

# News & Views

## PUBLICLY SPEAKING

### A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



What a year it's been! Despite the challenges we faced and the hurdles we had to overcome, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) continued to improve Pittsburgh's livability by helping financially challenged residents and their families become proud, productive community members for generations to come. We offered families a place to call home, providing high-quality affordable housing and investing in new affordable housing initiatives throughout the city. And we gave families a path to launch, doubling down on our resident services and ensuring that our residents have the support and resources they need to thrive.

In the second half of 2020, the HACP was determined to address the impacts and mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19 within our communities. We've modified our standard operating procedures, investing in new resources designed to advance the HACP's mission of providing affordable housing and a path for success; and, to do so in a manner that does not compromise the safety of our residents, staff and associates. Our offices remain closed to the public in an effort to keep our staff, residents, and applicants safe. To the greatest extent possible, we have moved programs, services and public meetings to a remote platform.

We've also prioritized the need to bring HACP households online – offering access to our new WiFi on Wheels initiative and connecting families with students to Comcast's Internet Essentials service. Going virtual doesn't mean that our operations have slowed down: our staff continues to work diligently to provide the services that help residents, applicants, landlords, and families. We are prepared to provide remote services as long as public health demands, and our resilient staff will keep adapting, innovating, and imagining new opportunities to meet people where they are and address their needs.

That innovation includes working with partner organizations to bring additional services and resources directly into our communities. From opening the newly-dedicated Bedford EnVision Center to distributing masks for residents to connecting them directly with health screenings and telehealth, our partnerships yielded impactful results in our communities all over the city.

Although navigating the COVID-19 pandemic has been a top concern for the HACP, it's not the only thing we've done this year. We fostered vibrant communities with safe events like Movie Night Madness and the Northview Heights tree planting - bringing people together and encouraging strong community relationships. We're marching toward an equitable Pittsburgh - moving development initiatives forward and disbursing funds for even more housing throughout the city. As we look ahead to a new year, we must remember that it was our relationships, our partnerships and our collective resilience that pulled us through this difficult time.

The HACP will continue on this course in the coming year, working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the City of Pittsburgh, and leaning into the leadership provided by the HACP Board of Commissioners. The health and safety of our residents will remain top priorities, and our staff will keep seeking and promoting innovative solutions to a constantly evolving set of challenges. We do believe, through our coordinated efforts, we will come out of the pandemic stronger and more resilient than ever before.

Caster D. Binion  
Executive Director

Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh  
Winter 2021

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The dedication of the Bedford EnVision Center marks a new chapter for Bedford Dwellings.

# HUD Secretary Ben Carson Dedicates Bedford EnVision Center

On October 15, 2020, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Ben Carson visited the Bedford Dwellings community in order to lead the dedication of the Bedford EnVision Center, formerly known as the Bedford Hope Center. Secretary Carson's visit provided the HACP, our colleagues at HUD and the City of Pittsburgh, and numerous partner organizations the opportunity to celebrate the work that has been done in the Center for the past two decades, while kicking off a new chapter for the community.

The EnVision Center dedication event capped off months of collaboration, innovation, and hard work. It was the culmination of years of strategic planning and relationship building. HACP and a host of partner organizations came together to create the best service center possible for residents in the community, and HACP was ecstatic to show it all off to Secretary Carson and our colleagues from HUD.

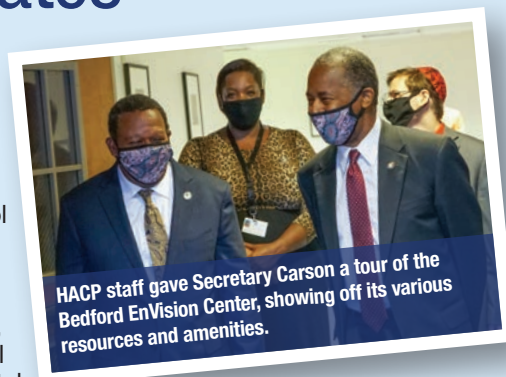
Dedication speeches started the event, and the crowd heard from a number of officials and stakeholders, including Secretary Carson, HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion, and Bedford Dwellings Tenant Council President Gail Felton. They spoke to the impact of the EnVision Center program, and the importance of working together to uplift communities.

"EnVision Centers were derived from the belief that HUD's true measure of success is not how many individuals we can bring on to our assistance programs, but how many families we can lift out of poverty and set on the path to self-sufficiency," said Secretary Carson. "EnVision Centers aim to empower Americans to stand on their own by providing people the tools they need to succeed, all located in one centralized hub."

A one-stop shop for the services and programs residents need to thrive, the Bedford EnVision Center marks a new era for the community, and for HACP's community partnerships. In the years ahead, the Bedford EnVision Center will make a tangible difference in people's lives, whether that will be teaching them how to use the internet, helping them file their taxes, or providing them with routine health screens.

Following the dedication speeches, HACP staff gave Secretary Carson a personal tour of the facilities and services available at the Bedford EnVision Center, which include: a property management office, Resident Self-Sufficiency staff, the Creative Arts Corner (an audio-visual production studio), a

computer lab, a child-care center, after school programs, conference rooms, classroom space, Resident Employment Programs, tax assistance, financial literacy programs, mental health services, and more.



HACP staff gave Secretary Carson a tour of the Bedford EnVision Center, showing off its various resources and amenities.

"We've got everything under the sun all under one roof," said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion. "And bringing all these things together in one place will make a world of a difference for our residents. All of this was possible because of our partnerships, and we will continue working with everyone we can to improve our residents' quality of life."

HACP partnered with a number of stakeholders and organizations to make the Bedford EnVision Center a reality, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the Bedford Dwellings Tenant Council and Council President Gail Felton; the University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center; Duquesne University School of Pharmacy; Duquesne University School of Education; the ABK Learning & Development Center; the Allegheny County Department of Human Services; Ursuline Support Services; Family Resources BJWL Program; the Center for Victims; 412 Food Rescue; the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh; and the Just Harvest Vita Tax Service.

"There's a bright future for the residents of Bedford Dwellings," Mr. Binion said. "And, with the EnVision Center, we're very excited about the promise of continuing to bring services directly to residents, building community relationships, and catalyzing success."



Secretary Carson learned about the numerous programs offered at the Bedford EnVision Center, including the computer lab and digital literacy programs.





The New Grenada Square Apartments (pictured left) and Phase 3 of the Larimer Choice Neighborhood Initiative (pictured right) are two of the most recent Project-Based Voucher/Gap Initiative developments to receive funding.

# HACP Looks to Future, Expands Gap Financing Program, and Funds Development Initiatives

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to put redevelopment initiatives on pause, but the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh's (HACP) development plans have continued. COVID-19 has presented serious operational and fiscal challenges to the Authority; however, throughout 2020, HACP has pursued development strategies that have allowed us to strengthen existing development initiatives that will ultimately expand access to affordable housing.

HACP recently committed additional funds to widen the impact of several of our long-term redevelopment efforts. During its October 2020 meeting, the HACP Board of Commissioners approved the transfer of \$22,125,440 to Allies & Ross Management and Development Corporation (ARMDC), HACP's development instrumentality, to fund the Gap Financing Program and other development initiatives.

The Gap Financing Program began in December 2015 as a way to accomplish two goals: increasing affordable housing options in the City of Pittsburgh and building capacity for local nonprofits and community development corporations. HACP and ARMDC partner with these local organizations, as well as some regional and national developers, and provide them with loans and PBV operating subsidies to develop affordable housing directly in their communities.

"We're very proud of the Gap Financing Program," said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion. "Not only does it bring more affordable housing to the communities that need it, but it builds important relationships with community organizations. It helps them compete with the many large developers in the city."

This disbursement of funds will be distributed to development across the city, aiming to make a broad impact for residents in neighborhoods from Allentown to Homewood. There are a number of development programs and initiatives that will benefit from this new commitment of funds, which includes: \$6,000,000 for the Project Based Voucher (PBV)/Gap Financing Program; \$5,000,000 for the Bedford-Centre Avenue Set-Aside; \$3,925,440 for Phases 3-5 of the Larimer/East Liberty Choice Neighborhood Initiative; \$200,000 for the Manchester Redevelopment; and \$7,000,000 for Acquisition Rehabilitation Construction.

"This is going to provide a significant infusion of new affordable housing to so many communities across the city. We're extremely excited about it, and it's made possible by the ongoing support from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Pittsburgh and the HACP Board of Commissioners," Mr. Binion said.

In response to a 2020 Request for Proposals for the PBV/Gap Financing Program, seven firms submitted nine proposals for developments throughout the city. HACP will now start the underwriting and negotiation processes with responsive applications. Once these processes are complete, HACP will issue conditional commitments for the selected proposals. HACP, ARMDC, and the selected partners will then complete predevelopment activities and financial closing within two years before beginning construction.

Though the PBV/Gap financing Program already has successes to celebrate, Mr. Binion is looking forward to this new round of financing. "The future is bright," he said, "and it's bright because we work together. We're very excited to forge these new partnerships and see the program continue to make a difference in Pittsburgh communities."

# Monthly Mask Mondays

## Brings Resources to High Rise Communities

For low-income families and other vulnerable populations, adapting to life in a world where masks and social distancing have become standard has been particularly challenging. The costs of masks and other healthcare resources can add up, and not everyone has easy access to the stores that sell them.

To make this transition easier, and to protect our most vulnerable residents, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) teamed up with community partners to host Monthly Mask Mondays in our senior high rise communities.

“We wanted to make sure that our senior and disabled neighbors are as safe and healthy as possible. So, taking into account that many face challenges with regard to transportation and mobility, we focused on eliminating those barriers and bringing resources straight to the people that need them,” said HACP Chief Community Affairs Officer Michelle Sandidge.

HACP staff set up in front of each high rise community one Monday a month, throughout the latter half of 2020. Staff and volunteers passed out masks and other healthcare resources to residents, bringing the tools residents need to stay healthy directly to them.

The Monthly Mask Mondays effort was a collaboration between the HACP and local organizations including Global Links, the Allegheny County District Attorney’s Office, Highmark, Allegheny County, and the Police Chief’s Association. They provided the masks and resources for HACP staff to distribute.

Ms. Sandidge highlighted the importance of these partnerships to HACP residents during the pandemic, saying that “the community really stepped up to help us keep our residents safe, and we’re very thankful for that. And this wasn’t just a one-time partnership. As we look forward to the year ahead, we will keep strengthening these relationships so our residents receive the best services and care possible.”



City Councilperson Anthony Coghill joined the Gualtieri Manor Tenant Council to pass out masks to residents.



Residents were able to pick up masks and other health resources at the Monthly Mask Monday events.

## 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, including regular classes. 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).





# Movie Night Madness Brings Residents Together to Combat Social Isolation



Communities transformed into mini movie theaters at the monthly Movie Night events.



Movie Night Madness provided residents with a safe way to socialize and be together.

Many of our friends and neighbors have felt lonely and isolated the last few months, which poses a serious threat to their mental well-being. With the support of local groups like the Manchester Citizens Corporation, Gateway Health Plan, and Cash for Kids, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) hosted Movie Night Madness events in its high rise communities to combat social isolation and support residents' mental well-being.

These monthly, social-distanced movie nights offered residents the opportunity to see their friends, have a laugh together, and strengthen their community and personal relationships. Every month from August through November, HACP hosted movie night events. And every month, residents sat outside and enjoyed the company of their neighbors from a safe distance.

"After being cooped up for so long, the residents needed an outlet," said Reggie Smith from Cash for Kids, the organization that provided the movies. "We put a movie on for them, and they could see their friends they haven't seen. They could just socialize, something they haven't been able to do in a while. This has been a difficult time for some people, and we wanted to create a lively atmosphere for them."

It worked. Movie Night Madness brought residents out of their homes into the fresh air. It transformed communities into outdoor movie theatres, complete with concessions and the buzz of social-distanced socializing.

"We enjoyed being out in the fresh air and watching a movie on the big screen. We even had people make food and bring snacks," said Carrick Regency Tenant Council Vice President Richard Campbell. "We just had a good night. This got people out, it brought them together. We actually had a bigger turnout than when we had indoor events!"

HACP, Manchester Citizens Corporation, Gateway Health Plan, and Cash for Kids intend to continue the outdoor movie night program in 2021, ensuring that HACP's senior citizens and disabled residents will have a safe and uplifting way to come together in the year ahead.

"People need to come together right now," said HACP Chief Community Affairs Officer Michelle Sandidge. "Not just to work together, but to laugh together, to spend quality time together. We will continue doing everything we can to give residents an outlet to safely do just that."



Service providers, like the Center for Victims, distributed resources to residents at Movie Night events.

**“People need to come together right now. Not just to work together, but to laugh together, to spend quality time together. We will continue doing everything we can to give residents an outlet to safely do just that.”**



# HACP Provides Food for Residents



The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh worked hard to make sure our residents had easy access to food over the past few months. These efforts wouldn't have been possible without the donations of food and time from our many partner organizations all over the city. There are too many to list: from 412 Food Rescue to Pittsburgh Public Schools to the Urban League to Edna's Market and Deli and so many more. We are extremely grateful to each and every partner that helped us put food on our residents' tables, especially during the holiday season.







## 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

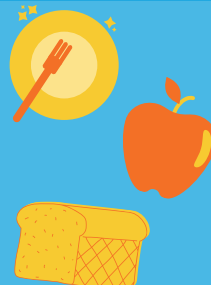


### Food Resources

HACP will continue to work with 412 Food Rescue and the Urban League 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 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.

The URA's Housing Stabilization Program provides up to 3 months housing assistance to eligible renters facing a temporary housing crisis. Contact United way at 2-1-1 for more information.



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



# HACP, Duquesne University Partner to Provide Onsite Resources & Address Health Inequalities



The COVID-19 pandemic has widened health disparities and exacerbated inequalities for underserved populations, isolating people further from the health services and resources they need. It's created an immediate need for support and action in many Pittsburgh neighborhoods.

To help address these disparities, HACP made a concentrated effort to bring services directly to HACP communities. Collaborating with partner organizations, HACP arranged service delivery in a manner that brought multiple programs to communities at the same time. The socially distanced movie nights offered throughout HACP's senior citizen communities are a great example: they were paired with onsite access to health screenings and vaccinations offered by our partners at the Duquesne University School of Pharmacy.

"We determined the best times when the residents would be gathering and we set up pop-up tents outside," said Dr. Jennifer Elliott, director of Duquesne's Center for Integrative Health and associate professor of pharmacy practice. "The second step was to connect them with the resources that they need."

Duquesne's onsite health clinics offered flu shots, asthma screenings, blood pressure screenings, and more. These pop-up health clinics could be found all over the city. Residents were having trouble connecting to health resources, so HACP brought the resources to their doorstep.

"You have to meet people where they are and speak to people directly," said HACP Chief Community Affairs Officer Michelle Sandidge. "You can't just send people letters and think somebody is going to read that and call you."



Duquesne University School of Pharmacy, along with other service providers, set up outside HACP communities to provide convenient health screenings.

In addition to physically bringing health services directly to its communities and residents, HACP worked even harder to bring more residents online. Bridging the digital divide has been a long-term goal for HACP, but it's been even more pressing in the age of COVID-19. Being able to get online isn't just about employment and educational opportunities, it's also about being able to access important health resources. There are a myriad of health resources online, and in the age of COVID-19, telehealth has taken center stage.

"We've seen a drastic rise in the use of telemedicine during the pandemic. This has allowed providers to deliver care to patients in their homes and help to limit the spread of COVID-19," said Dr. Elliot, "But we know that there are major gaps in technology access and use among some groups of patients, particularly low-income patients who have limited access to the needed technology."

To bridge that gap, and to ensure that residents have access to these online resources and services, HACP used its Mobile Lab program to teach residents basic digital literacy skills.

Going even further, HACP tapped into its CARES Act funds to purchase and distribute tablets for residents, making sure they have what they need to get online and take advantage of all the digital health resources and services.

Together, HACP and Duquesne University tackled a problem head on: how to narrow the gap in health disparities. By bringing health services directly to residents, HACP and Duquesne made sure that staying healthy was convenient and easy. By connecting residents to health services online, HACP made sure that residents have the same resources and tools to stay healthy as everyone else.



Residents were able to get their flu shots at the mobile Duquesne University School of Pharmacy health screenings, more important now than ever!



Healthcare workers from Duquesne measured blood pressure and more at their free health screenings.





HACP executive staff joined residents and Tree Pittsburgh to improve the urban greenery in Northview Heights.



Once they finished planting, everyone took a step back to appreciate their hard work.



Staff and residents got their hands dirty as they beautified the neighborhood.

“The true meaning of life is to plant trees, under whose shade you do not expect to sit.”

— Nelson Henderson



## Northview Heights Tree Planting Event Brings Together HACP Residents, Staff

On a cloudy day in mid-October, a group of HACP residents and staff gathered on the grounds of Northview Heights. Joining them were Tree Pittsburgh and the City of Pittsburgh Forestry Division. Masked up and socially distanced, they were all there for the same reason: to expand the greenery in Northview Heights.

The event kicked off with a planting demonstration. The holes had been pre-dug to accelerate the planting process and to make it easier for volunteers. Tree Pittsburgh staff took a heavy tree, the first of many, and plopped it into a hole. Filling up the hole with dirt, they explained each step of the process and gave some tips to the HACP residents and staff eager to get started, noting the importance of urban greenery.

More than just pretty landscaping, urban greenery is a critical part of urban infrastructure. It helps combat air and noise pollution; soaks up rainwater to prevent flooding; and creates habitats for local wildlife. Urban greenery can even lift community morale, potentially calming traffic and lowering crime. Pittsburgh has some of the most extensive urban greenery in the country and the work of Tree Pittsburgh and its partners will help to see that all Pittsburgh communities remain included in efforts to extend our urban canopy.

Once the demonstration finished, participants split into their planting groups and fanned out, grabbing trees and going to the numerous holes speckled throughout the community. One-by-one, the trees made their way into the ground. As more and more trees stood tall, the groups of planters stood back to proudly appreciate their work. They had worked together to add something special to the community, and they wanted to share that satisfaction with one another.

“It was great to see team members from the various communities and many of our executive team members come together today to enhance the appearance of the community and invest in our urban canopy,” said Anthony Geoffe, an HACP Asset Manager who attended the event. Other participants, including HACP’s Executive Director, echoed these sentiments, looking forward to the future.

“I’m always excited to see so many people come together for the benefit of our communities,” said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion. “Not only did this event bring people together, but it did so with the shared goal of improving the community and making an investment in the next generation. We’re very excited to see these trees grow and thrive, along with the relationships that made this event possible.”



Sandstone Quarry Phase I won the NAHRO Award of Excellence in the Project Design category.

# Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh Receives Awards of Merit from NAHRO

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) recently honored the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) with five of their 2020 National Awards of Merit. The winning projects spanned numerous categories. In all, HACP received recognition for the following initiatives:

- Cornerstone Village – Phase II
- Sandstone Quarry – Phase I
- Northview Heights Public Safety Center (with Pittsburgh Bureau of Police)
- Mobile Computer Lab 2.0
- Elimination Food Insecurity in Public Housing (with 412 Food Rescue)

HACP also received NAHRO's highest honor, the Award of Excellence, for two initiatives: Cornerstone Village – Phase II (Community Revitalization category) and Sandstone Quarry – Phase I (Project Design category). NAHRO formally recognized HACP's achievement during NAHRO's 2020 National Conference, held November 18 and 19, 2020.

"We're proud to honor the hard work and creativity our members have shown in meeting the needs of their local communities," said NAHRO CEO Adrienne Todman. "Now

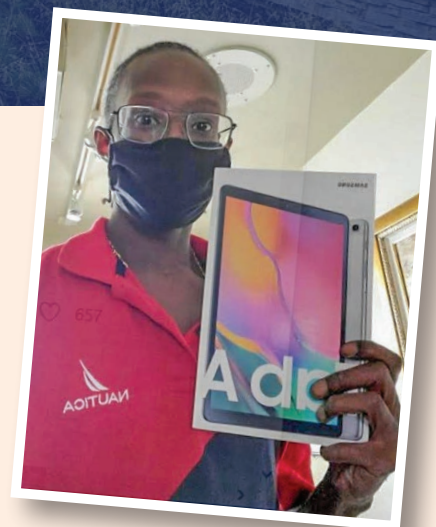
more than ever, it's important to showcase their solutions and share them with others who might get inspired."

NAHRO, established in 1933, is a member organization of nearly 20,000 housing and community development agencies and professionals throughout the United States. All members share the mission of creating affordable housing and creating safe, viable communities that enhance the quality of life for all Americans, especially those of low- and moderate-income. NAHRO's membership administers more than 3 million housing units for 7.6 million people.

The NAHRO Awards of Merit program was created 20 years ago to recognize agencies that found innovative ways to make a difference in their communities and the lives of the people they serve by creating affordable housing; revitalizing their neighborhoods; and developing initiatives such as job readiness programs, public-private partnerships, disaster prevention projects, and more.

The HACP is honored to be among this year's list of winners, and to be among some of the best Housing Authorities in the country. These awards are the culmination of our hard work to innovate and provide the best for our residents.

"HACP is grateful for all the partnerships and people that make this work possible," said HACP Executive Director Caster D. Binion. "We look forward to rolling up our sleeves and continuing the work of improving our communities. This is only the beginning."



The Mobile Lab 2.0 won a NAHRO award for its efforts to bring residents online and connect them to digital resources.

HACP received an Award of Excellence in the Community Revitalization category for Cornerstone Village Phase II.







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## Winter 2021

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### Executive Director

Caster D. Binion

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2020 Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh



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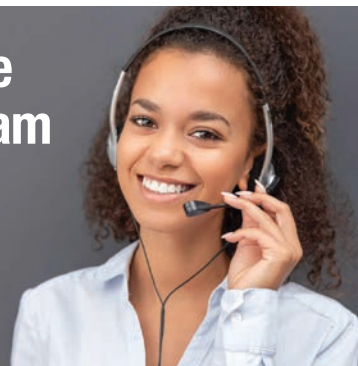
## Opportunities Abound with the Resident Employment Program/Section 3

The Resident Employment Program (REP)/Section 3 at HACP works tirelessly to provide residents with the skills they need to find employment and to connect them with employers in the region. Recent programs and opportunities include:

- A virtual job fair to connect residents with employers in a safe and social distanced way
- The Construction Trades Pre-Apprenticeship program from the Builders Guild of Western Pennsylvania, a paid training program that sets students up for a long-term career in the construction industry
- The YearUp program, a one-year, full time professional development program for young adults 18-30 that develops their professional skills and pairs them with a internship at BNY Mellon
- Much more!

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, or want more information, contact the REP Manager, Lloyd C. Wilson, Jr., at 412-456-5000, ext. 3219. You can also follow us on social media (@HACP1 on Twitter, @HACPgh on Facebook) for up-to-date information about employment opportunities at HACP and elsewhere.

## 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.**