

# FAHROgram

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS

September / October 2009

## President's Message

### Involvement Is the Key to Success



Gail Sansbury

I thoroughly enjoyed seeing all of you at the FAHRO 2009 Annual Convention and Trade Show. Thanks to the hard work of committee co-chairwomen Pam Brewster and Maria Burger and the support of our sponsors (Progress Energy, Mutual of America, Norstar Primerica and FPHASIF) and our FAHRO staff, the event was a great success. The convention marked the beginning of a new era with the election of my successor, William Russell, and the winding down of my term as FAHRO president.

I feel privileged to have shared what has been a learning and growing experience for all of us during the duration of my presidency. The theme of my term, "Operation Communication," was designed to help members communicate

more openly and to encourage more volunteerism through committee involvement. We created new FAHRO committees, increased the size of our board, gave birth to our own self-insurance program, added new annual awards programs to honor our outstanding agencies and individuals and successfully initiated funding from the Florida Legislature. In addition, we worked to strengthen our relationships with SERC, PHADA and NAHRO and reaped the benefits of federal stimulus funds.

Our lines of communication and our finances have improved over the past few years, but our ability to sustain our gains will be only what members make of it. I cannot stress enough the value of every member's involvement in FAHRO. Operation Communication is only the beginning.

See **INVOLVEMENT** on page 3

## State Legislative Affairs

### Florida's 'Sacred Cows' Could Fall Victim to Tough Times

by Richard Pinsky, FAHRO State Affairs Consultant

Historically, Florida has been adamant in its defense of three "sacred cows," which in many ways have defined who we are as Floridians: no state personal income tax; no gambling casinos; and no offshore oil drilling.

#### Special Session Expected in October

As early as this October, the governor is expected to call a special session to ask the Legislature to ratify the third Revised

Seminole Indian Gaming Compact, which the governor recently negotiated after the tribe rejected the Legislature's attempt. It is this need for a special session, which could also expand gambling, that has become the opportunity to add offshore oil drilling to the debate.

Of course, legislators who up until now have always been the first line of defense

See **LEGISLATION** on page 5

## Calendar

October 4-6, 2009  
NAHRO National Conference  
Marriott Wardman Park  
Washington, D.C.

October 28-30, 2009  
FRA Annual Conference  
Orlando Hilton  
Orlando, Fla.

March 29-31, 2010  
NAHRO Legislative Conference  
Washington, D.C.

May 18-20, 2010  
FAHRO Executive Directors Retreat  
Location TBA

August 10-13, 2010  
FAHRO Annual Convention &  
Trade Show  
Location TBA

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9/2009

## Member Feedback

*Do you need help with a project or issue and want to see if any of our readers have the answer? Has a colleague done something wonderful that deserves an attaboy or attagirl? Or are you just frustrated and want to vent? Here is your chance to (anonymously if you wish) say thanks, ask for assistance, vent your frustrations, express your opinion or let us know how you feel.*

- Congratulations to the Housing Authority of the City of Fort Myers and Norstar Development USA on their Sept. 3 opening of the Renaissance Preserve Senior Apartments, a HOPE VI Community-Phase I.
- The Oaks at Riverview Senior Center and the Oaks at Riverview Community Center celebrated their grand openings on Aug. 6. Congratulations go to the Tampa Housing Authority and Hillsborough County. Using the capital funding portion of a \$10 million stimulus award, the Tampa HA is also planning to build a development called Moses White Estates on land that has been vacant for almost a decade.



- FAHRO welcomes LaTanya McBride as the new executive director of the Union County Housing Authority in Lake Butler. We bid a fond farewell to Doris Thomas, who retired on Aug. 19.
- Congratulations to the Sarasota Housing Authority on its receipt of a grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to renovate its Janie Poe Drive/Cohen Way properties.

If you would like to contribute to Sounding Off, please send your comments to Susan Trainor, FAHROgram editor, by email, [editor@ctf.nu](mailto:editor@ctf.nu), or by fax, 850/878-7760. 🌿

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued from page 1

FAHRO's networking, information sharing and news updates can keep you informed, but you must be involved to truly reap the benefits of membership.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your leader and fully trust that Mr. Russell will take FAHRO and the value of your FAHRO membership to the next level of excellence. 🌿

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# Midnight Musings on the Economy, Education and Prosperity



Corey Mathews

It has become my habit to watch a few minutes of TV before I turn out the lights and go to sleep. I have one of those busy minds that never seem to turn off, so it needs some distraction to reset and focus. Anyhow, the other

night they had Alan Greenspan talking about the economy.

It occurred to me that here was one of the most brilliant individuals of our generation, one who was revered and was reappointed as chairman of the Federal Reserve, regardless of the politics of the various administrations he served. Now, he is for so many the scapegoat of our current financial mess. Yet as the reporter continued to suggest that Greenspan was to blame, he calmly smiled and remarked that the economic failure was not one of the system, but of its participants.

According to Greenspan, the system depends on people making decisions based on accurate information and their best interests. While there certainly were situations where oversight could have been better, we all

remember predictions of the bubble bursting that went on and on. Greenspan recalled several conversations with the "best and brightest" of the financial sector during which he cautioned them to slow down. Their response was that they "knew when to get out." Guess not.

Now, you are probably wondering why I am sharing this with you and how it is relevant to your trade publication. The answer is that this situation highlights one of our biggest weaknesses as people and as executives. As a student of human nature, I am hoping that by calling your attention to it, you will be better prepared to recognize it and thus avoid the pitfall. What is it? In a word, HUBRIS.

Webster defines hubris as "exaggerated pride or self-confidence." It happens when we think we have all of the answers, when we believe we can see what everyone around us cannot. As I watched Greenspan's interview and he continued to defend the free market economy for which he was the primary architect, I remembered thinking that he seemed to believe our recent economic crisis was necessary. While that might seem a horrible thing, if we step back and examine the

situation, we see that it is one from which we are now recovering. It is an experience that has ferreted out a lot of mistakes and poor decision-making. While the effects on countless individuals and our economy as a whole have been nothing short of devastating, we have innovated and adapted, and we will emerge stronger.

I believe the most important lesson we can take from this, aside from the need for realism and accountability, is that we cannot afford to stop learning. Let's face it: That is the crux of our association ... EDUCATION. Whether it is educating ourselves through attending conferences, or educating policymakers and the public through advocacy of our issues, it is education that distinguishes us and underlies our every purpose.

Make sure you are getting the most out of your membership by reading every communication, attending every training, encouraging your peers to engage and participate (it makes us all safer) and participating in a meaningful way. The results of these efforts will see us through and return us to prosperity. 🌿

## TEAMWORK

Congratulations to the following housing authorities in Florida who closed deals in the past two years that positively impact thousands of people:

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*Richard Pinsky*

against sacrificing the sacred cows will explain that allowing these two particular prohibitions to fall is needed to prevent the third and ultimate horror—a state income tax—from occurring.

Almost \$2 billion in new revenue to the State of Florida through oil drilling leases will help fund a great many underfunded or eliminated programs. Organizations are already lining up in support of off-shore oil drilling in the hopes of becoming a beneficiary of any largesse realized. It will be very interesting to see if affordable housing advocates enter the debate. Stay tuned.

### Rehabilitation Grants

The Florida Housing Finance Corporation is working to finalize the rules to be used to guide the distribution of the \$1 million in state rehab money for public housing units. The grants will target small PHAs that have units in need of upgrading and are at least 30 years old.

### 2010 Regular Session

The first set of legislative committee meetings begin the week of Oct. 5 in Tallahassee, officially kicking off the 2010 hearings and review of proposed laws. In an unusual move, the House has changed many of its committee chairpersons and in some cases the committee members as well.

FAHRO is in the process of preparing for the 2010 Legislative Session. The newly appointed FAHRO Legislative Committee under the leadership of incoming President Bill Russell will be finalizing the FAHRO legislative agenda, which will likely include a continuation of state funding of public housing. 🌿

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# HOUSING — THROUGH THE — DECADES

## Annual Convention Offers Something for Everyone

The Sandestin Beach and Golf Resort was a peaceful and elegant backdrop for this year's annual convention. Members from all over the state traveled there to meet with others in the industry and to have some fun, relax and gather knowledge. Progress Energy sponsored Tuesday evening's fun-filled welcome reception. The evening's trade show was particularly entertaining, with attendees getting to "travel back in time" to the various time periods the vendors' booths characterized as part of the convention's theme, "Housing Through the Decades."

The grand opening session was held on Wednesday morning. We were very fortunate to have Pat Hoban-Moore, HUD regional director from Atlanta; SERC President Frank Lofurno; and newly appointed HUD Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez speak to our group. Ms. Henriquez and others from HUD stayed over to have personal one-on-one meetings upon request with members. The afternoon's luncheon was sponsored by Norstar Primerica.

During the afternoon, members elected their 2010-2011 board of directors at the annual business meeting. The day concluded with a legislative appreciation reception sponsored by Mutual of America. During the reception, members met with Rep. Clay Ford from Pensacola, who stopped by to welcome everyone to the area.

Thursday involved more training than ever before, with three tracks of educational programming for members to choose from. Progress Energy sponsored a delicious lunch and a "Green Track" session. The event concluded with the annual celebration cocktail party and banquet sponsored by FPHASIF. During the banquet, we gave recognition to those who made the convention possible as well as winners of the Newsletter Competition, Best Practices, Individual of the Year Award and Agency of the Year Award. By the end of the evening, some were saying it was the best FAHRO convention to date. Do you agree? Give us your feedback with our online survey available at [www.FAHRO.org](http://www.FAHRO.org).



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Gary Knoerlein and Barbara Miller from Broward County Housing Authority with Laurel Robinson, executive director from West Palm Beach, and guest Herman Robinson



President-elect Bill Russell and board member Marcus Goodson



Executive Director Sam Brunson from the Crestview Housing Authority with Rep. Dave Murzin and Betty Brunson



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Maria Burger, executive director from Stuart, and Rep. Clay Ford



FAHRO President Gail Sansbury and HUD Assistant Secretary Sandra Henriquez



Pete Gamble, executive director from Daytona Beach, and Angel Tua, FAHRO treasurer



Pat Hoban-Moore, Atlanta HUD, and Fort Walton Beach Mayor Pro Tem Bill Garvie



Opening Session



Craig McDuffie with Colorwheel Paint

# Tampa Housing Authority Awards Children of Employees for Making the Honor Roll

At its July board meeting, the Tampa Housing Authority Board of Commissioners awarded 19 Certificates of Excellence to students of employees for their achievements in making the honor roll for all grading periods this past school term. In addition to the certificates, the students received a \$50 Staples gift certificate to assist in purchasing school supplies for the upcoming school term. Each student was introduced and his or her accomplishment cited; the parents also received certificates of appreciation for the time taken to ensure their children stayed on course. Students from elementary to high school were recognized.


Each student was also presented a "Making the Grade" keepsake—a full-color booklet with pictures of all of the recipients and narratives citing their accomplishments.

The Tampa Housing Authority also celebrates scholars during its annual Housing Hero Scholarship Gala at which eligible public hous-



*Happy students and their parents display their certificates of achievement.*

ing high school graduates are presented a \$2,000 scholarship, a laptop computer with computer carrying case and flash drive and luggage, if needed. These students must achieve a 3.5 GPA and submit a winning essay describing why they need the assistance. To date, THA has awarded 30 scholarships totaling \$60,000.

THA President/CEO Jerome Ryans says that he is "proud of the accomplishments of these youth who, despite their sometimes difficult situations, have chosen the path to higher education to prepare for bright futures for themselves and their family members." 

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# A Garden grows in Newtown

## Rebirth of a public housing complex is a tribute to the community

Published: Wednesday, September 2, 2009, at 1 a.m.

Residents of the new Janie's Garden rental community had a message for taxpayers Tuesday: Thank you.

Taxpayers' contributions helped grow this attractive new complex from the plowed-under ground of blight: the old, rotting Janie Poe public housing project, which had become a symbol of poverty, government failure and social neglect.

Demolished in 2008, the complex now contains 86 rainbow-hued apartments and town homes, serving middle- and low-income families in north Sarasota. Later phases of the redevelopment are expected to add about 140 more units.

Completed, the complex will be a more fitting tribute to Poe, a woman revered for championing Newtown's education rights at a time when segregation laws made it difficult to do so. At a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday, the redevelopment's positive effect on its Newtown neighborhood was obvious. What had been a forlorn site now looks fresh and welcoming. But the change goes deeper than appearances. For residents who endured the old, poorly insulated complex, the new, energy-efficient units are a blessing. Safe, clean and air-conditioned, they allow renters to "live like regular people, not like a third world country," said Valerie Buchand, president of the Janie Poe residents' council, she is also a member of the Sarasota Housing Authority board. Buchand—who thanked God and the community for Janie's Garden—received a standing ovation Tuesday for her principled, relentless push for public housing improvements.

### A mix of housing

The redevelopment—nearly completely occupied, administrators say—is not all "public housing"; it is a mixture of market-rate and subsidized units. Its first-phase completion is further proof of the Sarasota Housing Authority's turnaround. The agency had fallen onto the federal Housing and Urban Development department's "troubled" list because of funding gaps and maintenance backlogs. In 2005, HUD was asked to step in to get the authority back on track. HUD brought in Carmen Valenti and Bill Russell, who steadied the ship and won the trust (and cooperation) of residents. Those achievements instilled confidence in the long-delayed redevelopment goal, persuading city, county and congressional officials to commit millions in tax dollars to the project. That encouraged participation by private-sector developer and lenders. Adding further momentum was advocacy from the Janie Poe Task Force and a new housing authority board. Their continuing attention will be needed for all three planned phases of the redevelopment initiative. Severe recession and cuts to state funding have cast a cloud over such efforts throughout Florida, though some federal stimulus dollars are flowing.

### A victory to be savored

Much work lies ahead. Future phases of Janie's Garden await, and other housing authority complexes are in deep need of overhaul. There is also the constant challenge of trying to ensure that low-income housing is properly funded, maintained and managed so that it meets



*BEFORE: The old Janie Poe public housing project had become a symbol of poverty, government failure and social neglect. HERALD-TRIBUNE ARCHIVE/2006*



*AFTER: Janie's Garden has 86 rainbow-hued town homes and apartments for middle- and low-income families. COURTESY OF SARASOTA HOUSING AUTHORITY*

society's needs. Public housing's importance to the safety net—serving people with disabilities, for instance—can't be overstated. But Tuesday was a time to savor a victory. It was a reminder that challenges can be overcome when people learn to "row together in the same direction," as County Commissioner Carolyn Mason—herself a former resident of public housing—put it. It was a day to appreciate the community's investment in public housing, and the vital benefits it has returned.

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*FAHRO is committed to the professional development of the people who provide public and assisted housing in Florida by offering a network for increased communication and education. We will continue to support legislation for the improvement and development of affordable housing and economic opportunities.*



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