

Direct to You

Friday
4/7/22

Patricia Wells, OHA Executive Director



Good Afternoon OHA Family

WOW, it's been over 24 years serving here with OHA!! Over the years I have been a part of many teams that do amazing work in our communities, so it's difficult to choose just one as my favorite! From inspiring and supporting residents to join our programs, participating in special initiatives like Oakland Parks and Rec clean-up projects & serving thanksgiving meals at Arroyo Vallejo Park, to distributing gifts to our unhoused neighbors, celebrating the holidays with hundreds of children at the Winter Wonderland events at the service center, and with our elders during Holiday Splendor, as well as dressing up with our OHA family at the Employee Association's Holiday Parties. From providing "splendor" for our seniors during the holidays, to grand openings where families get keys to their new homes—each moment makes my heart sing. Yet if I am going to choose, nothing brings me more joy than seeing the bright smiles of our babies when we engage with them as just "folk" and encourage them to shine their brightest light. This past Thursday, was one of those days. (More on this below.)

As we move into spring with beautiful weather and fresh outdoor air, hopefully we all have more opportunity to get out an about and do things that mean a lot to us, personally and professionally. Whether your job at OHA affords you the opportunity to spend lots of time out in the sunshine, or you work from an office, I encourage you to get outside when you take a break, even if it's just to walk around the block or take a longer stroll around Lake Merritt or your own neighborhood on days you're able to work remotely.

Regardless, I'm excited to see our activities starting to increase as we have more engagement with our clients and each other. In the coming issues of Direct To You I will be featuring more of YOU! More of what we do for our clients, for our community and for one another. I encourage you to read the articles in Direct To You so you can fully appreciate the spectacular effort of your co-workers and maybe even read stories about your team or yourself. For instance, last Thursday, the FCP, OHAPD and EO teams joined together—as representatives of our Oakland Housing Authority Foundation—to spend time with our partner school, MLK Elementary's 3rd grade Attendance Winners, who received a field trip as their prize. Not only was the event meaningful and exciting, it was a testament to our dedication to OHA's mission...and our special guest just blew everyone away.

Also last week, after weeks of working with high school students on a high profile project, staff from FCP and four directors, demonstrated how much of an impact we can have in our community. The team met with these gifted students teaching, coaching and inspiring them as they delivered thought-provoking presentations on safety issues that could ultimately save lives. Read more about both of these events below.

Again, the work we do is important and I'm here for it! As we showcase the talent and enthusiasm of our OHA family, both individually and collectively, I hope you are all as proud as I am to work with such a stellar team.

Patricia

"Every time I rise up, I have confidence that I'm going to make it." – Stephen Curry





On Thursday, March 31, OHA hosted about twenty 3rd graders who are students of one of our partner schools, MKL Elementary. The students were the attendance winners at their school and received the field trip as their reward. The outing was billed as a literacy event and the students were encouraged to read aloud, had members of our staff, including new Deputy Police Chief **Alan Love**, and Acting Captain **Luther DuPre** read fascinating stories to them. Additionally, they received their own new books, had fun learning, reading, drawing, and playing “Simon Says!”

Then the biggest surprise of the day happened. In walked **Ayesha Curry**, wife of NBA superstar and Golden State Warriors Point Guard, Steph Curry, and actress, entrepreneur, cookbook author, and cooking television personality, in her own right. Through our FCP department, OHA secured a partnership with Stephen and Ayesha Curry’s **Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation**, which is committed to unlocking the amazing potential of every child by fighting to end childhood hunger, ensuring students have access to a quality education, and providing safe places for all children to play and be active.

The excitement of the kids was infectious once they realized that **Ayesha Curry** was actually in the house. The staff in attendance shared joy with these bright stars, along with several OHA partners, and each other. It was a day that OHA displayed us at our best: providing a safe, welcoming space for the young people to learn and grow—strengthened by our community partnerships and supported by our staff—plus a little star power.

In addition to the literacy activities, we celebrated the installation of a new “Little Town Library” at our West District Office. We also celebrated the launch of the “OHA Learning Lab.” The day perfectly aligned the mission and vision of Stephen and Ayesha Curry’s **Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation**, with OHA’s own Education Initiative, as the students enjoyed healthy snacks, fun activities and then had a story read to them by Ayesha, herself. Flanked by about twenty 3rd graders for this fun, action packed day, Ayesha unveiled one of their Little Town Library boxes, which the amazing Currys supplied with new books. This new source for reading is right in the neighborhood at the fingertips of hundreds of children who live in the area. Unlimited books await.

A special shout out to the department teams who contributed to making this day special: CID, OPO, OHAPD, FCP, and EO!

This was a celebration of what OHA does best—rising to the occasion to be good, at doing good, to achieve good. Thank you OHA!



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When you cross a group of eager high school students, a team of OHA staff who are excited about helping our youth solve the problems of tomorrow, and a stage with the prestige of UC Berkeley, you can't help but ignite a spark and make magic.

Over the past few months, the Capital Improvements Department Director **Bruce Brackett**, and acting Chief Operating Officer (COO) Kris Warren, have been working with the teachers and students from Oakland High School on their 2022 Youth Summit Y-PLAN. The Center for Cities + School's Y-PLAN (Youth - Plan, Learn, Act Now) is five-step action research methodology administered through UC Berkeley that fosters meaningful civic dialogue between young people and adults. High school students, taking special courses in engineering, have been focused on "Emergency Management Response, and Preparedness," as well as increasing their knowledge of "soft-story structures" owned by the Oakland Housing Authority.



Director Brackett, COO Kris Warren, along with OHAPD Chief **Carel Duplessis** and FCP Director **Nicole Thompson** provided a series of presentations to Oakland High School students focusing on the Authority's community presence, services provided to residents, OHA's Emergency Management Plan, as well as how OHA is improving OHA structures through earthquake retrofitting in order to provide greater resident safety.

Following the presentations, Director Bruce Brackett led students on a tour of one of the scattered sites that is being earthquake retrofitted. Walking this site, the students were able to see how buildings were braced and enhanced in order to withstand a significant earthquake. Students stated after the tour that they have driven past properties and are now able to identify what are considered "soft story buildings" that may require earthquake retrofitting.

This project required students to collectively define problems through surveys, tours, and discussions and create a report to be presented to members of the Authority as well as instructors from UC Berkeley.

On Thursday, March 31, 2022, Director Brackett and Chief Duplessis attended the presentations at Oakland High School and provided suggestions and critiques to the students regarding the content of presentations. According to Chief Duplessis and Director Brackett, students who participated in the event were no less than impressive and clearly demonstrated an increased knowledge base of how they would respond to an emergency. In addition, students stated they would like to create enhanced communication strategies in order to help others prepare for a disaster.

OHA and CC+S have been collaborating on their work with youth for over 20 years. CC+S at UC Berkeley conducts high-quality, non-partisan policy research, engages youth in urban planning, and cultivates collaboration between city and school leaders to strengthen all communities. CC+S works to advance policies and practices that create opportunity-rich places where young people can be successful in and out of school.

CC+S supported OHA through all four HOPE VI grants that funded the redevelopment of Lockwood Gardens, Coliseum Gardens aka Lion Creek Crossings, Chestnut Court aka Chestnut/Linden Court, and Westwood Gardens aka Mandela Gardens. CC+S cosponsored with OHA a national conference of 100 public housing youth from across the nation, the creation of a documentary about Coliseum Gardens, and the resident services evaluations for all four grants.

This is another example of how OHA staff is working with our young people from very early ages through high school, and beyond, in a comprehensive way to mentor, encourage and support the journey to adulthood. The team's hope is that by working alongside young people in a variety of ways, we can help create wonderful childhood memories and inspire our future leaders.

Congratulations to all OHA staff who participated in this program, with a special shout out to Directors Bruce Brackett and Nicole Thompson, Chief Duplessis, COO Kris Warren and **Dawn Pipkins**, a Manager in the Family & Community Outreach department.



April is National Parkinson's Awareness Month, Child Abuse Awareness Month, Autism Awareness Month and National Volunteer Month. It is also National Fair Housing Month! During this month, OHA continues to work with partners to support events that bring awareness to the issue of fair housing. This month, we will participate in programs to ensure we are intentionally doing our part to educate our clients, staff and partners about the rights of residents under the law, and to provide educational resources to help property owners, partnered with our HCV program, practice fair housing policies in their rental practices.



Direct From Me

Messages from OHA Employees to Leadership

Have an idea to save time or money? Figured out a way to make work a little easier and more efficient? Or perhaps you want to share your team's success with the entire agency? Well, now it's easier than ever to share your ideas! No matter what's on your mind... **Direct From Me** is the easy way to have your ideas delivered to OHA's Executive Director, Patricia Wells.



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REMEMBER: if you have reasonable suspicion that you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or if you are experiencing symptoms of fever (100.4 Fahrenheit or higher), coughing, or shortness of breath, do not report to work. Immediately contact your primary care provider and then your supervisor for instructions on what you need to do next. If you have any questions regarding your schedule, please contact your supervisor or Director. If you have questions in regards to pay or leave time, please contact Human Resources at (510) 874-1575.



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