechanic; Amy Jones-Bishop, executive director and Sheyenne Spruell, occupancy specialist.



LEFT: Starkville Housing Authority resident Danyell Latham and her sons Robert and Cason will be leaving public housing soon. The Latham family will become homeowners through the Starkville Area Habitat for Humanity Program. Danyell grew up in public housing and has raised her sons in public housing since 2008. Danyell has participated in the housing authority's homeownership workshops, and after numerous attempts, she was selected as the next habitat homeowner for the Starkville, MS area. The Lathams are scheduled to be in their home by November.

TUPELO HOUSING AUTHORITY

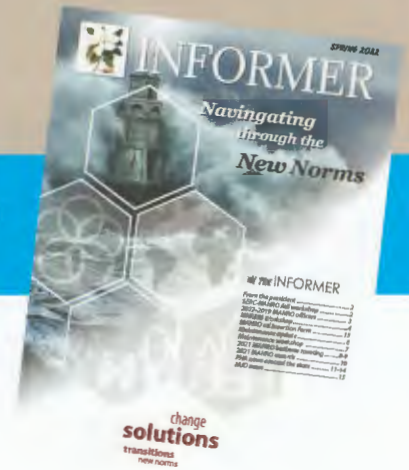
Revitalized program blooms at Tupelo Housing Authority

It has been an exciting season of growth at the Tupelo Housing Authority. Community pride is blooming outdoors thanks to the new "Yard of the Month" initiative. This program recognizes residents who contribute to the neighborhood's curb appeal with their beautifully kept yards. Winners are honored with a special sign and a feature in the Tupelo Housing Authority's newsletter, inspiring others and celebrating their dedication. The Tupelo Housing Authority is proud to support its residents and cultivate a thriving community.



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COMMISSIONERS RECEPTION

Commissioners and MAHRO members gathered for a reception on the terrace to kick off the conference!





Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials

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Hyatt Regency Greenville
Greenville, SC