

Direct to You

Thursday
8/11/22

Patricia Wells, OHA Executive Director



Good Afternoon OHA Team:

As I visited some of the National Night Out celebrations this past August 2nd, I became energized, grateful and fired up. Walking the properties cared for by our property teams, and by chatting with folks who interact with our leasing, resident services and subsidy teams, I “hear” validation that we, as the OHA Family, continue to pursue excellence in the work we do together. That re-affirmation of our OHA teamwork is always like a “shot of vitamins,” as it re-energizes and inspires me each day. To that, I say Thank You! to each one of you.

Yet, if you are like me, some days it is easy to “bring the energy” (BTE) and accomplish tasks to the high OHA standard; but my friends, some days it feels a little bit harder. It’s especially on those days that I seek out my inspiration – you, and the work you do! When I take a moment to walk the OHA halls to say “Hi!” to some of the team, check out a few of our properties, and spend a few moments connecting with residents, it reconnects me to the “why” we do the work we do, and gives me that vitamin boost for the day.

I encourage everyone to practice self-care, take a moment to celebrate, refresh, and seek out your inspiration as you focus on your part in achieving our mission. Only you know what you/your body needs and I urge you to pay attention to your inner voice. (Maybe even treat yourself to a little pampering, and check out the DIY spa treatments in the following article.) Regular self-care will help us all endure these ongoing public health concerns and stay inspired to reach our personal and professional goals.

Speaking of inspiration, a huge thank you to all of the teams who kicked off the vibrant July summer activities and are making sure August continues that trend. We celebrated with our residents with several block parties, ensured young folk attended camps and ball games, and supported several National Night Out gatherings. My hope is that the families we serve are encouraged by the OHA team’s dedication to our community.

The Direct To You newsletter is a way for me to share important information and team accomplishments with you, but I also invite each department to contribute articles about what is happening throughout the agency. As you read the stories below, shared by the teams doing the work, you will probably feel the same sense of pride as I do. I am so happy to share the many ways the work we do locally is making a tremendous impact on real families, and remind you that there are many more ways each of us can get involved through advocacy and by sharing your own ideas through Direct From Me.

On a final note before I sign off today, I want to send a special shout out to one of the stellar members of our police department, Officer Ismael Velasquez. I was honored to be a part of the ceremony celebrating his heroism, which you can read about below.

I hope you all have a restful weekend!

Patricia



We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.

– ARISTOTLE, AS INTERPRETED BY WILL DURANT

All past issues of Direct To You are available on the OHA website for 24/7 access. In addition to the messages sent directly from the OHA executive director, you can also find links to other resources, articles, and up-to-date information about OHA operations and the ways we are addressing the current health crisis.



Wellness Comes From Within

August is National Wellness Month and serves as a reminder to us all to focus within. All during August, National Wellness Month highlights the need for self-care, managing stress and promoting healthy routines. Create wholesome habits in your lifestyle all month long and see how much better you feel!

Learn more about how this day came to be and the many ways you can take small steps to make big changes...and maybe even spend a little time pampering yourself at a spa or doing some home “spa treatments.” Check out the ideas below for low- or no-cost treatments you can do yourself in the comfort of your home. Visit [WellnessMonth.com](https://www.wellnessmonth.com) for ideas and inspiration. Also, visit:

- At home spa treatments
- Luxury spa tips
- How to create a spa day at home
- At home self care spa ideas
- DIY spa treatments



However you choose to take care of yourself, from the outside in and the inside out, know that your mind, body and soul will thank you for it.

REMINDER: There is a robust array of health and wellness content available through **Task Human**. It's one of your employee benefits and it's provided at no cost to you. If you haven't already, download the App today!



Officer Velasquez: The Hero Within

When we think of the word “hero,” we often think of a person running bravely into a burning building to save people from imminent danger. Well, that is exactly what was done by one of OHA's own, and now we are honoring him for that bravery and service. At the July 25, Board of Commissioners meeting, OHAPD Officer Ismael Velasquez was awarded the Medal of Merit for his demonstrated valor and courage for running into a burning high-rise building, helping evacuate tenants, and directing responding OHAPD and OFD units to the location of the fire through smoke-filled stairwells.

Officer Velasquez distinguished himself through outstanding performance, dedication to duty, and service to the community of Oakland and was awarded the OHAPD Medal of Merit for his actions during the fire emergency in the West Oakland community, by new OHAPD Chief, Alan Love.

On February 15, 2022, Officer Velasquez was the first responder on the scene at the Acorn City Tower at 725 Market Street and located a fire breaking out on the sixth floor. After requesting assistance from additional emergency responders, he entered the building alone and immediately began directing the residents to leave the building. Although the hallways were filled with smoke, Officer Velasquez continued to knock on doors on all building floors, stopping to assist elderly tenants in leaving the building.

Without firefighting protective equipment, the heat and heavy black smoke made it difficult for him to proceed when he reached the sixth floor. Unable to go further, he went down the stairs assisting others down and out of the building. Officer Velasquez provided vital information to the responding OHAPD officers and Oakland Fire Department (OFD) firefighters.

Officer Velasquez's immediate and decisive action ensured all tenants were evacuated safely and provided the OFD with the logistical intelligence to effectively extinguish the fire.

Chief Love proudly presented the award in front of OHA Executive Director, Patricia Wells, Officer Velasquez's family, members of the OHAPD and other OHA staff.

The OHAPD Medal of Merit is awarded to employees who have acted under adverse conditions, risking some degree of hazard to life and limb, or where death or injury to another party is prevented. This nomination was vetted through a review of OHAPD personnel who responded to the fire and Officer Velasquez's body-worn camera footage.

Please join us (and his son who shyly made an appearance in the event photos) in celebrating Officer Velasquez for this courageous achievement.





Keeping Our Neighborhoods Connected

The annual National Night Out was held last week, and once again, it was a huge success. Heeding the directive of the City of Oakland to “Keep it small. Wear your mask, social distance,” the neighborhood events were somewhat smaller and a little more subdued than in previous years, but they were still impactful, important and fun for all involved.

OHA staff from Property Management, the Office of Real Estate Development, OHAPD, Family & Community Partnerships, and the Executive Office, fanned out across Oakland—from 40th Street to 98th Avenue—joining City of Oakland staff, Oakland Fire Department and Police Department personnel and elected officials to show our community how much we care about the health and safety of the families who call Oakland home.

Millions of neighbors across America join together each year on the first Tuesday in August in an effort to combat crime. By getting to know your neighbors and working together, communities can strengthen their ties and promote greater involvement in crime prevention activities, police-community partnerships, neighborhood camaraderie and make it clear to would-be criminals that neighborhoods are strong, organized and fighting back. This year’s biggest NNO event in OHA’s portfolio was at Peralta Village. The strong showing was a reflection of our families’ desire to empower themselves to make their community safe for their children and begin to reconnect after more than two years of reduced activity. Just like at the block parties we’ve had this summer, the fun was enjoyed by all who attended with music, games and more.

Thanks to the OHA staff who attended and are working hard to keeping Oakland safe!



NAHRO Summer Symposium

Since NAHRO was established in 1933, its membership has grown to more than 19,500 housing and community development providers and professionals throughout the United States. NAHRO members create and manage affordable housing for low- and middle-income families, and support vibrant communities through advocacy, continued education and the sharing of best practices. Today, the member agencies of NAHRO administer more than 3 million homes for more than 8 million people. This is the legacy we, here at OHA, are proud to be part of.

Earlier this month, NAHRO hosted a 2-day Online Summer Symposium and Virtual Hill Day. The event was divided into two days: Day 1 was an in-depth symposium on homelessness and housing scarcity; and Day 2 was a Virtual Capitol Hill Day kicking off NAHRO’s August advocacy campaign, which is a forum for the entire membership to communicate to elected officials and state representatives.

See next article below to learn how you can be involved in August advocacy month.

Staff from across OHA attended both days of the Symposium, learning and sharing ideas about how to increase housing supply and house some of our community’s most vulnerable families. They then participated in the Virtual Hill Day conversations with the following legislative offices: Rep. Barbara Lee (D) [CA-13], Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D) [CA-20], Rep. Jim Costa (D) [CA-16], Rep. Jackie Speier (D) [CA-14], Sen. Alex Padilla (D) [CA], and Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D) [CA].

By sharing the information about the importance of legislation that addresses voucher utilization, regulatory restraints, and the needs of the unhoused community, our industry is closer than ever to meaningful legislation that prioritizes housing as a right that requires urgent action.

Thanks to everyone across OHA who showed up to lift the volume of our collective voices.



NAHRO's August Advocacy Month

ADVOCACY

August is advocacy month. As an active member and a leader in NAHRO, OHA is committed to supporting NAHRO's advocacy campaign that advances our efforts to create and sustain national housing solutions. This year's campaign is "Federal Housing Solutions Work." As part of this community of housers, your voice and support are important to convey to elected officials that federal affordable housing programs work to build healthy and safe communities. So help OHA and NAHRO reach our 50,000 letter campaign goal by sending a letter supporting each of the critical affordable housing asks.

NAHRO's Action Alert Center has letters ready for you to send. All you have to do is add your name, OHA address, and press submit. In fact, each week of August Advocacy focuses on a different message to national elected officials to both thank them for their existing commitments to housing and to advocate for additional resources and investments. So you can send six letters from your work site and another six from your personal address if you choose—one for each of the topic areas below:

General: Federal housing solutions work

- Week 1: Address housing scarcity
- Week 2: Expand access to housing vouchers
- Week 3: Increase housing voucher effectiveness
- Week 4: Preserve public housing
- Week 5: Pass timely, robust appropriations

Help OHA represent for Oakland! Please send a letter for each week. You can send a standard letter provided by NAHRO or submit a customized letter that has some facts about Oakland. Sending a letter is simple, and takes less than five minutes. If you have questions about how to send a letter through NAHRO's Action Alert Center, check out this quick video.



Back to School

Even though summer doesn't officially end until September 22, for school children in Oakland, the summer vacation came to a close this week. For many of us "old-timers," the Labor Day weekend signaled the end of summer vacation, but given the last two years of distance learning, social isolation and cancelled activities including graduations, proms, summer camps and more, getting back into a school setting with friends is a welcomed relief for so many.

Fortunately, as school reopens, OHA's Family & Community Partnerships department (FCP) has numerous plans underway to help students ease back into the academic mindset, and several supports to help ensure success in the new school year.

The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) 2022-23 school year began this past Monday, August 8, 2022. Over the summer, OHA's FCP Education Team hosted several events to keep students engaged in positive activities while on school break. We kicked off the summer in June with the OHA Annual Summer Lunch Program, which provides enrichment activities in addition to a nutritious lunch each day. This year OHA served over 500 lunch meals throughout the summer at both our Peralta Village and Lockwood Gardens sites. OHA students enjoyed arts and crafts, educational activities, computer games and field trips while participating in this popular program.

In addition to our summer lunch program, OHA sponsored students to attend the yearly 10-day Camp Mendocino Camping trip in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club of San Francisco. And in the month of July, OHA students visited the Oakland African American Museum and Library, an experience that helped expand their understanding of African American history.

As the summer vacation winded down, the Education Team sponsored two 'End of Summer Literacy Events' in partnership with the Oakland Literacy Coalition, "Roar, Read, Run." OHA students at Lockwood and Peralta enjoyed a day of fun, physical and educational activities, which included T-shirt designing, gardening, jewelry making, a spelling relay and the distribution of over 200 backpacks with school supplies and a grab bag filled with special treats.

The OHA Education Team also expanded its support to include a new K-12 Feeder School Model during this summer, providing a continuum of support for OHA students from their entry into school as kindergarteners through high school graduation. In that effort, OHA collaborated with Oakland Natives Give Back, sponsoring two Kindergarten registration events to support OHA parents with the registration process for Kindergarten students in OUSD schools.



Throughout the summer OHA students were engaged in well-rounded activities that have kept them motivated and inspired for a successful school year!



Staying Safe in the Midst of Public Health Emergencies

As if it wasn't enough for OHA, and indeed the entire world, to navigate the unfamiliar territory of COVID-19 over the last 2 ½ years, we now have another health crisis on our hands, monkeypox. Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus. Monkeypox virus is part of the same family of viruses as variola virus, the virus that causes smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder, and monkeypox (not related to chickenpox) is rarely fatal.

The good news is that scientists better understand monkeypox—how it spreads and how to treat it. The bad news is that it has made its way to California and, the Bay Area. But don't despair.

Although monkeypox spreads much differently than COVID-19, the vigilance we are now accustomed to will serve us well as we learn about and implement steps to prevent contracting the virus. Now is also a good time to remind or reintroduce ourselves to some of the COVID-19 prevention efforts as well. With concerts, festivals, travel and just being out and enjoying our favorite summertime activities, life may feel very much like the Pre-COVID days, but we still need to continue safety practices like social distancing, hand washing and wearing a mask indoors, especially when in unfamiliar surroundings, because COVID-19 continues to be an issue that needs our attention.

Governor Newsom recently declared a state of emergency in California due to monkeypox. Learn more about the monkeypox virus on the CDC website.



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.

