

FAHROgram

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS

January / February 2010

President's Message

Participation Pays



William Russell

I am writing this message with only two days left in 2009. It is a good time to reflect on 2009 and to look ahead to the new year. 2010 will usher in some new aspects for FAHRO. We are excited to have new members joining, or in many cases, rejoining us, and we look forward to their participation strengthening our organization. We are also excited to have a new slate of officers, some new board members and new committee chairpersons doing their part to help lead and make FAHRO an even better association.

The new theme I introduced during the banquet at our annual conference is "Participation Pays." I believe this is especially true with FAHRO. Members, particularly those who participate, gain in many ways. We see this in the networking

that occurs at our events. We see this in the professional development at our conferences and at our regional trainings, including special arrangements with Nan McKay, which we have offered to members at significant discounts and with reduced travel costs by holding them throughout Florida. We see it in our advocacy at the state and federal levels, which has resulted in a direct financial impact for our members (for example, \$10 million in state hurricane mitigation grants, \$1 million in rehab grants from the state for small agencies, changes in the competitive ARRA CFP NOFA and higher HUD operating subsidy eligibility). We see it in members providing peer support on a continual basis. We see it at the FAHRO Executive Directors' Forum (formerly Executive Directors' Retreat), where, in a private setting, we air out issues we encounter and get valuable

See **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** on page 3

State Legislative Affairs

Election 2010: The Dominoes Are Falling

by Richard Pinsky, FAHRO State Affairs Consultant

The first of January officially marks the start of the 2010 election year. By now, most Floridians have heard that Governor Charlie Crist is not seeking a second term, but instead has decided to run for the United States Senate seat that until recently was held by Mel Martinez.

This, of course, has started the "domino effect," leading Republican Attorney General Bill McCollum as well as Democrat Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink also to forgo a second term. Instead, both have thrown

their respective hats into the ring for governor. Add in the remaining cabinet office, commissioner of agriculture, which will be open due to term limits, and Florida is left with the four most important elected offices being vacated at the same time. Because these four cabinet positions individually and collectively employ almost all of Florida's state employees in Tallahassee and throughout the state, you can be assured of major personnel and policy changes following the

See **ELECTION 2010** on page 5

Calendar

February 11-12, 2010

Sarasota, Fla.

FAHRO REGIONAL EDUCATION

Effective Tenant Interviewing
Sarasota Housing Authority

March 29-31, 2010

Washington, D.C.

NAHRO Legislative Conference

May 18-20, 2010

Location TBA

FAHRO Executive Directors' Forum

August 10-13, 2010

Location TBA

FAHRO Annual Convention & Trade Show

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Email: wrussell@sarasotahousing.org

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Sanford Housing Authority
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Email: atuta@sandfordha.org

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Email: mgoodson@hacfm.com

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Email: pamelasueb@embarqmail.com

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Email: gmcants@aol.com

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Email: stakleysarge@yahoo.com

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Phone: 772/287-0496 • Fax: 772/287-4084
Email: maria611sh@aol.com

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Broward County Housing Authority
4780 N. State Road 7, Lauderdale Lakes, FL 33319
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Email: kcregan@bchaff.org

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Miami Beach Housing Authority
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Email: ed@mbha.org

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Daytona Beach Housing Authority
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Email: gamblep@dhtafl.org

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Bartow Housing Authority
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Phone: 863/533-6311 • Fax: 863/533-0655
Email: catherine.bha@verizon.net

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1715 Division Ave., West Palm Beach, FL 33407
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Email: lrobinson@wpbha.org

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Jerome Ryans, Executive Director
Tampa Housing Authority
1529 W. Main St., Tampa, FL 33607
Phone: 813/253-0551, ext. 113 • Fax: 813/367-0778
Email: irenew@thaff.com

Executive Director (non-voting member)

Corey Mathews, Executive Director
FAHRO Headquarters
P.O. Box 14629, Tallahassee, FL 32317
Phone: 850/222-6000 • Fax: 850/222-6002
Email: corey@fahro.org

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1/2010

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 on its recognition by the Novogradac Journal of Tax Credit Housing (JTCH) in the first JTCH Developments of Distinction awards program. Renaissance Preserve Senior Apartment Homes received an honorable mention for overcoming significant obstacles. Proving that persistence pays, the project developers had submitted an



application for a HOPE VI grant award for three consecutive years before receiving the award in 2005. In 2007, the project was awarded the largest single State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) ever made by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE continued from page 1

feedback and suggestions from peers who have faced similar challenges and dealt with them successfully. We see it in HUD staff attending FAHRO meetings and sharing valuable information and insights with us. We see it in scholarships for our deserving, bright students. We see it in associate members meeting new clients for the first time and even collaborating with other vendors for the first time at FAHRO meetings.

We see over and over again that when members and associate members participate, it pays off in a number of ways. One of my goals for FAHRO in the coming year is to get even more of you involved in FAHRO so that it pays off for you and your agency or business as well as for FAHRO as an organization. Like any other association or endeavor, FAHRO will be as useful and successful as its members make it through participation, which I want to encourage in any way I can.

Happy, prosperous and healthy New Year to you all! 🌿



Send Your News to FAHRO!

Tell us about your accomplishments, milestones and other interesting member news. Your fellow members want to know!

Submit your news to FAHRO via:

Email: editor@ctf.nu (attach in MS Word format)

Fax: 850/878-7760

Mail: FAHROgram, P.O. Box 14629
Tallahassee, FL 32317-4629

(Send disk in MS Word format and include a printed copy.)

Photographs are welcome!



It's a New Year!



Corey Mathews

I looked at the calendar today and got excited. It's that time of year when magic seems to happen. The air feels cleaner, the night glows with holiday lights and there is a glimmer of hope in the air as we enter the New Year.

I think I speak for most of us when I say 2009 was a tremendously challenging year. I would like to borrow from the Chinese New Year, like historians did at the end of last year, when they coined 2008 as "The Year of the Chickens Coming Home to Roost." I would like to similarly use the Chinese New Year to refer to 2009 as "The Year the Bull Got in the China Shop."

The year started with Barack Obama becoming president and publicly sparring with Vice President Cheney over the proposed policy changes to Guantanamo, harsh interrogations and other

approaches to fighting terrorism. Obama's presidency was to be the time for a new beginning. Obviously, the new administration gave the sagging economy its front and center attention. Congress quickly passed a new stimulus bill, and the legislation was signed by President Obama in a lavish ceremony with a lot of fanfare. The bill was to be the catalyst to end the economic crises brought on by the prior year's burst of the real estate bubble.

The stimulus notwithstanding, 2009 continued to be a bad year for real estate. Prices continued to nosedive throughout the year, and industries associated with real estate sales took the worst of the hit. In Florida, where we have seen some of the worst real estate bubble-bursting, the unemployment rate has risen to exceed 11 percent.

By the end of the year, as Bob Franken lightheartedly summarized, "... nobody had a job anymore, but manufacturers weren't making anything, so

there was nothing to buy even as the post-Christmas sales lasted all year. (As the year wore on)... the problem just seemed to go away. The media stopped paying attention because most of their staff had been laid off, along with everybody else."

So, 2009 has ended, and we are looking at a lot of broken china—but even the jagged pieces look like the beginning of a beautiful mosaic under the light of the recent holiday season. The New Year marks not only the end of a troubled year; it also marks the beginning of change. Even the way we refer to the date will most likely change from here on out. (It is a lot easier to say "twenty-ten" than "two-thousand-ten.") If nothing else, 2010 is an election year. Also, February will bring us the Year of the Tiger! (All you have to do is visualize Rocky Balboa running up the stars to the tune of *Eye of the Tiger* for instant inspiration.)

Best wishes to you in the New Year! 🐯

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Richard Pinsky

November 2010 elections.

The dominos fall next into Florida's 25 members of Congress, with at least one congressman seeking one of the open cabinet seats and so far 10 state senators and representatives declaring their intentions to run for Congress. The state senators leaving office, either because of term limits or a desire to run for a higher statewide office or for Congress, has set off a large number of state House members competing with one another for the open Senate seats. The stakes are very high. The House and Senate members elected in 2010 immediately will begin drawing new district boundaries for the congressional seats, the state Senate seats and the state House seats. Those district boundary lines likely will determine the success of one political party over another through the year 2020.

Because all 120 state House seats will be up for election in 2010, with many of them open seats not held by a returning incumbent, dozens of local elected officials at the county and city levels are leaving their offices to run for the state House or Senate. The dominos finally come to a rest as new candidates run for city councils and county commissions to fill the seats being vacated by those seeking higher office.

It is impossible to predict the outcomes of most of these match-ups. So much depends upon the general perception

of the president and his approval by the voters. And the governor's race is certain to be one of the closest elections in 10 years, which will likewise have a significant impact on other races.

One thing is certain: With 120 state House seats and 20 state Senate seats as well as all four cabinet seats, including the governor, all up at the same time, candidates will be scouring the landscape for friends and supporters. And it won't all be about financial contributions. There will be only so many Republican and Democrat activists to go around. The four competitive statewide elections alone will absorb most volunteers, leaving a tremendous void for reliable campaign volunteers at the state Senate and House campaign level.

The 2010 election year is probably the greatest opportunity for FAHRO to get engaged at a grass roots level in order to have the greatest possible impact on Florida's future role in public housing. If you are like most folks in this down economy, giving money in the form of a campaign contribution is less likely than in previous years. However, volunteering this spring and over the summer is something that won't take a large investment of your time, yet has the potential to pay huge dividends in the form of building crucial friendships in the Florida Legislature. Please email FAHRO headquarters about how to get involved as a volunteer in the 2010 elections.

See you in Tallahassee! 



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A Cure for Fire Ants!

Walter Reeves from the University of Georgia's agriculture department has recently discovered a breakthrough that promises to provide an inexpensive, environmentally friendly and effective strategy to use on fire ants. Reeves is a local television and radio star who has recently announced an amazing cure for ridding lawns and playgrounds of the pesky critters. Apparently, testimony is building that it works.

The problem with traditional poisons is that they take several applications before the queen receives the poison and dies. Contact poisons that are on the market frequently result in agitating the colony so the ants simply move to a new location. A well developed colony can be as deep as 30 feet and spread out some 20 to 50 feet from the mound's center. It isn't anything for the ants to just build a new tunnel to the surface.

Reeves' cure to the problem is to simply pour two cups of club soda (carbonated water) directly in the center of a fire ant mound. The theory behind the solution is that carbon dioxide in the water is heavier than air and displaces the oxygen. This suffocates the queen and the other ants. The treatment takes about two days to work, but it reportedly will actually kill the entire colony.

Sounds like an interesting method to try. There is no poisonous residue, no contamination of the ground water and no indiscriminate killing of other insects or animals. Reeves says each mound must be treated individually and a one liter bottle of club soda works for about two or three mounds. Guess I'm adding club soda to my shopping list!

FAHRO REGIONAL EDUCATION: REGION III – SOUTH/CENTRAL

EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING & PROGRAM INTEGRITY



SARASOTA HOUSING AUTHORITY

Janie's Garden Community Center
2350 Central Avenue
Sarasota, Florida 34234

February 11 - 12, 2010

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday
& 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Friday

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Thanks to the efforts of Bill Russell at the Sarasota Housing Authority, FAHRO is proud to announce a two-day training to increase your staff's ability to offer quality tenant interviews. The training teaches standardized interviewing methodology to anyone conducting tenant interviews so your housing agency may better prevent fraud and reduce errors. Participants will gain effective tools for communication and data collection. They will use hands-on case studies to improve eligibility interviews, discrepancy resolution, fraud prevention and data collection. **The cost is priced to be super affordable at only \$450.00 per person for FAHRO members!**

Training Destination

Janie's Garden Community Center
2350 Central Avenue
Sarasota, FL 34234

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Thur., & 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Fri.

Directions: From U.S. 41, turn East on MLK Jr. Way. Continue to the second light and turn right onto Central Ave. Proceed South until you see our new multi-family development on your left, where you can turn in and find parking. The community center is located on Central Ave., just south of the residential buildings. **From I-75 Southbound**, exit on University Parkway (first Sarasota exit) and go West. Continue on University through multiple lights and turn left onto U.S. 41 and follow directions above. **From I-75 Northbound**, exit Fruitville Rd. and head West. Continue through town and turn right onto U.S. 41 (Tamiami) and follow directions above.

Key objectives of this training:

- Identify the skills needed for interviewing effectively
- Learn a planned approach to interviewing
- Improve your questioning techniques:
 - What makes one question better than another?
 - What questions should you avoid?
 - How do you bridge questions to gather maximum information?
- Utilize interview tools and forms for program integrity
- Improve your listening skills
- Deal more effectively with "zero income" families
- Recognize deception indicators
- Identify when someone might be withholding information
- Identify policy issues to improve program integrity

FAHRO Region III – Effective Interviewing Training

Registration Form

Four Easy Ways to Register:

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Tallahassee, FL 32317

Online: www.FAHRO.org

FAX: 850/222-6002

Phone: 850/222-6000
(M/C & VISA Only)

Use one form for up to six registrants from the same agency - Copies of this form can be used to register more than six people. Hurry, this training is in demand and there are limited slots available. Registrations are due to FAHRO by 1/27/2010. Please print or type the following:

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Agency or Company _____

Address _____

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Phone ____/____/____ FAX ____/____/____ Email _____

Please **circle** the correct amount for each registrant and write his/her name on the line provided.

	FAHRO Member Registration	Non-FAHRO Member Registration	Total Amount
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For our compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact our office if you need any special accommodations. A minimum of seven days' notice is required.



Employee Theft: The Wrong Kind of 'Self-Help'

As hard as it is to believe that someone you hire to fill a trusted position would actually steal from you, it happens every day in all kinds of businesses and in a variety of ways. And it is estimated that up to 75 percent of all employee theft goes unnoticed. Some security experts predict that up to 30 percent of the nation's workers will steal at some time during their working years. Difficult economic times, lack of salary increases and the threats of downsizing and cutbacks make it even more tempting for employees to help themselves.

When employee theft is discovered, the employer feels violated and often reacts out of emotion. Remembering that employee theft is a business problem and addressing it as such will aid in obtaining a quick resolution.

If you are the victim of employee theft, the first thing you should do is to take a thorough look at your agency's processes. Theft usually occurs as a result of a breakdown in procedure. Do you lack a system for checks and balances? Are employees not following clearly defined procedures? Are you paying enough attention? Use the situation as a wakeup call to reexamine the way you do business. Here are some prevention tips:

Hiring: This is the most crucial step in preventing employee theft. It is easy to assume that because someone is a friend or a

relative of a current trusted employee, the same must be true of the new prospect. Sometimes this process works; sometimes it doesn't. Check out everyone thoroughly. Nothing is foolproof, but doing some research should keep you from making an obvious mistake. Don't assume that new employees are more likely to steal than those with the most seniority. Remember that things change in our employees' lives just like they do in ours. Increased debt load from a child in college, strained personal relationships, an addiction or pressure from peers could all change a long-time, trusted employee's attitude.

Agency Policies: Policies can help with nearly all employee problems—from absence to poor performance. Clearly defining in your agency's policies the penalties and the preventive measures being taken to eliminate these problems allows employees to see the consequences for their actions. When enforcing rules, stick to the punishments stated in your agency's regulations. Consistency will go a long way toward maintaining your employees' respect and helping you manage problem employees more effectively.

Additional Measures: Employee accountability can greatly reduce delinquency. Having someone count cash trays when

Continues on next page...

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employees are coming into and leaving work, limiting the number of employees that have access to cash and using video surveillance will help make employees responsible for missing funds, which can help curb unaccounted shortages. These steps also provide proof of actions.

Be a Positive Role Model: The tone for integrity and trust starts at the top of any organization. Talk the talk and walk the walk. Set an example of ethical behavior and equitable management. Regardless of the level in the company at which theft occurs, it must be dealt with swiftly and fairly.

Employee Morale: It is also important to keep good relationships with all employees, maintaining close but professional relationships that emphasize teamwork and community, to keep up morale. Because even the best of prevention measures can go wrong, you need to be prepared so you can maintain good employee morale. Preparation will help you handle the situation smoothly, efficiently and fairly. A lack of proper preparation could take you down a slippery slope of decreased morale and increased theft.

Here are a few tips for dealing with theft once it becomes suspected:

Evidence is the most important aspect when dealing with employee theft. Without proper evidence, it is not a good idea to accuse an employee; this can lead to violent confrontations and distrust from other employees. Unless you can prove without a

reasonable doubt that the employee is stealing, do not confront him or her. This may require you to take extra actions to catch the employee in the act, but it is well worth it. This will save you much more than it costs in the long run.

Keep in mind that making an accusation against an employee can permanently damage relationships, not only with the employee in question, but also with those with whom the individual works closely. Don't say anything until you have undeniable proof. Once you have proof, it is time to take action. **NEVER** confront an employee in front of other staff. Take the employee to a private area. Provide the employee with the evidence you have collected and deal with the situation accordingly. If this includes termination, let the employee gather personal belongings and leave the premises on his or her own accord. Making an example of an employee or being overly aggressive does nothing but hurt your image and build sympathy for the offender. Instead, speak calmly yet assertively and state your claims.

Hold a staff meeting after the incident to let everyone know what happened and what actions were taken. This allows employees to see that these situations will be discovered and handled appropriately, and it prevents rumors from spreading about the incident. Demonstrating that you are serious about employee theft and are taking the appropriate measures to deal with employees who steal will greatly deter other employees from taking similar actions. 🌿



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PCHA Supports Pinellas Hope With Donation



\$300,000 for people in need

The Palm Lake Village Housing Corporation (PLVHC) and the Pinellas County Housing Authority (PCHA) recently presented Frank Murphy and Sheila Lopez of Pinellas Hope and Catholic Charities with a check for \$300,000. This donation will assist in providing a portion of the operating funds needed to continue Pinellas Hope, a nonprofit organization providing an array of social services designed to promote self-sufficiency for those in need in Pinellas County.

The PLVHC had non-HUD funding available for this one-time donation to Pinellas Hope. Catholic Charities was recently notified by the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners that 30 percent of its budget would be reduced. To date, Catholic Charities has been able to place 57 percent or approximately 737 individuals into some type of permanent housing within the community.

PCHA Board Chairman Joseph Triolo says, "As a local housing leader, our mission is to provide housing to those in need, and we have recognized this valuable opportunity to partner with Pinellas Hope. We are honored and privileged to be able to lend a hand. Support has never been more needed than it is today, and we are pleased that we are able to help."

Pinellas Hope provides homeless individuals with comprehensive case management and support services so they can successfully transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. Frank Murphy, president of Catholic Charities, was grateful for the decision the board made because with this contribution, Pinellas Hope will be able to continue its commitment to serve those in need.

Chairman Triolo recently visited the offices of Congressman Bill Young, Congressman Gus Bilirakis and Congresswoman Kathy Castor to seek their assistance in identifying grant and other funding opportunities for Pinellas Hope. Congressman Young's office has taken the lead and is looking at opportunities for a pilot program between Pinellas Hope and the PCHA.

For more information about the PCHA's partnership with Pinellas Hope or the housing authority's strides to provide housing to those in need, visit at www.PIN-CHA.org or call 727/443-7684. 🌿

Lakeland Housing Authority Provides Affordable Housing for Seniors in Bartow



An aerial view of The Manor at West Bartow

Lakeland Housing Authority in partnership with the Lakeland-Polk Housing Corporation recently completed The Manor at West Bartow, a 100-unit affordable housing building for persons 62 and older. This development meets the need for low-income and very low-income seniors and is especially structured for persons on social security since the rents are very low.

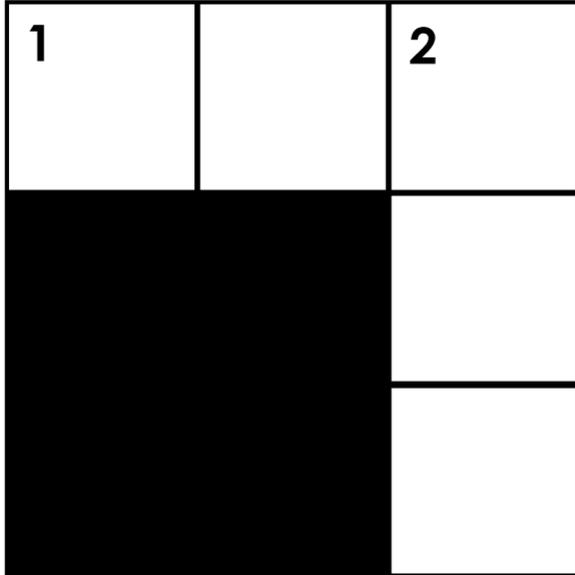
Rental rates for the one- or two-bedroom units include utilities, and residents will not pay more than 30 percent of their adjusted gross income for rent.

The property is located on five acres in Bartow, Fla., within one mile of the downtown district.

For more information, call 863/533-9101. 🌿

In Memoriam

Michele Gomez, an analyst with the Public Housing Program in the HUD Miami Field Office, passed away on Nov. 13. She is survived by her daughter and mother. In making the announcement, Acting Director Brian Gilmore said, "This is a very difficult loss as Michele was so young and was taken from us far too early in her life. There is some solace in knowing that she is no longer suffering from her illness and in the many positive memories she leaves behind for so many people associated with the assisted housing community in South Florida. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her and her family."



Across

1. Kitty _____.

Down

2. Gone With _____ Wind.

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Mission Statement

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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