



Issue #6

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Virginia LISC E News

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Meet AmeriCorps Members from ElderHomes and Virginia Supportive Housing

The Virginia LISC AmeriCorps members started their service on September 1 at ElderHomes, Pathways, Southside Community Development and Housing Corporation and Virginia Supportive Housing (VSH).

Over the next few E-Newsletters we will introduce each of the Virginia LISC AmeriCorps members. In this addition of the newsletter, we start with members serving with ElderHomes and VSH.

Meet Roger Whitney

Roger is serving as the Volunteer Coordinator at ElderHomes. ElderHomes was founded in 1992 to improve the living conditions of seniors (and recently non-seniors) that are low-income or are living with a disability. Volunteers help more than 250 households each year by making repairs and improvements such as installing wheelchair ramps, window and door locks, painting, plumbing and electrical repairs.

Each day, Roger leads about 10 to 12 volunteers in building ramps and installing them for someone who would not be able to come outside without the ramp. He also leads them doing minor home repairs.

Roger learned of the Virginia LISC AmeriCorps opportunity from Martha Rollins, Executive Director, at Boaz and Ruth from which Roger recently graduated. According to Roger,

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he is continuing his learning at ElderHomes. Roger enjoys working with the Volunteers. Roger said that the Volunteers enter ElderHomes with a little apprehension about using the equipment and materials. He helps ease their apprehension by going over how the ramp is made and how to use the equipment. By the end of the day, everyone is a pro. "This is a great experience and is a very rewarding one being able to help those in need". Unfortunately says Roger, they have more demand than we are able to meet.

So what are Roger's plans after the Virginia LISC AmeriCorps program ends in August? Roger would like to continue doing more of the work done by ElderHomes.

Meet Rishonda Anthony

Rishonda is serving as a VIDA Coordinator in VSH's Petersburg office. VSH was founded in 1988 and was the first not-for-profit in the Commonwealth with the mission of providing permanent supportive housing to homeless single adults. Today, VSH continues to successfully serve very low-income homeless individuals and families, and those with disabilities. VIDA is the Virginia Individual Development Accounts program that helps eligible families learn how to manage their money and save to purchase a home, pay for school or start a business through their VIDA savings account.

As a VIDA Coordinator, Rishonda is busy in the community reaching out to hundreds of people each month telling them about VIDA and the importance of budgeting.

After seeing an advertisement in the paper for a VIDA Coordinator, Rishonda applied and went for her interview. During her interview, she learned that the position was an AmeriCorps position and was part of the LISC AmeriCorps program. So Rishonda did her internet homework to learn more about AmeriCorps, Virginia LISC and VSH. She liked what she learned. "I especially liked the concept of Sustainable Communities" she said as her master's degree is in Economics from the University of London. Her focus during her studies was Third World development. After working since September in Petersburg, Rishonda said "this job has already taught me of the great development needs that are here in the United States". She said that everyone should join AmeriCorps. "It is a great opportunity to get a feel for the nonprofit world".

When the Virginia LISC AmeriCorps program is over at the end of August, Rishonda would like to continue working where she is - for VSH in Petersburg and continue her nonprofit learning experience. She says that it has been a

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Roger Whitney at his recent graduation



Rishonda Anthony reviewing VIDA applications



Sho-Dan at a recent AmeriCorps Training

privilege to work with VSH and with Salathia Johnson, Director of Asset Development, who has encouraged her to see the world from different angles.

Meet Sho-Dan Epps

After a slow start, Sho-Dan just recently started working with VSH and VIDA in the Richmond office. Breaking his ankle playing soccer put his starting date in the Virginia LISC AmeriCorps program a little behind his fellow members. But then, Sho-Dan's life has been wrapped around soccer. He even says that "Soccer is the love of my life". His mother suggested he join AmeriCorps in hopes to "light a different kind of spark, one of service to my community". His mother knows all about AmeriCorps as she is the coordinator for the members working at Pathways in Petersburg.

When Sho-Dan is not helping individuals in the VIDA program, he is studying chemistry and teaching at John Tyler; and, of course playing soccer. He hopes to try out for the Richmond Kickers.

As for the community service light his mother wishes for him to see, there is a glimmer as Sho-Dan feels that this is overall a good experience and would recommend that everyone become an AmeriCorps member or at least perform a service to the community a few days a week.



A Partnership forms for the Development of Claiborne Square Apartments in Petersburg

Better Housing Coalition (BHC) and Restoration of Petersburg Community Development Corporation



UNITED for PROGRESS
NEIGHBORHOODS

United for Progress
Neighborhoods

As we move forward, Virginia LISC is now embracing a more comprehensive and collaborative approach to building vibrant neighborhoods. Our *UP Neighborhoods Initiative* hopes to integrate economic, community and social development strategies in targeted areas around the region.

Battersea is the first selected neighborhood for our *UP Neighborhoods Initiative* and Pathways has been selected as our first Convening Agency (CA).

As CA one of their important roles will be to orchestrate a collaborative of partners who will agree to work towards the implementation of goals set forth by residents. As CA, Pathways will also play a critical role in leading community outreach and meaningful civic engagement at the grassroots neighborhood level to ensure trust-building and two-way understanding. These will serve as the building blocks for sustaining a Quality of Life planning process that will result in prioritized, resident shaped neighborhood strategies that we will work to implement over the next several years.

Working together, Battersea residents, Pathways and participating partner organizations, along with support

(ROPCDC) have a new housing initiative in Petersburg. This is the first housing development to result from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's (LISC) community engagement process of nearly two years ago and the resulting community plan supported by the Cameron Foundation and the City of Petersburg.

In early 2010, BHC and ROPCDC will begin construction on the Claiborne Square Apartments. This new affordable, 3-story senior community at 506 Halifax Street will include 43 apartments in the main building and a cottage with four additional units.

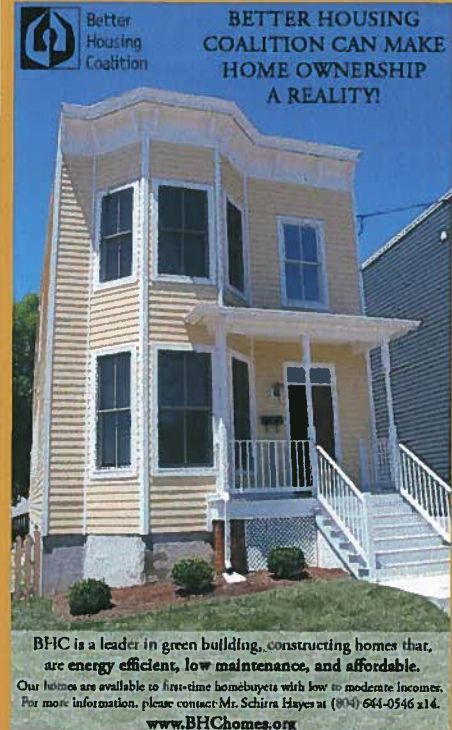
To kickoff their partnership, the CDC's held a community celebration at the future site of the development on Sunday, November 22. Guest speakers included Reverend Robert Diggs (Pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church), T.K. Somanath (President and CEO of Better Housing Coalition) Greta Harris (Regional VP, LISC) Annie Mickens (Mayor, City of Petersburg) David Canada (City Manager, City of Petersburg), Delegate Rosyln Dance and Jill Coleman (Vice President, Cameron Foundation).

The Claiborne Square Apartments will be certified under the EarthCraft Multifamily Program, adhering to strict requirements for energy efficiency and indoor air quality. It will also incorporate green building technologies which go beyond EarthCraft requirements, such as solar hot water heaters.

Visit our [Facebook page](#) for pictures taken at the event by staff.

We hope you find the Virginia LISC E News informative and encourage you to consider making a [donation online](#). You can also become a fan of Virginia LISC by joining our [Facebook page](#) today! Thank you for your support.

from Virginia LISC will integrate and implement a variety of economic, community and social development strategies to advance the quality of life in the UP Neighborhood Initiative area of Battersea.



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