

The mission of the King County Housing Authority is to provide quality affordable housing opportunities and to build communities through partnerships. We encourage self-sufficiency and we protect the dignity of people with limited resources while safeguarding the public trust.

Glorious blooms
GARDENER WINS CONTEST
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KCHA NEWS

July
2005

A resource for King County Housing Authority residents

Helpful youth program will soon have new home

Many join groundbreaking celebration



PHOTO COURTESY OF KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Shamarke Ahmed with Harun Sheikh, KYFS assistant manager Cyoon McBride and Abdul Musse.

KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

KENT – Like many of the kids in Kent’s poor East Hill neighborhood, Shamarke Ahmed was not born in the United States. He came with his family from war-torn Somalia as a young child, and they first settled in Georgia.

While it may have been a step up from the terrible conditions in his African homeland, Shamarke’s new home was steeped in trouble. Violent crime and drug dealing were common among youths and “they looked up to gangbangers,” the Kent Meridian High School senior told a rapt audience at the Rec Hall at Springwood Apartments.

Shamarke found an avenue away from crime when his family moved to Valli Kee in Kent in 2001. Kent Youth and Family Services provides a youth program at the 114-unit family development in Kent that drew him in and encouraged academic success.

Tall and thoughtful with wire-framed glasses, Shamarke seized the opportunity to star at school. He earned high grades and has been awarded a full scholarship to the University of Washington. “The youth program makes a difference,” said Shamarke. “I can be somebody now.”

More poor kids will have a chance to be somebody with the construction of a new Springwood Youth Center this summer. KCHA along with its Building Better Futures partners – Kent Youth
Please see “Future youth center celebrated” on page 2

KCHA considers rent policy changes

BY ASHLEY LOMMERS-JOHNSON
King County Housing Authority

Changes to rent policy may soon become a necessity.

As the federal government provides less and less money for public housing, the amount the King County Housing Authority collects in rent may have to increase to cover the cost of housing and services.

Within the next three to four months, the KCHA Board of Commissioners will make very difficult decisions about how much residents will have to pay toward housing costs.

The board has several options. It could shift policies to allow people with higher incomes to be tenants, but board members do not consider that a good alternative when so many extremely low-income households are in need of a home.

The board could also reduce services, but many are key to helping residents become self-sufficient.

The Housing Authority is considering these ideas, but it also considering whether to ask some or all residents to pay more for their housing.

No one living in public housing pays more than 30 percent of their income for rent. Some pay as little as 15 percent of their gross income. Some households, because of their very low incomes, pay no rent at all.

On the other end of the scale, some residents with higher incomes choose to pay a flat rent, which is still lower

than what private landlords charge. While current rents are fair and affordable for all, not all residents pay the same percentage of their income for rent.

The board will tackle these important questions about the rent policy in the next few months.

Should rent be based on income? Is there another way to ensure that rents are fair and affordable?

Can the rent policy be simpler to understand yet still fair?

Should KCHA continue to provide income deductions for residents who get jobs to encourage them to work and stay employed? What about other deductions?

Should every resident be required to pay a minimum amount of rent?

Should some or all households be required to pay a greater percentage (for example, 33 percent instead of 30 percent) of their income for rent?

Should residents be allowed to pay a flat rent forever, even if their incomes become relatively high?

Should KCHA increase the flat rents that residents pay?

Residents will have the opportunity to provide their views on the issue this summer, before the board votes on a new rent policy.

If you are interested in participating in the discussion and inviting some of your KCHA neighbors to a focus group meeting, please call (206) 574-1100 and leave your name and telephone number.

Park Lake, Avondale students win scholarships

KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Yordanos Fesehaye has been a go-getter at Evergreen High School in White Center. She’s a natural-born leader who has mentored younger students, planned school events and organized community

projects.

Caylen Dean helped pioneer the Link Crew mentoring program at Woodinville High School and participated in the Northshore School District’s Teaching Academy, using her leadership abilities to “help bring out the best in everyone around her,” a teacher noted.

Both Fesehaye, a resident of Park Lake Homes I in White Center, and Dean, who lives at Avondale Manor in Redmond, have worked hard in their quests for college educations. They were the King County Housing Authority’s top two applicants for scholarships from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

Fesehaye and Dean’s commitment will not go unrewarded. KCHA has awarded each with an academic scholarship worth \$1,000 per year, up to a total of \$4,000. These special scholarships are the first KCHA has offered since the 1980s.

“Because of the obvious strong com-

mitment you and your family have made toward your educational goals, we would like to help support your efforts,” KCHA Executive Director Stephen Norman wrote in a letter to both girls.

Fesehaye, the daughter of Letekidan Teklemariam, graduated from Evergreen in June and has enrolled at the University of Washington. Dean, the daughter of Lori Dean, also graduated last month and plans to study elementary education at Seattle University.

James Schindler, Dean’s English teacher at Woodinville High, credited her for working toward her goal by taking an advanced teaching academy class.

“With her patience and innate kindness, I think she has chosen a goal well suited to her skills and personality,” he said.

Fesehaye began life in war-torn Eritrea. Her father died in a car accident involving a drunk driver when she was 4. She began a

Please see “scholarships” on page 2

Highline Council meets July 7

KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

The North Highline Unincorporated Area Council represents an unincorporated area of King County south of Seattle that includes White Center and Boulevard Park. It serves as the area’s voice with King County government.

The council usually meets the first and third Thursday of each month at the North Highline Fire Station, 1243 S.W. 112th St., from 7 to 9:30 p.m. It will meet on July 7 and 21 this month.

In cooperation with the council, the King County Housing Authority offers free transportation to these meetings. If you are interested, please call Steve Fisher at (206) 574-1280.

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GROUNDBREAKING A HIT

Bellevue Boys & Girls Club awarded \$10,000

KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Bellevue Boys & Girls Club, which has programs at Spiritwood Manor, Hidden Village and Eastside Terrace, was one of five clubs from around the country selected to receive an Annie E. Casey Award of \$10,000.

The award, presented in April at the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's 99th National Conference in San Diego, is given to the clubs considered the best at helping low-income families and their children. There are

3,400 Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide.

"The clubs are a valuable part of our community," said Carma Oaksmith, manager for Spiritwood Manor and Hidden Village.

She added that the clubs provide a homework hour, computer access, outside games and mentoring.

"Without them, children would have nowhere to focus after school, when many of their parents are at work or at school or college themselves."

Future youth center celebrated

Continued from front page

and Family Services, the Puget Sound Educational Service District and the Center for Career Alternatives – celebrated the start of construction of the new facility at a groundbreaking under sunny skies in late May.

A crowd of more than 100, including Springwood kids and leaders from nonprofit service agencies, gathered in the beat-up, one-story Rec Hall to hail the building that will take its place.

The new facility will feature a full-size gym, a classroom, a computer lab and a kitchen.

Speakers, which included Kent Police

Chief Ed Crawford, KCHA Executive Director Stephen Norman and Mike Heinisch, executive director of Kent Youth and Family Services, stood next to a model brick wall fashioned from cardboard, with shovels and sledgehammers leaning against it.

The ceremony followed the unveiling of a donor wall at the new Kent Family Center that marked the successful completion of the center's capital campaign.

That facility, completed last spring, houses Head Start classrooms, a Women, Infants and Children (WIC) clinic and a career development center.

In a stirring speech, the Rev. Marvin Eckfeldt called the Family Center "a dream come true."

Jack and Mary Lou Becvar of Kent, major supporters, unveiled the donor wall. Head Start children gave the donors leis.

Shuttle schedule

The monthly schedule is posted at central locations in the buildings the shuttle serves. The schedule sometimes changes, so confirm times against the posted schedule. Residents must sign up for ride service.

Fri., July 1: Auburn grocery	Gustaves Manor 9:45	Wayland Arms 10:15	Plaza Seventeen 10:35
Mon., July 4: holiday			
Tues., July 5: Shoreline grocery/food bank	Briarwood 9:45	Lake House 10:15	Paramount 12:30
	Northridge I/II 1:00		
Wed., July 6: Burien grocery	Burien Park 8:45	Munro Manor 9:15	Brittany Park 9:45
	Boulevard Manor 10:30	Riverton Terrace 10:40	Yardley Arms 1:00
	Park Lake 1:30		
Thurs., July 7: Issaquah/Kent grocery	Eastridge House 9:30	Harrison House 1:00	
Fri., July 8: SeaTac Mall	Plaza Seventeen 10:00	Wayland Arms 10:10	Gustaves Manor 10:20
Mon., July 11: Bothell/Redmond grocery	Northwood 9:30	Northlake House 9:45	Forest Glen 1:00
	Casa Juanita 1:35		
Tues., July 12: Southcenter mall	Harrison House 9:45	Vantage Glen 11:30	
Wed., July 13: Int. grocery/Wal-Mart	Brittany Park 10:00	Munro Manor 10:20	Burien Park 10:50
	Boulevard Manor 11:10	Brittany Park 12:15	

Thurs., July 14: Kent grocery	Harrison House 1:00
Fri., July 15: food banks	Gustaves Manor 9:45
	Wayland Arms 9:55
	Plaza Seventeen 10:30
	Southridge 1:00
Mon., July 18: Bothell/Redmond grocery	Northwood 9:30
	Northlake House 9:45
	Forest Glen 1:00
	Casa Juanita 1:35
Tues., July 19: food banks	Mardi Gras 10:00
	Paramount House 12:10
	Northridge I/II 12:25
	Briarwood 12:45
	Lake House 1:00
Wed., July 20: Burien grocery	Burien Park 8:45
	Munro Manor 9:15
	Brittany Park 9:45
	Boulevard Manor 10:30
	Riverton Terrace 10:40
	Yardley Arms 1:00
	Park Lake 1:30
Thurs., July 21: Issaquah/Kent grocery	Eastridge House 9:30
	Harrison House 1:00
Fri., July 22: reserved	
Mon., July 25: food banks	Brittany Park 9:15
	Yardley Arms 11:30
	Riverton Terrace 1:30
Tues., July 26: food banks	Mardi Gras 10:00
	Burien Park 1:00
Wed., July 27: reserved	
Thurs., July 28: food bank/Kent grocery	Boulevard Manor 9:30
	Munro Manor 9:45
	Harrison House 1:00
Fri., July 29: Alderwood Mall/Redmond grocery	Northwood 8:45
	Northlake House 9:00
	Forest Glen 1:00

Echo Glen inmates learn while making art



PHOTO COURTESY OF KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

KCHA AmeriCorps member Jill Beppu (left) and volunteer Rachael Bigham show off mosaics they created with the help of residents at Echo Glen Children's Center.

BY CLAUDE IOSSO
King County Housing Authority

The boys and girls at Echo Glen Children's Center, a juvenile detention center in Snoqualmie, have done bad things. Often born with addictions and raised with abuse, many battle mental and emotional problems and have learned only how to lash out at the world.

At Echo Glen, rules and walls may have replaced chaos, but those who work with the kids know they have much to learn about life. One of these workers, King County Housing Authority AmeriCorps member Jill Beppu sought to use clay and paintbrushes to teach them a little.

A collection of beautiful mosaics, featuring shards of colored clay and mirrors, is proof that she and volunteer artist Rachael Bigham, succeeded.

The mosaics, in frames and built into towers, are outsider art at its best – garish, raw and fascinating. Beppu and Bigham assembled the mosaics, but Echo Glen inmates created many of the pieces.

For KCHA, Beppu teaches English as a Second Language to immigrants in Kirkland and Bellevue. Unlike the residents she works with at Casa Juanita and Spiritwood, most of her Echo Glen students speak English, but she wondered if communicating with them would prove harder.

Beppu, who has a master's degree in fine arts from the University of Washington, began teaching art at Echo Glen as a volunteer in 2002. When she joined the KCHA AmeriCorps team in 2003, her Echo Glen efforts became part of the job duties.

In 2004, Beppu decided to return to the AmeriCorps team for a second year. KCHA AmeriCorps Coordinator Pat Porter asked her to consider involving her students in the AmeriCorps art competition, held at the annual Northwest National Service Symposium.

"Jill picked up the idea and ran with it," Porter said. "Then it took on a life of its own. It's a marvelous project, full of so much energy."

She said she was happy to see strong involvement in the project.

"The kids actively participated, which is something these kids just don't do," she noted. "They're non-verbal and closed-up, but they willingly followed the rules so they could be in the class."

Beppu said she hardly expected this transformation when she started at Echo Glen. The youths weren't hostile and, closely supervised by security staff, they were quiet and respectful. However, they betrayed little interest in art.

One youth caused a change in the others approached the project when he applied himself to a piece, laboring for 10 minutes to sketch a cartoon scene in the Japanese "animé" style.

"That this young man could focus on one thing for 10 minutes was a great accomplishment," Porter said. "The other kids were then willing to follow along."

The students at Echo Glen embraced the mosaic project, not only carving designs into shards of clay, but also learning how to grout, paint and glaze. For some, they discovered the pride of creation and were anxious to show their work to Beppu and the staff.

"The kids now are able to focus, to decide to continue," Beppu explained. "They can visualize. They learned patience, how to cope with disappointment and how to take care of things."

As Porter noted, "They learned they don't have to react to everything with anger."

Despite the mosaics' eye-popping grandeur, a technicality kept the project from winning the May symposium at Portland State University. It turned out that all entries had to be crafted by AmeriCorps members alone.

The disappointment was short-lived. Beppu and Bigham soon won a \$6,000 Kateri Brow Big Idea Grant from the Issaquah Schools Foundation. Beppu plans to continue the Echo Glen art program with that and other funding from charitable groups.

Scholarships

Continued from front page

dramatic academic turnaround after joining the Upward Bound program.

She spoke about her background at the Greenbridge groundbreaking event. (See "Greenbridge ground breaking takes the cake" on the front page of the general section.)

"Yordanos is an amazing young woman," Upward Bound learning specialist Carrie O'Brien wrote in a recommendation for the NAHRO scholarship. "She plans on being successful, and I have no doubt she will accomplish any goal she sets for herself."



Program makes phone service affordable

KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Washington Telephone Assistance Program can help you acquire phone service or keep the service you already have.

The program is managed by the State of Washington, the federal government and your local telephone company.

To be eligible for the program you must be an adult living in your own home and receiving financial or medical assistance from the state Department of Social and Health Services.

You are eligible if you receive any of a variety of different kinds of assistance, including food stamps, General Assistance, Social Security, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medical Assistance, Refugee Assistance, Community Options Program and DSHS Chore Services.

The program offers new customers free basic installation, as long as there is wiring already to your home.

WTAP will also drop any initial deposit requirements for local service. WTAP offers a low monthly rate, with participants paying \$8 at most for their phone service each month.

You still must pay taxes and fees.

To enroll in WTAP, contact your local telephone company. You will need to provide them with your DSHS client identification number. The telephone company will verify your eligibility with DSHS.

WTAP covers basic residential local telephone service for one line only. For additional lines or added features, such as caller identification, answering services, call forwarding, call waiting and long-distance calls, including toll calls, you will have to pay full price.

After WTAP determines you are eligible to participate, the program pays the phone company the difference between the cost of service and what you can pay.

For more information about WTAP, call toll-free 1-888-700-8880.

Patio display wins Ballinger garden competition

By CLAUDE IOSSO
King County Housing Authority

SHORELINE – The back of Vera Bereszyuk's unit at Ballinger Homes is a burst of color, with peonies, hydrangea, geraniums and clematis all clamoring for attention from pots and the garden bed. Calla lilies beckon from the front.

All the plants got noticed last month during the second annual Ballinger in Bloom garden contest. Bereszyuk's garden won first prize, tabbed the best of 14 entries by three garden experts.

Bereszyuk was delighted with her victory. The Ukrainian immigrant was unable to say much in English, but when the judges presented the first prize, she beamed and said, "thank you" repeatedly.

Ukrainian immigrants dominated the 2005 competition. Lidia Ogorodnik, who took first place last year with a backyard garden surrounding a love seat, won second prize. Mariya Skobyak, whose garden featured a nice border and mix of colors, took third place.

Two contestants, Mai Cha and Ivan Bonarenko, earned honorable mentions.

Bereszyuk won a \$25 gift certificate to Home Depot while Ogorodnik and Skobyak won decorative plants. Cha and Bonarenko received small cash prizes.

Ballinger Homes, a 110-unit family development near Shoreline's northern border, won a National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials award this year for an exterior remodel. Pink rose campions, red geraniums and white and blue hydrangea decorating the contestants' yards made the handsome, two-tone duplexes look even better.

Many residents take great care of their units, and several fine gardens were not even entered in the contest. It is this community spirit that Shoreline Community College outreach worker Lindsey Legaspi decided to celebrate when she organized the first Ballinger in Bloom event in 2004.

This year's judges were Ken Plante of Sky Nursery and two avid amateur gardeners, Darlene Miller, vice president of



PHOTO COURTESY OF KING COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
Vera Bereszyuk is the proud winner of the 2005 Ballinger in Bloom contest.

workforce and economic development at Shoreline Community College, and Center for Human Services Finance Director Tracy Little.

The three judges checked each garden and conferred under gray skies, which fortunately never dropped any rain. To ensure impartiality, they were given no information about the contestants, and they only considered the gardens themselves.

The judges agreed that Bereszyuk's garden deserved first place. Citing the large mix of flowers, Miller noted that the backyard garden featured "a good color mix."

Plante said, "There are lots of plants, a nice plant selection and good design."

KCHA, Shoreline Community College and Center for Human Services sponsored the Ballinger in Bloom event, with plans to continue it next year.

North Area welcomes new support service coordinator

By TONYA LEWIS
King County Housing Authority

When the residents of Northridge House and Northridge II need help finding services in the North City neighborhood of Shoreline, their new support services coordinator is uniquely qualified to help.

Like the residents at the twin 70-unit, mixed-population high-rises, Ruben Rivera-Jackman calls North City home. He has lived in the neighborhood for nearly a decade.



Ruben Rivera-Jackman

joined the King County Housing Authority's Support Services team on June 6, taking over for Jeffrey Gerhardstein at Northridge I and II and at Paramount House, in Shoreline's Jackson Park neighborhood.

"I am excited about working in the housing field again," Rivera-Jackman notes.

"I grew up in New York City and lived in low-income public housing as an adolescent, after my family became homeless as a result of a fire."

Prior to starting with KCHA, Rivera-Jackman worked for five years at Therapeutic Health Services as the clinical supervisor for outpatient alcohol and drug services.

He has many years of experience in social services, including working with affordable housing providers.

Rivera-Jackman received a master's degree in not-for-profit leadership from Seattle University in 2003.

"One of my passions is advocating for safe and adequate housing for low-income, disabled individuals and the elderly," Rivera-Jackman wrote in an e-mail. "I am excited about providing support to the residents to ensure that they sustain their current housing and enhance their quality of life."

And Rivera's interest in reaching out goes beyond just his dedication to the residents he will be serving.

"I look forward to contributing to the Support Services Coordination team by sharing my diverse professional and personal experiences," he added. "I hope to create a sense of community amongst the

residents living in the North end of King County."

Ruben Rivera-Jackman can be reached at (206) 363-3580. His office hours are from

1 to 4 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays at the Paramount, from 1 to 4 p.m. Tuesdays at Northridge II and from 1 to 4 p.m. Wednesdays at Northridge I.

Home ownership takes preparation, resolve

By A. LINDA TAYLOR
Special to the Voice

Whether you are buying a home, qualifying for a rental property or improving your credit rating, education is the key to achieving financial success.

For example, did you know if you are purchasing a home you may be eligible for a \$13,500 grant from the Resident Opportunity Self Sufficiency program to help with closing costs and a down payment?

The Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, International District Housing Alliance and El Centro de la Raza offer workshops and seminars designed to equip you with the tools you need to move forward on the path to a brighter and more secure

financial future.

You will have the opportunity to learn concepts and strategies on developing lifelong habits that will help you accumulate wealth. With proper maintenance of your credit, accumulation of savings and responsible financial management, you can hope to achieve the American dream of homeownership.

To learn how you can achieve your homeownership dream, please call Metesa Greene, The Urban League at (206) 461-3792 ext. 3013, Elaine Magil, IDHA at (206) 623-0122, or Leilani Finau, El Centro de la Raza at (206) 957-4633.

A. Linda Taylor is housing director for The Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle.

