

# News & Views

## PUBLICLY SPEAKING

### A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



At the beginning of the year, we never would have anticipated being in the position we are in today. With a global pandemic presenting unprecedented and unexpected challenges to everyone, the HACP has worked diligently to ensure that we are giving residents the support they need and that we are taking the necessary steps to keep our staff, residents, and communities safe and healthy. Our emergency and field personnel have worked diligently since the onset of the pandemic to keep operations running smoothly and without interruption of service, while many of our administrative and professional staff have seamlessly transitioned to a remote work platform.

To promote public health, the HACP's main offices have been closed to the public since the middle of March. Our dedicated staff has been working diligently from home to provide services remotely and maintain regular operations. We have provided our staff members with the resources and technological support they need to continue these remote services, and we are prepared to continue helping residents, applicants, landlords and families regardless of what may come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges extending well beyond the scope of our operations. Our residents across the city have faced many hardships due to variable impacts of COVID-19, whether that be falling ill themselves or struggling to get food in a time of national crisis. We have been there to support our residents every step of the way, whether that is working with community health partners to establish free COVID-19 testing events or working with Pittsburgh Public Schools and 412 Food Rescue to ensure regular and established food distributions to our communities.

Times of crisis bring out the best in people, and we have seen an army of "Mr. Rogers' helpers" emerge to support those in our communities who need it most. Across the HACP, across our communities, and across the city, people have been stepping up to make sure we can continue our operations, to ensure our residents are safe and healthy, and that everyone is receiving the support they need.

The HACP is deeply grateful for the work everyone has contributed. We would especially like to thank the residents who volunteered to help with food distribution to our colleagues at the Pittsburgh Public Schools who helped make our laptop collaboration a reality. We cannot achieve our goals while working alone. Moving forward, the HACP will strengthen not only the partnerships we already had in place, but also embrace the new ones that emerged in a time of crisis.

The HACP understands that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact us and our communities for the foreseeable future, and we are deeply committed to supporting our residents, staff, landlords, and community partners. As the situation continues to develop, we will evaluate our operations and our services to ensure that we are meeting the moment and supporting our residents in a way that promotes public health.

Moving into the second half of 2020, the HACP is determined to do everything we can to make things better for everyone. We know the past few months have been difficult, but Pittsburghers are strong. Together, we will get through this, even stronger than we were before.

Caster D. Binion  
Executive Director

Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh  
Summer 2020

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# HACP Partners with Pittsburgh Public Schools to Bring Online Learning to Young Residents

HACP has been committed to the goal of bridging the digital divide that exists in many low-income communities since joining the ConnectHome initiative in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the City of Pittsburgh. For the past few years, HACP and our partners have worked on various initiatives to bring WiFi, technology, and digital literacy to the homes of our residents.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic has expedited some long-standing goals, as internet access is more important now than ever. Lack of internet access was impacting communities in Pittsburgh long before COVID-19, but the challenges families face have been exacerbated by the mass migration of daily life online. No internet now means no school, which can have far-reaching consequences on childhood development. No internet means falling behind.

In a recent survey, more than 1,500 students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools system, many of them HACP residents, reported having no internet access. Even more households didn't have enough computers or devices for each child to do their schoolwork remotely. In line with our commitments to bridge the digital divide and promote education for our residents, HACP partnered with Pittsburgh Public Schools to provide laptops and Comcast Internet Essentials to low-income students living in HACP communities.

As part of the agreement with Pittsburgh Public Schools, HACP will make a one-time contribution of \$275,000, which the school district will use for the purchase of Chromebooks to be provided to an identified 872 Pittsburgh Public students currently residing in HACP households.

"Due to the care and generosity of the Housing Authority of Pittsburgh, we will be able to level the playing field for some of our most vulnerable students," said Superintendent Dr. Anthony Hamlet. "We are so grateful for this contribution that will bring us closer to our ultimate goal of becoming a 1-to-1 laptop district."

Providing students with internet access and tools they need to engage with online learning will allow them to continue their education and expand their learning opportunities.



Bringing internet access and digital devices to our communities and residents has been a long-term goal of HACP's, and we are excited to work with Pittsburgh Public Schools to make it a reality. This partnership is one more step towards eliminating the digital divide.

"This represents so much more than a donation or an inter-agency commitment," said HACP Chief Community Affairs Officer Michelle Sandidge. "This is the partial realization of a long-term effort to ensure that HACP students aren't left behind due to the digital divide. It's an investment in the future of these kids and an investment that we are proud to make."

HACP will continue to work with Pittsburgh Public Schools, the City of Pittsburgh, and HUD to expand internet access, bridge the digital divide, and ensure that residents have access to remote learning and online education.

"We're in constant discussion on how we can better serve the kids that we have in public housing," noted Ms. Sandidge.



Principal Littlehele and teacher Ms. Yancy from Fulton Elementary School attended a laptop distribution event. HACP's partnership with PPS makes it easier for students to connect with their teachers and education.



The Smith family picked up their laptops at Fulton Elementary School as part of HACP's partnership with PPS.



# Tenant Council President of Caliguiri Plaza Springs Into Her Role as Community Leader



Ms. Springs has been Caliguiri Plaza Tenant Council President since 2018.



Ms. Springs is deeply involved in planning and executing food distributions with 412 Food Rescue.

Four years ago, Caliguiri Plaza got a gift. They didn't know it at the time, but this gift would change their community. It wasn't a fancy new gadget or the hottest accessory. It was a new resident, one who would later become their Tenant Council President: Ms. Leslie Springs.

Ms. Springs moved to Caliguiri Plaza in June 2016. Her mother had passed away and she had custody of her granddaughter. When she arrived, she heard about 412 Food Rescue and the food deliveries they made to her new home. She was reminded of her mother, who had to get up at 4:00 in the morning to wait in line at the food bank.

Her mother always taught her to help out where she could, so Ms. Springs took it upon herself to get involved and started separating and organizing the various food items. As time went on, she got more and more involved, until she was leading the food distribution efforts at Caliguiri Plaza, working in tandem with the people from 412 Food Rescue.

Whenever food arrived from 412 Food Rescue, Ms. Springs was there waiting for them. She would help them separate and organize the food to make it easier to distribute to residents. She would set up the community room, getting it ready for the residents who would come to get their share of food. She would personally go door-to-door to make sure that people who were sick or shut-in were still able to get the food they needed.

It all came naturally to her. As Ms. Springs put it, "I believe in helping somebody, this is just the micro of what I do best."

In 2018, Ms. Springs was elected Tenant Council President, which only gave her more opportunities to help people and make them happy. It wasn't easy at first--there was a steep learning curve and some people would give her attitude or make her job difficult. Once she found her support system, however, she grew into the role. Now, she's a reliable shoulder to cry on and a trusted confidant in the community.

"It was hard for the first couple of months," she said, "but now it's beautiful."

Two years later, and after being reelected, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and Ms. Springs was on the front lines, making sure her community members had what they needed. Many residents have come to her just to talk, seeking reassurance and a friendly ear. She is always there for them, making clear that she will get them what they need and giving them encouragement. "I lend them a listening ear and I tell them that everything is going to be alright," Ms. Springs said. "Times are hard right now, but we're all going to get through this."

Donned in gloves and masks, Ms. Springs and 412 Food Rescue now set up food distributions in the hallway instead of the community room, watching residents as they pick up their food to make sure they're at a safe distance from one-another. When lunches get delivered from Oakmont Bakery or the Board of Education or anywhere else, Ms. Springs and her army of resident volunteers go door-to-door, from the eleventh floor all the way down to get the lunches to every resident in her community. And she does make sure everyone gets one: if someone isn't home, she makes a note of it and goes back until they get their meal.

Deeply dedicated to her community and the work she does there, Ms. Springs is just happy to have the opportunity. As she puts it, "It feels good to know you can give back without getting a paycheck. I feel really good about that. When I know I'm making someone else happy, I'm happy."

Ms. Springs is very thankful for 412 Food Rescue, for all that they do in her community and across the country, as well as all the work that HACP does. For those interested in getting involved, she urges them to just jump in and get started like she did. If they don't know where to start, she's offered to make the connection; after all, she does love helping out.

# Phase IV of Kelly Hamilton Homes and Phase III of ELDI Completed

## Other Development Initiatives Making Progress

The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) has continued to work with our various community and development partners to maintain development initiatives across the city. Following all the guidelines set out by public health officials, we are moving forward and making exciting progress.

Construction of Phase IV of the Kelly Hamilton Homes development has also been completed. After HACP completes the closing process, 58 new units will be added to the Homewood neighborhood. With 42 units reserved for Project-Based Vouchers and 16 units at market-rate, this development will be a vibrant mixed-income community.

HACP also completed construction of the third and final phase of HACP's collaborative development with East Liberty Development Inc. (ELDI). This phase completed the last two scattered sites of the new units that the collaboration added to the East Liberty neighborhood. Once HACP completes the closing process, these units will mark the end of HACP's three-phase development collaboration with ELDI.

"It's been very exciting to work with ELDI over the past few years," said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion, "and we've been very happy to bring these units to East Liberty. Although this initiative is over, this isn't the end of our relationship and partnership with ELDI and the East Liberty community."

Progress on other development initiatives is continuing at a steady pace. In Lincoln-Lemington-Belmar, the renovation of the former Lemington Home for the Aged into the new Lemington Senior Housing is underway. Construction is in the early stages, but once complete, this development will create 54 units, as well as extensive space for health services and providers.

The Lemington Senior Housing development isn't HACP's only renovation and rehabilitation initiative. In East Liberty, the construction for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of Elmer Williams Square, which will rehabilitate 36 units and add one new unit, are both underway. One of the larger initiatives, however, is the renovation and rehabilitation of the 348-units Crawford Square development, which will modernize the buildings and offer both affordable and Project-Based Voucher units. Construction is underway and making good progress.

"We have a lot going on across the city," HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion notes, "from Lemington Senior Housing to Crawford Square to the many modernizations we have going on, we're working our hardest to meet community's needs and provide the highest quality housing for our residents."

Looking to the future, HACP will continue to work with our development and community partners to further our development goals and offer Pittsburgh residents the best housing experience we can.



The newly constructed Kelly Hamilton Homes line Kelly Street and Hamilton Avenue.



With both Project-Based Voucher units and market-rate units, the Kelly Hamilton homes will be a vibrant mixed-income community.



# Center for Victims Offers Support and Services to HACP Residents



HACP residents can rely on the support and services that the Center for Victims provides.



The Center for Victims staff has a number of resources available to HACP residents.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many people's lives in wide-reaching ways. Stress and trauma impact our lives in various ways; they can make it difficult to think or feel, disrupt personal relationships, or many other things. The Center for Victims, one of HACP's trusted service partners, is a resource for any resident who may be struggling during these times.

"Center for Victims is the most comprehensive and inclusive provider of services, advocacy and education for victims of all crimes," said Director of Education & Conflict Resolution Services Vanessa Mayers-Snyder. "We will continue to provide services for trauma, supporting victims, and creating social change for a more peaceful community."



With a wide range of services, the Center for Victims is a good resource for residents who are struggling or in need of support to deal with trauma or stress. To contact the Center for Victims, call Ms. Mayers-Snyder at 412-385-3812 or call their 24-Hour Help Hotline at 1-866-644-2882. For more information about the Center for Victims, visit [centerforvictims.org](https://centerforvictims.org).

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**“Center for Victims is the most comprehensive and inclusive provider of services, advocacy and education for victims of all crimes.”**

— Vanessa Mayers-Snyder, Director of Education & Conflict Resolution Services

# Boys & Girls Club and MedExpress Bring Food Trucks, Resources, and Community to Bedford Dwellings

It was a sunny May afternoon in Bedford Dwellings and the smell of barbecue was in the air. Service providers were passing out kits with information and resources. People were lining up – according to social distancing guidelines, of course – with their family and neighbors to take advantage of the food and resources. It wasn't quite a community day, but it was the closest thing you could get in the age of COVID-19.

MedExpress and the Boys and Girls Club of Western Pennsylvania (BGCWPA) worked with HACP to coordinate this food truck community event. On May 20, food trucks from South Side BBQ set up in Bedford Dwellings and provided families with hot food, free of charge, to mitigate the food insecurity many families are experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We know there are those in our communities who need a little extra support right now,” said Emily Reinbold, Director of Communications, Community, and Company Initiatives for MedExpress. “We’re here to make sure our local families have what they need to stay healthy, which includes access to warm meals.”

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The South Side BBQ food trucks were the center of the event, but they weren't the only thing going on that day. 412 Food Rescue and the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank both attended and also distributed food, making sure that families have access to fresh produce or other food items they need.



Service providers handed out resources related to health, education, and safety to residents.



South Side BBQ brought their food truck to Bedford Dwellings and provided residents with some freshly made meals.

In addition to food, MedExpress and BGCWPA provided residents with helpful information and resources. MedExpress distributed healthcare kits to residents, which included information about and resources for mental health, domestic violence, and many other challenges families may be facing. BGCWPA gave families information about summer recreation, as well as the summer camp they are offering this year.

“HACP is grateful for the support provided by Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania and for their concern for low income Pittsburgh families during this time of crisis,” said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion. “We are continually humbled by the ongoing support provided by our nonprofit partners and the local business community and extend our sincere gratitude to BGCWPA, MedExpress, South Side BBQ and an entire Pittsburgh community that understands that we’re all in this together.”

Beyond the food and the resources, though, this food truck event brought people together and gave them the opportunity to see each other in a way they hadn't in months. Neighbors and friends saw each other's faces again, though they were mask-clad. They talked and laughed together again, though they were six feet apart. It may not have been a community day, but the sense of community was uplifting.



The BGCWPA food truck event was a community day of sorts, bringing residents together and smiles to their faces.



# Nature-Based Play Area Takes Root at Bedford Hope Center

The heavy digging is almost done. HACP and its partner organizations – ABK Learning & Development Center, the Duquesne University School of Education and StormWorks are putting the finishing touches on a new nature-based play area that will be used to enhance the services provided at the Bedford dwellings ABK Center, which provides early childhood education to dozens of Hill District area families.

The project is the culmination of months of planning and has been made possible by financial support provided by McAuley Ministries and Gateway Health Plan. HACP has committed to the goal of improving and expanding early childhood education outcomes among public housing families a top agency priority and this project is the latest example of our dedication to developing new and beneficial programming.

The nature-based play area will enhance the programming of the Center, while providing the Center's 40-plus students in the age range of infant to 5 with daily access to healthy, creative outdoor play. Duquesne University has conducted extensive research into the value of incorporating nature-based play into early childhood education and has developed a curriculum tailor-made for the Bedford Hope Center play area. The site will be complete in July 2020 and rolled out to ABK students in the very near future.

"This project has been a labor of love for all involved," said Michelle Sandidge, HACP Chief Community Affairs Officer.



"We pulled together a great team between Duquesne University and StormWorks, did a great job of engaging with the students, parents and staff at ABK and received generous financial support from both McAuley Ministries and Gateway Health. We put the well-being of the young minds at ABK first and everything came together."

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**“This project has been a labor of love for all involved.”**

— Michelle Sandidge, HACP Chief Community Affairs Officer.



## Housing Choice Voucher Program Unveils New Service Center

HACP's Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program has unveiled a new service center that applicants and participants can call into to have their needs met and questions answered. It will be used to cover all Housing Choice Voucher related questions and concerns, including, but not limited to: Annual/Interim Recertifications, Changes

in Family Composition, Change of Ownership, Change of Income, Contracts, Moving Papers, Portability, Rent Increases, Request for Tenancy Approval, and more!

**To use the new HCV Service Center, call 412-456-5090 and select Option 2.**

# Authority Residents Prepare for Careers in the Green Economy

The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) and the Pittsburgh A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) are pleased to announce the start of a new program that will prepare individuals for a career as Pharmacy Technicians at CVS. This program will be conducted at the Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church in a wing that will be transformed into a state of the art training facility to house this program along with other social services supported by CVS Health.

Program participants will gain exposure and apply learned skills within the following areas:

- Privacy Training – HIPAA
- Patient Care Conversations
- Pharmacy Basics
- Third Party Plans & Cards
- Medicaid & Medicare Part B/D
- DEA Regulatory Training
- Inventory Management
- Loss Prevention Practices
- Pharmacy Workflow

This opportunity is being provided through “Breaking the Chains of Poverty” – a ten-year partnership between HACP, the Pittsburgh A. Philip Randolph Institute and the United Steelworkers. This **FREE** program will fully prepare residents for a career opportunity at CVS or another pharmacy. Through a combination of web-based, classroom, and on-the-job training, participants will gain all of the necessary skills to provide outstanding service to pharmacy patients. In order to participate, applicants must be at least 18 years

old, have a HS degree or equivalent, take and pass a drug exam and remain drug free (including medical marijuana).

The training will be administered by APRI staff in partnership with CVS Health. The program is designed to address life skills such as time management, conflict resolution, workplace ethics, worker and human rights, strategic planning, and Green Economy training. Participants in the Pharmacy Technician program must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or equivalent, take and pass APRI’s TABE test at the accepted level, and pass APRI’s panel interview.

Other certifications that will be attainable through “Breaking the Chains of Poverty” include:

- Hazardous Waste Operations
- Emergency Response
- Mold Remediation
- Green Chemicals
- Green Communities
- OSHA Safety

**For additional information or consideration for inclusion in the “Breaking the Chains of Poverty” Pharmacy Technician program, please contact:** Bernelle Wood Community Engagement Director, Pittsburgh A. Philip Randolph Institute, at 412-562-2432.

**Interested in connecting with new opportunities for employment of career training?** Visit the HACP Resident Employment Program online at: [www.hacp.org/careers/resident-employment](http://www.hacp.org/careers/resident-employment). The website includes a regularly-updated listing of Section 3 employment opportunities, general employment announcement and training programs that are available to HACP residents and qualified low-income Pittsburgh residents.

**For more information on the Section 3/Resident Employment Program** and/or how to participate in upcoming training and employment opportunities, contact: Lloyd C. Wilson, Jr., Section 3 Coordinator, at 412-456-5000, ext. 1048, or [lloyd.wilson@hacp.org](mailto:lloyd.wilson@hacp.org).



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**This FREE program will fully prepare residents for a career opportunity at CVS or another pharmacy.**

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# Do you want to start a career in healthcare?

## Apply for CCAC's Health Professions Opportunity Grant (HPOG)!

### What is HPOG?

HPOG is a grant that provides free healthcare training, free childcare, free uniforms, and free transportation to people who want to start their healthcare career.

Grants are available for:

- Nursing Assistant
- Medical Assistant
- EMT
- Phlebotomy
- Medical Billing and Coding
- Electronic Health Record Specialist

### How do I apply?

Join the Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) program at this digital event:

Monday, July 13, 2020 @ 1 PM  
Zoom link and information will be provided upon registration

**This event will be held virtually to promote social distancing.**

## Call 412-456-5000, ext. 3219 to register!



# Minority Emergency Preparedness Task Force Hosts COVID-19 Preparedness Event in Arlington Heights

On June 26, 2020, the Minority Emergency Preparedness Task Force (MEPTF) converged on Arlington Heights to host a COVID-19 Preparedness Event for the community's residents. The team distributed a helpful emergency response kit that included washable reusable masks; hand sanitizer; educational materials on topics such as the virus and prevention measures, as proper hand washing, and chronic diseases that impact African American communities. Kits also included fire safety materials, mental health resources, and inspirational pamphlets. In addition to the health kits, MEPTF partnered with the Squirrel Hill Health Center to provide free COVID testing.

MEPTF formed in 2008 in response to the Hurricane Katrina crisis. It is a team of county government emergency responders, health and human services providers, community groups and law enforcement personnel who advocate for the specific emergency preparedness needs of the minority communities through coordinated assessment, mitigation and recovery initiatives. This event was planned in coordination with HACP with funds from the POISE Foundation COVID-19 grant and the Birmingham Foundation. Other community partners were invited to participate as well. The Task Force has been a frequent visitor of Arlington Heights, often participating in community day events and hosting regular health, wellness and emergency preparedness events.

"The Task Force operates with limited funding and limited resources so we focus on high risk communities where we can have the most impact," said Rev. Eileen Smith, Founder/ Director of the Minority Emergency Preparedness Task Force. "During the pandemic, we are concentrating on Arlington Heights because we know that African American communities are being adversely impacted and we do not want to see anyone suffer due to lack of education.



We provide basic needs such as masks and sanitizer and educate people on how to properly use each item to keep themselves and their families safe."

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit African American communities disproportionately hard, and they continue to be at high risk as the pandemic continues. Factors such as medical conditions like heart disease and diabetes, less access to health care, and more people working jobs that have been impacted by the economic fallout of COVID-19 have all created a high-risk environment in many low income and minority communities.

"We're well aware of the outsized impact COVID-19 has had and continues to have on low-income communities," said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion, "Which is why events and partnerships like this are so important. Thanks to MEPTF and other community partners, we can be proactive in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. We look forward to working with them in the future to keep all HACP families safe and healthy."

## Bridging the Digital Divide – One Step at a Time

COVID-19 has presented us all with a whole new set of challenges, not the least of which is staying engaged with our school and work requirements. HACP is constantly seeking to develop new ways to connect residents with the technology needed to keep up. Be on the lookout for

mobile computer programming coming to your community in the near future. For more information on HACP's mobile lab programs, contact Byron Wright, Computer Program Supervisor, at 412-456-5000, etc. 1027, or [byron.wright@hacp.org](mailto:byron.wright@hacp.org).







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### Executive Director

Caster D. Binion

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## COVID-19 Information and Resources



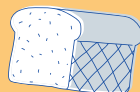
### Contact Us

If you have any questions or need to contact us, call one of the numbers below:  
**Emergency Maintenance: 412-456-5226**  
**HACP Hotline: 412-456-5111**  
**More Information: 412-643-2797**



### Food Resources

HACP will continue to work with partners like 412 Food Rescue and Pittsburgh Public Schools to bring food directly to our communities.



Visit [pawic.com](http://pawic.com) or call 412-350-5801 to begin an application for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program



Visit [pittsburghfoodbank.org](http://pittsburghfoodbank.org) or call (412) 460-3663 for more information for information about the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank's Grab & Go meals, SNAP, and other food distributions



### Other Resources

United Way operates helpline for housing and other emergencies. Call 2-1-1, text your zip code to 898-211, or visit [pa211sw.org](http://pa211sw.org) for assistance. Visit [everyoneon.org](http://everyoneon.org) to find a low-cost internet provider and other helpful information

For more information and resources, visit [hacp.org/covid-19](http://hacp.org/covid-19)

## You've got mail!



HACP is expanding our digital communication. Join our email list to stay in touch and get regular updates. Sign up at <https://bit.ly/hacpemail>



**The first 100 people to sign up will receive a \$25 gift card so sign up now!**



Having an email address and sharing it with HACP will get you connected to critical information about HACP services and help us meet your housing needs. It's quick and easy to sign up for a free account on websites like [gmail.com](http://gmail.com), [yahoo.com](http://yahoo.com), and [aol.com](http://aol.com).



**Call the HACP Hotline at 412-456-5111 for help or more information**