

Former WHDC Intern Joins Staff



Amanda House (left) with WHDC staff member Denise McDougal deliver Thanksgiving turkey baskets to residents and families.

Amanda House served as Wesley Housing's Community Partnerships Intern in the summer of 2006. In August 2007, Amanda became a full-time employee, serving as the Volunteer & Community Partnerships Manager for Wesley Housing. Among other responsibilities, she is in charge of recruiting and retaining volunteers for our Resident Services Department, reaching out to potential community partners and promoting our Adopt-A-Center initiative. More recently, she has been focusing her efforts on WHDC's Help the Homeless activities and the Holiday Help season. To kick off Holiday Help, Amanda organized Thanksgiving turkey basket donations for 50 WHDC households. The baskets were made available through a newly-forged relationship with AMERIGROUP and The Salvation Army.

WHDC Bids Farewell to Al Smuzynski

Wesley Housing staff, family members, friends, colleagues, and local elected officials gathered to bid farewell to retiring WHDC President/CEO Al Smuzynski on October 25th at Belle Haven Country Club. Erik Hoffman, WHDC Board Chairman, served as emcee of the evening's festivities, which featured a ski theme, acknowledging Al's favorite sport. Al was honored with a Congressional Proclamation from Representative Jim Moran (D-VA 8th), recognizing Al's dedication to increasing affordable housing in Northern Virginia. Gerry Connolly, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, presented Al with a special plaque.

Under Al's leadership, Wesley Housing was named 2006 Developer of the Year by the **Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND)** and was recognized by **Leadership Fairfax, Inc.** with its Regional Leadership Award. WHDC's Coppermine Place I (a multi-jurisdictional, fully accessible apartment community for physically disabled individuals) received the **Coalition for Housing Opportunities in the Community for Everyone, Inc. (CHOICE)**'s first Accessible Design Award; HAND named the community the 2007 Best Project in Northern Virginia. For these achievements and many others, the **Virginia Housing Coalition** inducted Al into the newly created Affordable Housing Hall of Fame — a fitting tribute to a tireless advocate for affordable housing. 🏠



Walter Webdale, President of AHC, Inc. (right) enjoys a special farewell cake with Al Smuzynski, part of the dessert course sponsored by AHC, Inc. Many thanks to our other event sponsors: Citi, Chevy Chase Bank, Database & LAN Solutions, Inc., Virginia Housing Development Authority, Ann & Erik Hoffman, Nancy & Lyle Minter, Shelley Murphy, Reed Smith LLP, and the Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers. Proceeds from the event will be contributed to the Al Smuzynski Benevolence & Community Services Fund.

Resident Success Story

David Valentin is something of a celebrity at Wesley Housing's Strawbridge Square Apartments in Alexandria. He has lived at Strawbridge for 13 years and is known by virtually every resident in the neighborhood. As Katie Bruder, Lincolnia Community Resource Center (LCRC) Director notes, "All the kids really admire him. He also has two younger brothers, Alex and Peter, who look up to him as well. He has worked two years in a row as a summer camp counselor at the Center."

David, who attended the LCRC summer camp when he was younger, says that he enjoyed his experience as a counselor because it was close to home, he had "cool" co-workers, and he already knew the neighborhood kids. Now a first-year accounting major at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, David says that his best memories as a child at Strawbridge Square were playing outside with all the other kids. "We played games like tag, cops and robbers, and football." David adds that he always attended the WHDC-sponsored after-school programs. "Some of the volunteers who helped me with my homework are still coming to help."

David is an example of the potential that exists in all children, regardless of family income level. The reality is, however, that financial, transportation, and often language barriers make it less likely for lower-income children to engage in extra-curricular activities after school. Many kids are typically denied exposure to potentially life-changing, positive growth opportunities. Recognizing this dilemma, WHDC's three on-site Community Resource Centers provide opportunities for youths right where they live, and services are virtually cost-free. Our educational and social programs ensure that kids in Wesley Housing's communities have the same opportunities as kids in higher-income communities. 🏠



L-R, Peter, Alex, and David, with their mother, Blanca, in front of their grandmother's house in Puerto Rico.

Shelley S. Murphy *continued from page one*

asset management, and property management. Finally, we are consolidating our Family and Resident Services departments so that we can better leverage the strengths of each section.

Q What Has Surprised You Most?

A What has been most surprising, and gratifying, is the level of support I have received from our key stakeholders and the Board of Directors as we go through this time of transition. Change is difficult, and I am new to the affordable housing sector. Everyone I have met has been helpful in offering advice and suggestions. Our employees have also been remarkably patient with me as I learn the ropes! I appreciate all of the help and guidance I have received.

I look forward to continuing the journey with their support! 🏠

WHDC Property Updates

BEVERLY PARK APARTMENTS

Wesley Housing's 41-unit property in the Arlandria area of the City of Alexandria has been vacated in preparation for a significant rehabilitation, including expansion of some units to accommodate larger families. The first phase of renovations is expected to be completed in April 2008. Plans for a second phase will be submitted to the City of Alexandria before the end of 2007.

Agape House Halloween Party and Mom's Day Out

As a part of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington (UUCA)'s Annual "Working Together Weekend", Wesley Housing staff organized a Halloween Party and Mom's Day Out for the residents of Agape House. Volunteers from UUCA provided costumes for the six children of Agape House and hosted a Halloween Party filled with fun and games — not to mention sweet treats. During an afternoon of pumpkin carving, bobbing for apples, and tricks, some of the moms of Agape House were treated to a visit to a nearby salon where they received free pedicures and "ME-time". The children enjoyed their afternoon of dress up and games while the moms had some time to socialize with each other. We would like to give a special thanks to all the UUCA volunteers who helped organize the party and to Sheron Walters-Lopez, Agape House Resident Services Coordinator, for donating the salon trip for the moms.



PARCVIEW APARTMENTS

The renovation of ParcView Apartments, a 14-story building with a new mix of 149 units in the Landmark area of Alexandria, is now substantially completed. Improvements include combining some one-bedroom units into two-bedroom units, updating the windows, roof, HVAC, and appliances, making some units handicap-accessible, new carpet and paint for the hallways and exterior doors, replacement of the rooftop exhaust fans, partial concrete replacement, landscaping, and a new dumpster pad area. Other projects may include elevator cab replacements and upgrades to the common area fire alarm system. Eighty percent of the units will be set aside as affordable apartments for households earning not more than 60% of Area Median Income.

Imbalanced Housing Landscape

Just a few streets away from luxury homes, low- and moderate-income families struggle just to keep a roof over their heads. They often dedicate 50% of their income to rent.

- "Worst case need" is defined as unassisted renters with very low incomes who are either paying more than half of their income for housing or living in severely substandard housing.
- Working full-time for the minimum wage of \$5.85 translates into an annual (pre-tax) salary of \$12,168, or \$1,014 per month.
- Market-rate rents for a two-bedroom apartment in Northern Virginia exceed \$1,300.
- As of April 2007, there were 11,756 unduplicated people on the waiting list for public housing, housing choice voucher and Fairfax County rental assistance programs (DHCD).

Wesley Housing has been providing permanent, affordable rental housing solutions to working families, seniors, and disabled persons for over three decades. We invite you to join us in our mission, and help us end homelessness. ✂️ ❄️

YES, I want to support WHDC's mission!

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