

Neighborhood UPDATE



MHACY
Municipal Housing Authority
for the City of Yonkers

JANUARY 2021

THE MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR THE CITY OF YONKERS

A Letter from Wilson Kimball



More than half a century after his death Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is still current and still right about so many things. Last year we saw our country threatened not only by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by misinformation, ignorance, and fear. First came the ridiculous assertions that certain populations were immune to the Corona virus. Then came the

ignorance regarding the importance of wearing masks, washing your hands, and socially distancing from each other. Last, came the fear of taking the vaccine. But science has given us knowledge about the COVID-19 and now we have a vaccine.

In the height of the first wave of the pandemic in 2020 I saw people with incredible values stand up and be strong in the face of many challenges. Individuals wore masks although they were taunted and demeaned. Families stayed socially distant although they yearned for each other's company and front-line workers with little or no personal protective equipment (PPE) went to work to serve and save others. Whatever their religion, their values made them strong, ethical, determined, loving and self-less. Our religion gave us the power to control our reactions to the pandemic.

Sometimes it seems like there are not enough good values in the world and then you witness a daily act of grace and you are reminded of just how amazing we can all be if we work together, try harder and look out for one another. Every time I read something that Dr. King wrote I understand how much more there still is to learn from him. But there is one of his lessons I have already mastered and that is the knowledge that science and religion are not rivals. Consequently, as we face a second wave of this horrific pandemic let us embrace the power of science and commit ourselves to the values we learned in our respective religions. For me values like compassion, kindness, love, and selflessness are always welcome and so is the vaccine! Bring it on.

Wilson Kimball
President & CEO
Municipal Housing Authority for
the City of Yonkers

"There may be a conflict between soft-minded religionists and tough-minded scientists, but not between science and religion. Their respective worlds are different and their methods are dissimilar. Science investigates; religion interprets. Science gives man knowledge that is power; religion gives man wisdom that is control. Science deals mainly with facts; religion deals mainly with values. The two are not rivals. They are complementary."

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



@mhacyonkers

mhacy.org

Teachings of Martin Luther King Relevant Today

On January 20 we celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. who would have turned 91 on January 15 this year. His birthday became a national holiday in 1983 and is celebrated on the third Monday in January.

Martin Luther King's teachings of self-determination and peaceful activism are particularly relevant today as we face division in this nation during a time of political and social upheaval similar to the changes that were faced during the civil rights movement of the late 1960s. It is also ironic that his birthplace is the focus on political action today.

MLK was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15th, 1929. King experienced racism from an early age, and those events stayed with and eventually brought him to a life of activism. After graduating college with a doctorate degree in theology, King became a pastor in Alabama. He began a series of peaceful protests in the south that eventually changed many laws dealing with the equality of African Americans. King gave hundreds of moving speeches across the country, and in 1964 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

On April 4th, 1968, Dr. King was shot and killed while in Memphis, Tennessee. Although his life ended that day, the work that he had accomplished changed the nation. King will be remembered not only for his commitment to the cause of equality for African Americans but also for his profound speeches that moved so many.

Many leaders continue his work today, as the Black Lives Matter movement has united so many in our nation to stand behind justice and social equality for all.

Consumer Protection Warns Against Covid-19 Vaccine Scams

The Westchester County Department of Consumer Protection is warning all Westchester residents to be vigilant for Covid-19 vaccine scams as we enter the next phase of the pandemic.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said, "There are vaccine scams out there. People may solicit you, may sound professional and look for money and information from you to get a vaccine. Don't fall for it and don't pay attention to it."

Tips for Westchester residents based on tricks scammers are using:

- Vaccine is expected to be free.
- There are no sign-up lists for vaccine.
- You can't pay to get your vaccine earlier.
- Medicare or Social Security won't be calling you about getting your vaccine.
- You don't need to give out SSN, credit card or bank info before you are able to get vaccine.

If you are contacted by someone looking to sell you early access to the vaccine, contact Westchester Consumer Protection at 914-995-2155 or at ConPro@westchestergov.com.

MHACY Makes Holidays Brighter with Gifts and Meals

The Municipal Housing Authority for the City of Yonkers treated residents to some holiday cheer. Thanks to Cross County Shopping Center, the law firm of Koob & Magoolaghan and Chef Peter Kelly of X20 on the Hudson residents received holiday meals, gift bags and two lucky families won a Nintendo Switch console with four games.

"Despite the pandemic, we hope that everyone had a happy holiday and is looking forward to the year ahead in 2021. May it be a brighter one for us all," said MHACY President and CEO Wilson Kimball.



Lakisha Collins Bellamy Homegrown Talent

Lakisha Collins Bellamy remembers the day she moved into Cottage Place Gardens in the summer of 1985, but even more memorable was the day in November of 2007 when she returned for her first real job with the Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority.

“It was fate that I came to work for the Housing Authority,” said Lakisha, who currently serves as MHACY’s in-house counsel. “And it has been rewarding ever since.”

Lakisha is a homegrown success by any account. An attorney who was admitted to the New York State Bar in June of 2015, she was appointed to serve on the Yonkers School Board this past summer. She holds a master’s degree in public administration and a bachelor’s degree in political science.

The road to her success started at MHACY in 1997 when Lakisha was a college freshman and took a summer job with the housing authority. “As a 19-year-old I was so impressed with the people and the level of work that was being done. “I said ‘when I graduate, I’m coming to work here.’”

But her life would take some additional twists and turns before ending up at MHACY. While she was earning her master’s degree, Lakisha worked for the Westchester County Board of Elections, but was looking for a higher paying position to help support her infant son. Her cousin told her that a civil service test was being offered for a position at MHACY, but she initially missed the deadline for submitting the application.

“I thought it was over, but then she called me again to say that

they reissued the test and I had better apply. It was really divine intervention that God opened that door again,” she said.

When the letter notifying her of the test scores arrived in the mail that day in September, Lakisha’s hands were shaking as she opened the envelope. She was praying while holding her son, who was only four-months old. Not only had she passed the test, but she was the top scorer!

“I said, ‘thank you, Jesus,’ because I didn’t just want this job, I needed it to survive,” she said.

Lakisha worked her way through the ranks at MHACY. As the Director of Housing Programs, she oversaw daily operations of Section 8, Low Income Housing Tax Credit and Public Housing programs, eventually spearheading a software transition that improved the quality and increased the efficiency of customer service throughout the agency.

After attending the City of Yonkers Management Academy, Lakisha renewed her commitment to becoming a lawyer, and managed to

finish law school part-time and summers in 3 instead of 4 years. Her son, Justin, then nine, walked on the stage with her when she received her law degree.

When she took the bar exam, she knew she would pass after the question fatefully was one on housing law.

Now, 13 years after taking her first job at the Housing Authority, Lakisha says she is grateful to all the people who helped her to achieve her goals, and that her career path brought her back to MHACY.



***Congratulations to Josefina Jiménez
of 11 Loring Ave #1 for winning MHACY's
Holiday Decorating Contest.***

Sarah Fonseca and Tracy Liberatore Celebrate 20 and 25 Years with MHACY

Congratulations to MHACY employees Tracy Liberatore and Sarah Fonseca for milestone anniversaries with the Housing Authority.



Sarah started as the Tenant Relations Aide in 1995 in the admissions department for Public Housing. Two years later she transferred to Section 8 where she worked in admissions. She was promoted to Clerk and was responsible for recertifications. In 2000, she began working under the previous Program Director where she was responsible for the waiting list, admissions, hearings list and served as liaison for the department. She was recently promoted to Assistant Housing Supervisor. Under her current role she is still responsible for the waiting list, admissions, portability. Sarah is always there to help staff, residents, participants, and landlords.



Tracy started as the receptionist for MHACY in 1995. Within 6 months she was recruited as a caseworker for Section 8 and then quickly worked her way onto program staff. Within a few years she became an Assistant Supervisor and was responsible for Portability, Inspections and Vendor Payments. She was promoted to Housing Supervisor roughly five years ago. Under this title she still performs the same functions with the added responsibility of supervising the staff and assisting the Program Director. Tracy is always eager to help and is always the first to volunteer.

CONGRATULATIONS!