In August, the Housing Authority of New Orleans implemented a new six-month program created to attract qualified candidates, and to train them to work in the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) Department. Six apprentices, who initially applied for other agency positions but were contacted by the Human Resources Department to enroll in the program, were welcomed as its first class of trainees.

The apprentices are supervised by the Special Projects Manager who will manage them through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Regulatory Training, HANO Administrative Plan Training, and will also participate in on-the-job training. “We intend to create a pool of highly skilled candidates who can fill vacancies as needed,” said Housing Choice Voucher Interim Program Director, Val Pruitt. “In the past it has been difficult to recruit applicants that possess the required skills necessary, and find individuals that are well-versed on the agency’s policies and regulations. This program will ensure a more qualified group of applicants to counsel and provide case management for our residents.”

Participants are expected to complete all assignments, activities, and tests satisfactorily, and maintain excellent attendance in order to remain in the program.

Apprentices are also encouraged to apply for Housing Counselor vacancies as they are announced.

With one month of HCVP training under her belt, former apprentice Bridgett Webb began working as a Housing Counselor. “I am enjoying my new position, and I am looking forward to more learning experiences. I want to do whatever it takes to be an asset to HANO’s HCVP Department,” Ms. Webb said. “I believe that the Apprenticeship Program definitely prepares Housing Counselor candidates with the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to effectively service clients.”

Currently HANO serves approximately 17,700 families through the HCV program requiring the addition of well trained and qualified staff. This level of knowledge and training is critical for the Housing Counselor position which provides day-to-day direct contact with program tenants and landlords.

The HANO Apprenticeship Program is currently accepting applications for the next training class. To learn more about HANO’s Apprenticeship Program, contact HANO’s Human Resources Department at (504) 670-3368.
HANO has launched the new Landlord Portal giving 24-hour access to updated documents on voucher distribution, inspections and financial reports, and much more. Visit www.HANO.org/landlords.aspx to register and create a personal profile for your account. Landlords that may experience difficulty accessing the new portal should email landlords@hano.org with any questions or concerns.

Rochelle Trotter, a former Iberville resident, is finally fulfilling her dream of owning her own home. Ms. Trotter began her path to homeownership when the relocation process kicked off, moving hundreds of Iberville residents off-site to prepare for the impending demolition and redevelopment.

Ms. Trotter was faced with the decision of whether to move to another HANO site or to step out on faith and purchase a home. “Our new home will belong to us,” Ms. Trotter said. “And, it makes more sense to pay for a house than to continue paying rent. One thing is for sure, we no longer have to worry about moving again.”

After months of preparing the necessary paperwork and financial planning, Trotter completed the purchase of her home in October thanks to the City of New Orleans’ Soft Second Mortgage Homebuyer Assistance Initiative, and has officially moved in. “It is really overwhelming to finally say this is my home,” Ms. Trotter said. “Completing the process was a lot of hard work and I shed lots of tears along the way, but it all paid off in the end.”

Ms. Trotter has big plans for her new home. “I want to plant a tree with my kids. We can watch the tree grow over the years, and then our family can grow at the same time,” Ms. Trotter said.

Fellow Iberville resident Onjeal Martin, a mother of three, is one step closer to becoming a first-time homebuyer. Even though her homeowner process is not yet complete, Ms. Martin is truly grateful for the support she continues to receive from the agency.

“A lot of my family members did not receive any assistance when looking for their own home, so it is great to have some help from HANO,” Ms. Martin said.

Last summer, Ms. Martin and her family moved into the home she intends to purchase as a renter utilizing her Housing Choice Voucher.

Since 2001, HANO’s Homeownership Program has assisted 291 families in becoming first-time homebuyers. This number includes 182 Housing Choice Voucher Program participants and 30 families assisted through the Public Housing program, as well as 79 additional low-income families who purchased units through other homeownership or development programs. The Homeownership Program, managed by HANO’s Client Services Department, began an outreach campaign to create more awareness by reaching out to public housing and HCV tenants. Most recently, the department participated in Dillard University’s 7th Annual Housing and Home Improvement Fair, and met with over 60 attendees to discuss purchasing a home and how the agency can offer guidance and support throughout the process.

So far this year, the program assisted in transitioning 27 HANO families from public housing and HCV tenants to homeowners.

For more information on how to become a first time homebuyer, visit www.HANO.org.

HANO LAUNCHES HCVP LANDLORD PORTAL

HANO has launched the new Landlord Portal giving 24-hour access to updated documents on voucher distribution, inspections and financial reports, and much more. Visit www.HANO.org/landlords.aspx to register and create a personal profile for your account. Landlords that may experience difficulty accessing the new portal should email landlords@hano.org with any questions or concerns.
POLICY UPDATE! Effective September 1, 2013, HCVP tenants can only walk-in for a visit with housing counselors and case managers to report changes in their income or household composition, repair issues at unit, or any other matters regarding their housing assistance every Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

ATTENTION HCVP LANDLORDS
HANO has recently implemented the mandatory requirement for direct deposit and the conversion to electronic statements for HCVP landlords.

Effective immediately, HANO will no longer mail Housing Assistance Payments to HCVP landlords. Landlords must now submit direct deposit forms immediately via e-mail to crobinson@hano.org. Landlords who do not submit direct deposit forms will be issued checks on the first Thursday of the month from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at HANO. Please be advised that the agency will charge a $50 processing fee for every paper check dispersed. To access the direct deposit form, visit www.HANO.org and click on the “landlord” tab then click “forms.”

In addition, HANO will no longer mail monthly statements to HCVP landlords. Electronic statements can now be accessed on HANO’s new Landlord Portal. Register today at www.HANO.org!

HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS
Attention, HCVP Landlords! Below is a checklist to review prior to a Housing Quality Standard (HQS) inspection:

1. Egress windows and doors must open from the inside without the need for keys, tools, or require special knowledge or effort in order to be used as an exit. Locks and/or deadbolt locks must have a “thumb latch” that can be turned from the inside. This prohibits the blocking of a lone egress window in a bedroom with bars, an a/c unit or furniture.

2. Egress doors and security doors must open from the inside without the need for keys, tools or require special knowledge and used as an exit. Locks and/or deadbolt locks must have a “thumb latch” that can be turned from the inside. This prohibits the blocking of any egress door(s) with furniture or appliances.

3. Permanent weather stripping must be placed on exterior doors, and they must close properly. Any loose door hardware (knobs, locks, hinges, door sweeps or other associated hardware) or damaged (holes, vandalized, deteriorated, peeling, separated surfaces, etc.) door surfaces must be removed on all interior, exterior, storm doors and security gates.

4. Windows that do not open, will not stay open, or have missing window locks and cracked/broken glass are prohibited. Caulking is not an acceptable repair for cracked or broken glass. Latch and eye hooks are not acceptable as a replacement for a missing or broken lock.

5. Interior and exterior disturbed paint surfaces (peeling, chipping, cracking, flaking, and chalking) regardless of amount or location are not acceptable.

6. ODS (Oxygen Depletion System) approved space heaters cannot be installed in bedrooms. All units are required to have adequate heat for the unit. Furnace or heater vent flue pipes must extend vertically 12 inches above the roof line of the tallest roof within 6 feet of pipe.

7. Hot water heater pressure relief valve drain tubes must be extended within 6 inches of the floor. Gas water heater vent or flue pipes must extend vertically 12 inches above roofline of the closest roof.

8. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlet safety features must function properly. The outlet must not trip and/or de-energize when tested in the kitchen or bathrooms.

9. Electrical wiring of any kind must not be exposed. This includes outlets and switches that are loose or hanging inside or outside the wall.

10. Yards must be clear of garbage, debris, or overgrown grass higher than 18 inches growing on or around unit.

For more information visit www.hano.org to review the HCVP Administrative Plan.
CRIME PREVENTION CORNER

Staying Safe During the Holidays

The holiday season is a time of celebration with your family and friends, but you can also be vulnerable to theft and other holiday crimes. HANO encourages residents to consider the following tips to better protect yourself during the holiday shopping season:

Safety Tips for Holiday Shoppers

1. Remember to pay special attention to your surroundings during a shopping trip.
2. Minimize shopping at night or alone; you are more susceptible to be a victim of a crime during this time.
3. Avoid carrying large amounts of cash in your wallet or purse. Bring only the cash you need or pay with a credit card or debit card.
4. Always use an ATM in a well-populated building or a well-lit area, and also protect your pin number from others during the transaction.
5. Keep a record of all your credit card numbers in a safe location. Report lost or stolen cards immediately.
6. Avoid carrying too many packages from the store to place in your vehicle.

Safety Tips for Holiday Drivers

1. Be cautious while driving alone at night.
2. Park in well-lit areas and keep all doors locked and windows closed when you are entering or leaving your vehicle.
3. Never leave your vehicle unattended with children inside or while it is running.
4. Always be aware of your surroundings when walking to your vehicle, and never leave gifts or other valuables in plain sight in your vehicle.
5. If security is available, ask for an escort to your vehicle if leaving at night or alone.

For more safety tips or to report a crime, call the HANO Police Department at (504) 670-3372.