



News from Virginia LIISC

Helping Neighbors Build Strong Communities

Highland Park's Guardian Angels



Jo White's bright red jacket and matching beret can be sighted all around Highland Park, from the Firehouse Café to Anne Hardy Park to the schools. She's everywhere. As one of the founders of the Richmond chapter of the Guardian Angels, it's her job to be.

"The crime issue here is the problem, if we don't get rid of the crime, we won't attract the businesses," said White. "We need to make this community healthy."

The Guardian Angels is an anti-crime nonprofit made up of unarmed volunteers who patrol the streets. The Guardian Angels was founded in 1979 in New York City by Curtis Sliwa. There are now more than 100 Guardian Angels chapters in cities around the world.

White and her co-founder Tommy Cox brought the Guardian Angels to Richmond on June 19, 2010.

"I started this organization called Saving Our Youth about five years ago and then I started a Neighborhood Watch for Highland Park and a Citizens on Patrol. So this was the next step," said White.

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Guardian Angels Continued

The Guardian Angels and the Richmond City Police Department are partnering with Virginia LISC to implement a Community Safety Initiative in Highland Park.

"When Virginia LISC identified Northside as one of four target neighborhoods, we knew we wanted our work to involve a crime safety initiative, and here Jo and the Richmond Police have already begun this process," said the Virginia LISC Senior Program Officer Veronica Fleming. "Now it's a matter of ramping up the structure of the initiative and bringing in all the partners" she said.

In a neighborhood where crime rates are high—a total of 1,255 crimes recorded by the Richmond Police for the areas of Highland Terrace, Highland Park Southern Tip, North Highland Park and Green Park in 2013 alone—it takes the collaboration of many to secure the safety of the community.

The Community Safety Initiative, a national LISC program since 1994, emphasizes working with citizens, police and community developers collectively toward the goal of safe neighborhoods.

Fleming coordinates the CSI for the Virginia LISC office. She meets with residents, partners, police and the Guardian Angels to bring all entities around one table to organize a comprehensive plan for battling crime and then to act on that plan.

"The key to the CSI is the alignment of development with proven neighborhood-focused safety technologies. We will work as one group to define our priorities and strategically address each issue," she said.

What's Happening on Northside

Community Cleanups



Virginia LISC is working with our neighborhood partners in Highland Park to hold monthly cleanups. The cleanups will be the third Saturday of every month. **The next one will be on Saturday, April 19, starting at 10 a.m. at the Firehouse Café (3011 Meadowbridge Rd).** Come out and enjoy good people and a good cause.

Quality of Life Meetings



Residents and partners of Highland Park have put together a Quality of Life plan for the revitalization of the neighborhood. People involved have split into teams to implement the plan. The Quality of Life work teams are meeting on the **second Thursday of every month at 6 p.m.** and the Quality of Life leadership team will meet on the **third Monday of every month at 6 p.m.**

Brookland Park Plaza Building



Virginia LISC recruited Community Preservation and Development Corporation, a Washington DC based developer, to redevelop the old Highland Park High School building into a 77-unit senior housing complex. The building is located at Six Points along Brookland Park Boulevard.

Muralist comes to Northside



Boaz and Ruth, Hands on Greater Richmond are partnering to bring local muralist Hamilton Glass to Highland Park to paint a mural at 3096 Meadowbridge Rd on April 23. Hamilton Glass's work is around Richmond, including the mural above, at the GRTC depot on Cary Street.

Transforming Properties, Transforming Lives



Harvey takes pride in her new house, which can be seen by the sparkling exterior of her house, the immaculate interior and the big smile on her face as she leaves for work. Photo: Killeen King

Ever since Brenda Harvey moved into Whitcomb Court, a public housing project in the East End, she was determined to get out.

"I told my two girls the day we moved into the projects that I would get us out. I promised them that," said Harvey. "And their belief in me was my motivation."

Harvey's dream turned into a reality. She moved into her own house on Boston Avenue the beginning of February.

How did she do it? She got in contact with Southside Community Development and Housing Corporation, a nonprofit that renovates homes and then offers closing cost and down payment subsidies.

"I first met Brenda back in 2011 when I was working for a different organization," said Donna Stallings, Housing Program Manager at SCDHC. "She came to me seeking help on finding a house, but her credit was too low to be house-ready."

Stallings and Harvey worked out a plan to get Harvey out of debt. Harvey stuck to the plan, carefully budgeted her money and met periodically with Stallings. Two years later she came to Stallings out of debt and ready for homeownership. So Stallings took her on a SCDHC house tour.

The Boston Avenue house that Harvey chose to buy was financed in part by the Neighborhood Stabilization Investment Fund—a fund created by Virginia LISC and the City of Richmond to provide revolving loans to for-profits and nonprofits like SCDHC, so that they can rehabilitate vacant properties.

"By addressing vacant properties, this loan fund will help turn neighborhoods into healthy sustainable communities," said John Bolton, Loan Officer at Virginia LISC.

LISC and the City of Richmond provided the loan to SCDHC so that they could rehabilitate the vacant property, SCDHC renovated the house and provided down payment and closing cost subsidies as well as counseling services to Harvey, and Harvey brought her determination and hard work to make a better life for her and her daughters.

"So many people who hear my story, ask me how I got out of the projects," said Harvey. "And I tell them you can do it too. You just have to want it so badly that you work for it nonstop, and you have to go to the right sources."

Housing Trust Fund in Mayor's Budget

The Mayor's Budget for Fiscal Year 2015 includes \$1million to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The fund could provide gap financing for renovation and redevelopment projects, down payment assistance for new homeowners, and accessibility modifications for seniors and veterans. The funding is now under review by the City Council, who will decide whether to maintain, increase or negate support for this initiative.

LISC Now Offering Community Advantage Loan

Launching a business can be a long process, and one that requires much thought, organization and most importantly, money. Without the initial capital, even the best business idea may not succeed.

LISC and the Small Business Administration have a solution.

The SBA Community Advantage Loan program that LISC now offers was developed to help entrepreneurs that are looking to start or expand a business, especially in low-income and moderate income neighborhoods.

“This is the kind of product we’ve been looking for to help take neighborhood residents to the next step in launching their business,” said John Bolton, the loan officer at Virginia LISC. “We are now able to offer funding that is not as easy to find from other sources, and at the same time we are investing in the neighborhoods where LISC works by bringing new businesses to these communities.”

The SBA licensed the Community Advantage Loan program to LISC and the program is managed by LISC’s affiliate New Market Support

Company.

LISC can provide community advantage loans of up to \$250,000 to entrepreneurs looking to expand or open a business in Richmond and Petersburg city neighborhoods.



For more information or to see if you qualify, contact John Bolton at 804. 358.7602 ext. 16 or email him at jbolton@lisc.org.

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