



THE RESIDENT NEWSLETTER

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Daytona Beach HA Helps Residents Succeed with Neighborhood Networks Centers



Since 1995, HUD's Neighborhood Networks initiative has helped close the digital divide by promoting onsite computer labs at public housing developments. The goal of the program is for housing managers to positively impact resident lives through these centers.

The program has certainly had its desired effect in Daytona Beach, Florida where, through the support of three Neighborhood Networks centers run by the Housing authority of the City of Daytona Beach (HACDB), 42 students made their school's Honor Roll and 44 people found jobs in the last year. The centers, and their dedicated staff, are connecting families to technology and helping them develop the skills to use it.

HACDB established their first Neighborhood Networks Center in 2004. Presently they have three centers, located on the grounds of different developments. The centers are managed by a staff of five who make sure users get the most out of them. All three centers are open for extended hours to meet the needs of their public housing residents. Also, each center has a dedicated Technology Coordinator available to offer one-on-one computer assistance.

"People take it for granted that people are computer savvy or tech savvy," said Pierre Louis, Director of HACDB's Neighborhood Networks program. "However, there is a large—I mean a large—segment out there who just need someone to train them along until they can get to the point of being technically self-sufficient."

The centers run a range of programs. For example, they offer online tutorials in computer and financial literacy which public housing residents can use to comply with their community service / self-sufficiency requirement in addition to obtaining job skills. Mr. Louis even created a document that streamlines the process of logging hours completed through the centers. They also offer after-school tutoring for grade school students with a focus on science, technology and math. Seniors can attend weekly classes in

computer and cellphone technology designed specifically to meet their needs.

A good deal of the centers' success is due to partnerships with local organizations such as Daytona State College, City of Daytona Beach, Boys and Girls Clubs of Volusia Flagler Counties, One Stop Career Center, and Center for Business Excellence (CBE). These organizations offer a wide range of resources and services to the centers; from GED preparation to onsite mentoring programs.

The CBE has a special link to the centers as they donated and continue to maintain the centers' first 22 computers. Through their partnership with HACDB, the organization has been able to reach public housing families with their training and resources at the Neighborhood Networks centers.

"Because we're right in the developments, when people want to find out about job skill training, they can do them in the centers, in the community service module we have set up or they can learn about whatever workshops that the Center from Business excellence is having," Louis said. The center staff receives CBE training on benefit applications. "We work with the Center for Business excellence to learn how to navigate the pages, navigate for the services."

Today most job applications, benefits forms and educational materials are all online. Through Neighborhood Networks centers, and their caring staff, HACDB is making sure public housing residents have internet access, and that all residents are ready to face a digital future.

Webinar for Residents on Changing GED

In January 2014, the GED will undergo a major change—it will only be offered as a computer-based exam. Other high school equivalency tests are also moving to online formats, and all of the tests are upgrading to reflect higher college and career-readiness standards.

On December 11th, HUD and its federal partners presented a webinar on this, and other related changes for PHAs, residents of assisted housing, and related industry organizations. Webinar panelists included digital literacy specialists and staff from the US Departments of Education and Commerce, as well as HUD's own Ron Ashford, Director, Public Housing Supportive Services and Dina Lehmann-Kim, Grant Manager in the same office. Through this webinar, the panelists hope to help everyone understand the impact of these changes, and to provide resources for resident services staff so they can assist residents in successfully managing this transition.

You can view the webinar here: <http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/new-computer-based-high-school-equivalency-tests-coming-soon-webinar>

TIPS: Help Your Housing Development Go Smoke-Free

There are many reasons smoke-free housing is a good idea. The U.S. Surgeon General has warned that breathing secondhand smoke for even a short time is dangerous. Children, the elderly and disabled, and low-income and other disadvantaged individuals and families are the most likely to suffer from breathing secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke causes heart attacks and lung cancer and it makes asthma worse. Smoke-free housing is especially important for kids. Secondhand smoke can hurt their growing

lungs, and kids and teens with asthma have difficulty breathing. Secondhand smoke is also associated with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Research has demonstrated that smoke does not stay contained within individual apartments and as a result can harm residents in non-smoking apartments. For more information on the harmful effects of secondhand smoke on children, please visit the website of the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org/richmondcenter.

HUD has strongly encouraged PHAs to adopt policies to implement smoke-free developments but they need your support to be successful. The [*Smoke-Free Housing Toolkit for Residents*](#) is a valuable resource that contains educational and organizing materials, including:

- A report on the dangers of secondhand smoke from the Centers for Disease Control;
- A brochure on the benefits of smoke-free housing from the Environmental Protection Agency;
- A brochure that includes information on how residents advocate for smoke-free housing in their developments; and
- A Home Pledge Kit to share with neighbors and fellow members of the community.

Smoking is not only harmful for smokers, but also the people around them. If you are concerned about the effects secondhand smoke is having in your development, this toolkit can help you get informed about smoke-free housing and offers ways to begin advocating for it in your community.

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