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I’d like to take this opportunity to thank our immediate Past President Judy Mellard for her service the past two years. In the short time since I’ve assumed the duties of president, I’ve come to appreciate her commitment and dedication to MAHRO, and I will strive to carry on her good work.

At the release of this publication, we will be attending our annual Commissioners’ Conference, where we are looking forward to the activities and training sessions. These training sessions give our commissioners the knowledge and resources they need to make the decisions with which they are tasked. All of us owe thanks to our professional development committee and Commissioner John Bounds for making this conference the success I know it will be.

In the times ahead, we will be faced with many uncertainties such as financial constraints, burdensome regulations, and changing leadership on the state and federal levels. It will be vital for us, as individuals and committees, to work hand in hand with our senators and representatives on both levels. Through constant communication and the sharing of ideas and concerns, we will be able to deal with the problems that we will face. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of each MAHRO member and his or her role in helping us reach our organizational goals.

Over the course of my tenure as president, I look forward to working with the many dedicated MAHRO board members and committee members as well as the entire MAHRO membership. I would like to thank all of those responsible for allowing me the honor to serve as president of this vital organization and offer a heartfelt thanks for the trust placed in me. A very special thank you to the Louisville Housing Authority’s board of commissioners for allowing me the latitude to accept this responsibility.

Ginger Ming, MAHRO president
Ginger Ming is the executive director of the Louisville Housing Authority where she has 15 years of service. She is currently the president of MAHRO and serves on the MHARM Insurance board. Ginger is currently serving as the chairperson of the SERC housing committee. She also serves on the housing committee for NAHRO.

Ben Washington is the executive director of the Vicksburg Housing Authority and its non-profit Vicksburg Housing Management and Development LLC, where he has over six years' service. He is a board member for MAHRO, and serves on SERC’s rental assistance committee. He has a bachelor of science in business administration from University of Southern Mississippi.

Kaye Judson is retiree from the West Point Housing Authority. Kaye has 32 years’ experience in public housing and holds a bachelor's degree in science and accounting. She currently serves as secretary-treasurer of her state association and is co-chairperson of the scholarship committee for SERC. She has served on SERC’s small agency task force, scholarship, housing, professional development, and education and training committees. Kaye also serves on NAHRO’s professional development and small agency task force committees.

Paula Dempsey is the occupancy administrator at the Louisville Housing Authority of Louisville where she has 2 years of service. She is currently serving as SERC’s vice president for professional development in MAHRO and is currently serving on SERC’s professional and development committee.

Alan Ingram is the deputy executive director for the Natchez Housing Authority. He has 36 years’ experience and serves as the vice president of member services in MAHRO. He is also a member of MAHRO’s scholarship committee, legislative committee, the MHARM Insurance advisory board and is the editor for the MAHRO Informer. Alan is currently serving on SERC’s scholarship and member services committees, and is a past state representative and former member of the executive, legislative and scholarship committees. He has a bachelor’s degree in public administration from the University of Mississippi.

Katina Pace is the deputy executive director for Mississippi Regional Housing Authority VI (MRHA VI) in Jackson. Prior to joining MRHA VI in December 2013, 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 17 years of affordable housing experience. Mrs. Pace received her bachelor’s degree in economics with an accounting emphasis from Tougaloo College.

John Bounds is the chairperson of the board of commissioners for Mississippi’s Oxford Housing Authority. He has 16 years’ experience in the housing industry. John has a bachelor’s degree from the University of Mississippi, and he serves as the vice president of the board of commissioners for MAHRO. He also serves on SERC’s legislative and commissioners’ committees.

Tabitha Smith is the executive director of the Tupelo Housing Authority and has 24 years of service. She currently serves as chairperson of the MAHRO administrative practice committee. She also serves as a member of MAHRO’s emerging leaders committee, and on the SERC administrative practice committee.

Brian Power is the executive director at Mississippi Regional Housing Authority IV in Columbus, MS, and has 33 years’ service in public housing. Brian serves on the board of directors and as past president of MAHRO. He has been a SERC member for 25 years and has served on numerous committees including maintenance and modernization; public affairs, legislative, education and training committee, executive committee; and as a state representative.

Rita McKissick is the executive director of The Housing Authority of the City of Booneville. She worked for The Housing Authority of the City of McComb for seventeen years, starting as a housing manager and moving up to administrative assistant before coming to Booneville Housing. Rita has two children and two grandchildren.

Helen Werby is the executive director of the Biloxi Housing Authority, where she began working in August, 2004 as the HOPE VI coordinator. She serves as the president of the Biloxi Community Development Corporation. She currently serves on the boards of the Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MAHRO), the Mississippi Housing Authority Risk Management Insurance Pool (MHARM), Gulf Coast Housing Initiative, Mercy Housing and Human Development, Mississippi Association of Affordable Housing Providers (MAAHP), and Gulf Coast Housing Partnership.

Felicia Jackson is the assistant executive director of the Housing Authority of the city of Laurel, MS where she has 26 years of service. She is a co-chairperson of the South Mini Group, and a member of Professional Development and Emerging Leaders for MAHRO and SERC. Felicia is a graduate of Jackson State University holding a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

Thomas Coleman is the executive director of Tennessee Valley Regional Housing Authority of Corinth, and has over 40 years of service. He has served on the board of directors for MAHRO and on SERC’s legislative committee. He is past vice president of housing (two terms) and has served on numerous other committees. He has a bachelor’s degree from Mississippi State University. Thomas and his wife Mary Kathryn have two sons, Tom and Douglas, and two grandchildren.

George Smith is a retired executive director from MRHA V in Newton, MS. He currently serves on the MAHRO Policy Advisory Committee.

Ailrick Young is the executive director of the city of Laurel and has 22 years’ experience. He is currently a member advisory committee of the policy committee in the Mississippi chapter, and has served as SERC past president as well as on the nominating and youth development committees. He holds a bachelor’s degree from University of Southern Mississippi in criminal justice. Ailrick and his wife Sabrina have two children, Ailrick Jr. and Lauren.

Royal Ann Spencer is the executive director of the Clarksdale Housing Authority where she has 39 years of service. She serves on the policy advisory committee for MAHRO, and is currently serving on SERC’s small agency task force committee. She has also served on the board of directors of MAHRO as well as president, senior vice-president, and vice-president for professional development. Royal Ann attended the University of Southern Mississippi.

Judy Mellard is the executive director of the Hattiesburg Housing Authority with 16 years of service. She currently serves as the immediate past president of MAHRO. She is the Mississippi SERC representative and has served on SERC’s annual conference, professional development, housing, legislative, and budget committees. Currently, she serves as the chairperson of the SERC-NAHRO IRGE committee and serves on the SERC legislative 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.
MHARM update

On January 24-25, our annual insurance workshop was held at the Embassy Suites in Ridgeland. With over 70 registered attendees, this was the largest insurance workshop held to date. Thought-provoking and timely topics included Distracted Driving by Mike Eady; Public Sector Risk Control – Travelers; Herbicide and Pesticide Application by Mike Page, loss control specialist - Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services; Contracts and Sexual Harassment by Amanda Franklin, J.D. area assistant vice president - Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services; Repo-positioning by Lee Hill, J.D. - Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC; AHP and Health Insurance by Tracie McPherson, Mississippi area president and benefits consultant - Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services; and Coverage and Claim Review by Philip Rutledge. Tommy Robinson concluded the seminar reviewing MHARMs financial position. The workshop was both informative and well attended. Thanks to all the presenters and attendees for another beneficial session.

In conjunction with the workshop the new 2019-2021 MHARM advisory committee held its initial meeting. Committee members are appointed for two years and chosen from each MAHRO mini-meeting district. The chairperson of F-Troop is also asked to be a part of the committee. The advisory committee provides feedback and ideas to MHARM management to improve and enhance claim handling and operations. This committee is invaluable to MHARM. Thanks to the following for agreeing to serve on the MHARM advisory committee:

North Mini-District:
- Terri Holt – Winona
- Kyle Downs – Baldwyn
- Brian Power – Region IV

Central Mini-District:
- Sabrina Billings – Yazoo City
- Maxie Rasco – Forest
- Carla Boyles – Attala County

South Mini-District:
- Felicia Jackson – Laurel
- Sarah Lyons - Biloxi
- Judy Mellard - Hattiesburg

NAHRO 2019
Washington Conference

CONNECT TO PURPOSE

April 7-9
Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel
Arlington, VA

MAHRO business meeting

According to MAHRO by-laws, each year the corporation holds one meeting that is known as the annual meeting at a time and place to be determined by the board of directors. The annual meeting is usually held on the last day of the annual conference. At this time, the MAHRO membership is invited to review budgets, the financial report and minutes from the last meeting. The executive director of each member agency shall have the authority to vote on behalf of the member in regard to the financial report and minutes. Board members recap the itineraries of each of their positions to show progress and achievements that were planned and executed throughout the year.
2019 Maintenance Workshop update

It seems like just the other day, we were discussing last year’s maintenance workshop, and now this year’s has come and gone. We managed to successfully train ninety-seven attendees about the new, frequently changing UPCS inspection process. Last year, we conducted a three-day session on the scoring process, dos and don’ts, and then-recent changes instituted by HUD. Now less than a year later, we are back at it again teaching this year’s “new and updated” changes. The REAC inspection process changes yearly, sometimes monthly, but the information provided should last a lifetime. USIG and John Emery provided another great training session, and those who passed the exam on the last day with receive a certificate from the trainer.

The Golden Nugget Hotel in Biloxi provided excellent food, accommodations and a helpful, accommodating staff. We had several vendors participate in the workshop and introduce some new, technologically-advanced products to help the maintenance employees with their jobs. MAHRO’s maintenance committee is already preparing for next year’s workshop, and we welcome your comments and suggestions on topics. We will be back in Biloxi at the Nugget again next year. Dates will be reviewed soon, but regardless of when, I guarantee the training will fit our needs and will be presented in a way that you will always remember.

We would also like to congratulate Mr. Ronald Gober from TVRHA for being awarded the Harold Panter MAHRO Maintenance Employee of the year. The award was presented this year during the Maintenance Workshop rather than the Annual Conference, so all his peers could see him and offer their congratulations!

Thank You!

MAHRO’S Education and Training Committee

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Absolute Security, Center Point Energy, Hill Manufacturing, K & K Chemical, Landlord Locks, Lindsey Software, Mississippi Department of Environment Quality, Orkin Pest Control, SACS Software, Seth’s Lighting, New ERA Pest Control, Precision Concrete Cutting, Stark Exterminators and Tapco Inc. Windows and Screens

HUD slashing advanced notice for inspections on public housing; should we be concerned?

Article from housingwire.com

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is about to give landlords and property owners much less of a warning about when it is going to inspect public housing or privately owned apartment buildings that include HUD-subsidized units.

HUD announced Wednesday that it is “dramatically reducing” the lead time between when it notifies public housing authorities and private owners of HUD-subsidized apartments about inspections on their properties and when those inspections actually take place.

According to HUD, its Real Estate Assessment Center currently provides as much as four months advanced notice before inspecting a multifamily property to ensure that it is “decent, safe and healthy.”

But HUD is cutting that lead time from as much as four months to 14 days.

Beginning on March 22, HUD will notify landlords and property owners 14 calendar days before an inspection is to take place.

According to HUD, its current system allows for property owners to use the lengthy lead time before an inspection to make “cosmetic, just-in-time” repairs to their properties, thereby ensuring that the pass inspection but not sufficiently sustaining proper maintenance throughout the year.

“It’s become painfully clear to us that too many public housing authorities and private landlords whom we contract with were using the weeks before their inspection to make quick fixes, essentially gaming the system, HUD Secretary Ben Carson said in a statement.

“The action we take today is part of a broader review of our inspections so we can be true to the promise of providing housing that’s decent, safe and healthy to the millions of families we serve.”

According to HUD, the Real Estate Assessment Center is currently responsible for inspecting properties owned and operated by approximately 3,700 local public housing authorities in the nation. Additionally, REAC-contracted inspectors assess approximately 23,000 privately owned apartment buildings.

Under the current system, approximately 96% of these properties pass their inspections, but HUD says that that many PHAs and landlords have “grown accustomed to REAC’s 20-year-old inspection regime” and, sometimes invest more money and time in passing the minimal inspection requirements instead of providing quality housing, as they are obligated to do.

In the new system, HUD employees and contract inspectors acting on HUD’s behalf will required to provide property owners 14 calendar days of notice prior to an inspection.

If the property owner declines, cancels or refuse to let an inspector review a property, HUD will record a presumptive score of zero. If a second inspection attempt results in a valid inspection within seven calendar days, the resulting score will be recorded for the property in question.
Executive directors from around the state met in September at the Columbus Hyatt Place. Debra Taylor, executive director of Columbus Housing Authority, and Brian Power, executive director of Mississippi Regional Housing Authority IV, helped with ‘host duties’ throughout the conference, assuring that everyone had what they needed to make this event successful!

The Columbus Visitors Bureau treated the attendees to a tour of the Tennessee Williams Home and a welcome reception at the Riverwalk the opening night of the conference.

Sessions began early the next day with MAHRO President Ginger Ming and Columbus Mayor Robert Smith welcoming participants. Sessions included presentations on economic development trends, leadership, and staying healthy. The roundtable discussion session, as always, was found to be one of the most helpful parts of the conference.

Several fun, exciting outings were incorporated into the conference including a city tour that featured the locally famous Friendship Cemetery, a tour and lunch at the PACCAR facility, and dinner by the pool at Lion Hills Clubhouse.

The Central Mini Group held its quarterly meeting in December 4th in Jackson. The meeting was attended by Chairman Ben Washington, Co-Chairperson Katina Pace, Allison Cox, Sonda Davis, Alice Bishop, Alan Ingram and Ron Turner. The agenda presented at the meeting included AI presentations, HUDs repositioning, SERC 2018 Fall Conference, Commissioners Conference, MTW application, 2019 Executive Directors Retreat location, Centralized Mini Meeting structure and the annual Maintenance Workshop.

All of the topics listed above were discussed in some capacity. The topic with most coverage was the Analysis to Impediments partnership with MHC. The discussion was mostly about how to plan and carry out the scheduled public hearings now required of housing authorities. Alan wanted to know which two documents the housing authorities were responsible for bringing to the hearing; the group determined it was the sign-in sheet and copies of the survey. It appears as if the presenter will be responsible for the recording of the meeting. Katina briefed the group on her recent public hearing and explained how she partnered with the entitlement city, Jackson Housing Authority and Vicksburg Housing Authority. She discussed the process for running the public notices to cover both voucher tenants and public housing tenants. She also answered questioned and discussed the requirements for advertising the hearings.

We briefly discussed HUD’s repositioning meeting. Ron indicated that he has one property he considers a possibility for repositioning but not at this time. He explained that in order to always have the option of selling the property, he lists potential sale of the property in his annual plan. By doing this, if he ever decides to move forward, he will not have to repeat steps or lose time moving on a plan of action.

We discussed the location for the 2019 Executive Directors Retreat and have tentatively decided on Jackson. Katina and Allison presented some great ideas for meeting activities and discussed great attractions the city now offers all in a centralized location.

The group also followed up on discussion from our last meeting about making the Jackson area our centralized meeting location for all future meetings. Jackson’s location in the center of the state will equalize travel distances for participants. Meeting dates for the Central Mini Group for the remainder of this year are February 22 (bring an employee), June 28, September 18 (start of Executive Directors Retreat) and December 6.
As part of NAHRO’s Housing America campaign, a poster contest is held each year for children residing in affordable housing and community developments owned or administered by NAHRO member agencies. Posters reflect the national theme of “What home means to me.” The contest is a collaborative effort of NAHRO’s chapter/state, regional, and national organizations. Mississippi was well represented throughout the state with many entries proceeding to the SERC-NAHRO Regional Poster Contest. Kacie Thomas from Natchez won the 3rd place prize for her category.
The 74th MAHRO Annual Conference was held at the beautiful Beau Rivage in Biloxi, MS. MAHRO President Ginger Ming chose “Embrace the Chaos” as the theme, and with all the housing changes, it certainly was appropriate. She emphasized that training is a good way to prepare for change. The conference provided sessions that addressed these changes for all housing authorities, but each one will have to decide what is best for their particular agency.

By now, most everyone is familiar with Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), which was created in order to give public housing authorities a powerful tool to preserve and improve public housing properties. Sessions also included a commissioners training and active shooter events/current drug trends conducted by professional captains of the police force.
At the opening session, members enjoyed a presentation from U.S. Congressman Steven M. Palazzo from Gulfport. Palazzo is not only a highly respected congressman, but he a true friend to the housing industry.

Also attending the MAHRO conference was the SERC-NAHRO President Sean Gilbert. Sean is serving his final year of a 2-year term. Sean is also the senior vice president of the Knoxville Community Development Corporation. He stressed the point that SERC is our leading advocate on Capitol Hill by continuing efforts to represent our organization with input from our state organizations and NAHRO.

As always the receptions are the highlight of the conferences. This one did not disappoint. “THE MURDER MYSTERY GROUP” provided entertainment at the president’s banquet. A ‘who done-it’ mystery had the group going in circles trying to figure out who was the villain.

The 2018 MAHRO scholarship awards were presented to three students for achievements in academics. Annual awards for maintenance person of the year and a memorial award were also presented at the conference. HUD awards were presented to housing authorities receiving knowledge of housing achievements for 2018. (see page 10 for photos). Mississippi Housing Association Risk Management (MHARM) held a meeting during the conference, giving members detailed updates on insurance issues, claims and the general status of the organization.

The conference was a huge success thanks to many people who contributed their time, talents and generosity.
The Murder Mystery Company not only entertained, but everyone was determined to solve the crime. Congratulations to the expert winners (and losers) of the murder mystery “who done it”.

It was a fun evening for all who participated and even for those who did not. We knew this group could solve the crime!
Scholarships  | AWARDS 2018

$1,000 MAHRO SCHOLARSHIP
Raylen My’Kel Jordan
Laurel Housing Authority

$1,000 MAHRO SCHOLARSHIP
Charles Lester Lampley, Jr. (not pictured)
Mississippi Regional Housing Authority IV

MICHAEL A. ROBERTSON SCHOLARSHIP
Skylar JaQuinCley Crenshaw
Tennessee Valley Regional Housing Authority

SHIELDS SIMS HUMANITARIAN AWARD
Sophia Nickels-Starkville Housing Authority

HAROLD PANTER MAINTENANCE
EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
Adolph Phillips.
Columbus Housing Authority

Raylen My’Kel Jordan
Laurel Housing Authority

Sophia Nickels-Starkville Housing Authority
Mississippi Regional Authority VII

Charles Lester Lampley, Jr. (not pictured)
Mississippi Regional Authority IV

HUD AWARD FOR LARGE PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
South Delta Housing Authority

HUD AWARD FOR SMALL PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
Mound Bayou Housing Authority

HUD AWARD FOR MOST IMPROVED PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY
Mississippi Regional Housing Authority V

HUD AWARD FOR ?
Mississippi Regional Authority VII

PUBLIC HOUSING RECIPIENTS OF CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE IN MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS and HIGH PERFORMERS

RESOLUTIONS

Bob McComb of Pontotoc accepts a resolution for his Commissioner John Ashmore.

TERI HOLT OF WINONA ACCEPTS A RESOLUTION
FOR HER COMMISSIONER KENNETH KING.

Tabitha Smith of Tupelo accepts a resolution in honor of former Executive Director, Janize Williams.

Amy Bishop of Starkville accepts award for Commissioner Sophia Nickels, winner of the Shields Sims Humanitarian Award.

RECOGNITIONS
Starkville Housing Authority—

Bridges out of Poverty grant provides art classes for students

The Starkville Housing Authority (SHA) has partnered with the Starkville Arts Council to provide after-school art classes. The classes are held every Tuesday at the SHA Literacy Center. After-school tutorial students have the opportunity to explore the world of art more in-depth through the program. The classes are taught by teaching artist Gerard Woods. Executive Director Amy Bishop hopes that the program will provide a positive way for students to express themselves. The program is sponsored through a grant from Starkville Bridges out of Poverty.

Region VI—MRHA VI provides gifts for the community

Instead of pulling names for a company-wide gift exchange, employees at the Mississippi Regional Housing Authority VI (MRHA VI) in Jackson decided to spread a little holiday cheer to those who need it the most. They collectively purchased a large supply of personal items to fill BLESSING BAGS for individuals in need. Thanks to the kindness of so many of the staff, they were able to prepare 40 drawstring packs of necessities. The bags included a variety of hats, gloves, socks, blankets, soap, lotions, hand sanitizers, deodorant, toothbrushes & toothpaste, and some non-perishable food items. This community outreach effort was a tremendous success! Several staff members traveled throughout the city of Jackson on December 21, distributing the bags at shelters and to homeless individuals. The kindness of the MRHA VI staff was well received and put smiles on the faces of many individuals. The BLESSING BAGS also blessed the staff with the joy received from helping others. “I feel like I have really done something to help someone today, and that is better than any material gift I could receive,” said one participating staff member.

Region VII

MRHA7 one family at a time

The Family Self-Sufficiency Department of Mississippi Regional Housing Authority VII in McComb received a certificate of excellent performance for enabling HUD-assisted families to increase their earned income and reduce their dependency on welfare assistance and rental subsidies. The certificate was given from the HUD Field Office in Jackson. Family Self-Sufficiency coordinators are from left to right: Bernie Hollaway, Mary Gallagher, Alesia Butler and Kristie Jordan.
Laurel Housing Authority (LHA) Conducts BOOKTACHULAR!

The Laurel Housing Authority (LHA) brought joy to many young residents through their Booktacular Event. The event, held by LHA officials and staff, was styled as a block party on Leontyne Price Boulevard on Halloween night. As part of the celebration, the staff and community volunteers dressed in costumes and provided plenty of candy, free food and music for the youth to enjoy. Participants also received free books from the Laurel/Jones County Library and safety lessons from members of the Laurel Fire Department.

LHA annual senior Christmas event a SUCESS!

Smiles, laughter and joy filled the Laurel Train Depot recently as senior residents of the Laurel Housing Authority (LHA) enjoyed an evening of fun, fellowship, food and dancing.

The local housing agency conducted its annual senior Christmas party which got numerous senior citizens out of the house to experience some Christmas spirit.

LHA’s board of commissioners, Executive Director Ailrick Young, and the employees of the Laurel Housing Authority along with several community organizations sponsor the event each year.

Vionne Angeletta, a LHA resident, participated in the event and thanked the housing authority for sponsoring it. “Everything is beautiful. The food is good, the people are nice and it’s a good event,” she said. “It’s just good to be able to get out, talk to other people and have a good time.” Charlie Stewart, another LHA resident, said she enjoyed the fellowship with the other residents.

Young said the Christmas event is important to the housing authority because of the joy it brings to the residents. “We enjoy doing this every year and being able to fellowship with each of you,” he told the crowd. “The staff works hard to prepare for this event, and they look forward to it each year.”

Assistant Executive Director Felicia Jackson coordinates teenage residents from the housing authority’s residents’ and staff’s family members, who volunteer to assist the senior residents during the event. During the event, staff members and volunteers pass out door prizes and ensure that every person at the party leaves with a gift.

Senior citizens unable to attend the event are also delivered a hot Christmas dinner on that day. Young said the LHA is working to provide affordable housing opportunities while enhancing the lives of residents.

Meridian Housing Authority—Busy improving properties

Over the past year, Meridian Housing Authority (MHA) has made tremendous strides toward increasing safety measures throughout each of its nine affordable housing communities. On October 18, 2017, the Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded MHA with a competitive safety and security grant in the amount of $189,000.

Surveillance and security systems were installed and are currently fully operational in the following communities: Highway Village, Western Gardens, Oakland Heights, Eastern Gardens, and Sowashee Courts. Plans are also underway to install surveillance systems at Magnolia Courts, Mountain View Village, Mount Barton and several of the agency’s scattered site locations.

After receiving HUD approval of the Capital Fund Financing program, several other major improvement projects have occurred throughout the agency’s properties including interior paint upgrades; heating unit replacements; fire extinguisher replacement and upgrades; windows and storm door replacements; refrigerator and range replacements; electrical upgrade; and enhancing curbside and containerized waste removal.
YouthBuild is an organization that provides education, counseling and job skills training to young adults between the ages of 16 and 24. The participants generally do not have a high school diploma or GED. The Natchez Housing Authority was awarded a $720,000 grant for three years and is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor.

The Natchez Housing Authority’s (NHA) YouthBuild program ranges from 6-to-9 months and offers five components: construction, academics, counseling/case management, leadership and postsecondary opportunity. After going through a two-week mental toughness exercise to get ready for YouthBuild, participants enter the actual course portion of the program. During this time, the participants earn their high school diplomas, enhance their leadership skills and promote career development to prepare them for the workforce.

The participants are required to attend classes from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The program focuses on three days of academics and two days of construction. NHA’s YouthBuild partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build homes for low-income families. The partnership with Habitat provides work sites that allow the participants to get hands-on construction experience.

The NHA held its first YouthBuild graduation on January 31. After a nine-month cohort, the program had 14 graduates: Nyesha Gaylor, Janesia Albert, Daphne Belton, Zejuana Davis, Candice Good, Jelremy Hutchins, Jatarrius Jackson, Jarell Johnson, Curleesia Knight, Roniqua McKnight, Joseph Proby, Lakira Smith, and Laura Swazy. The program and program has been a huge success for the community. Five of the graduates are now enrolled in Copiah Lincoln Jr. College. One graduate enrolled and relocated to Alcorn State University. NHA will continue to monitor and support the graduates to ensure that they are successful and productive in our community.

Laurel Housing Authority — Hosts 2019 SERC/MLK Basketball and Cheer competition

Laurel Housing Authority in Laurel, Mississippi hosted the 2019 Southeastern Regional Council (SERC) of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials’ Martin Luther King (MLK) Basketball Tournament and Cheer Competition.

While it’s billed as a basketball tournament and cheer competition, the event’s overall goal was to encourage academic achievement. Housing authority youth from SERC’s region participated from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi and North Carolina for the 27th annual tournament.

Laurel Housing Authority (LHA) Executive Director Ailrick Young said LHA was pleased to be this year’s official host of the Annual MLK SERC Basketball Challenge held January 18-20. While each team competed during the basketball tournament and cheer competition, this event involved more than just fun and games. Teams registered in the event were required to participate in educational activities, learn about Martin Luther King’s legacy and be exposed to the history and culture of the host city.

Felicia Jackson, LHA assistant executive director and tournament coordinator, said the educational activities and special events were designed to provide a unique experience for participating youth, which included a visit to the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art. Special events, such as the opening ceremony and awards banquet, were opportunities to reward participating youth with a formal sit-down dinner, while providing thrilling entertainment and an encouraging speaker.

Those attending the event heard a message from Laurel native and former NFL player Akeem Davis as the banquet speaker. Davis, a graduate of Laurel High School, attended Jones County Junior College and the University of Memphis. Because of his love for football, Davis signed an undrafted free agent deal with the Washington Redskins in 2014. After bouncing around with seven different NFL teams, Davis took a break from football last year. He’s going back to school at the University of Southern Mississippi to study sports management.

Young said the weekend featured numerous activities including a visit to the historical museum, an essay contest, basketball play and a great banquet where the young people were awarded prizes for their participation in the essay and competition basketball performances as well. Layla Jackson from Laurel, MS won an award for promoting education/excelling in academics.

Sponsors for the event were J’s Building & Designs, Laurel School District, the city of Laurel, Jones County – Beat 5, The Park Companies, Smith & Smith Associates, JET Consultants, Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, Lauren Rogers Museum of Arts, Mississippi Housing Authorities Risk Management, Coca Cola Bottling Company, Baur Corporation, Raising Cane’s and Jones County Economic Development Authority.
Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials

Apr 7-9—Legislative Conference
Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel
Arlington, VA

May—MAHRO Occupancy Workshop
Embassy Suites
Ridgeland, MS

June 2–5 —PHADA Annual Conference
Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa
Fort Lauderdale, FL

June 23-26— SERC-NAHRO Annual Conference
JW Marriott-Orlando
Orlando, FL

July 27-29—NAHRO Summer Conference
San Francisco Marriott Marquis
San Francisco, CA

August 13 —MAHRO Annual Board Meeting
Beau Rivage Casino and Hotel
Biloxi, MS

August 14-16—MAHRO Annual Conference
Beau Rivage Casino and Hotel
Biloxi, MS

SERC-NAHRO Committee Meetings
Chattanooga, TN
March 15–16

The MAHRO Informer is an official publication of the Mississippi Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

PLEASE SUBMIT ARTICLES TO:
MAHRO Informer
pauladesigns22@gmail.com
Visit our website at:
www.mahro.org

2019 SERC-NAHRO Annual Conference
JW Marriott - Orlando
23-26 June, 2019
Orlando, Florida