

# PAHRA PROUDLY PRESENTS 2023 BELLAMY & BEST PRACTICE AWARDS

The PAHRA Best Practices Showcase is held annually to recognize the achievements of our member agencies, and to demonstrate the diversity of activities involved in providing affordable housing, improving lives, and revitalizing communities.

Each year, PAHRA recognizes members who have implemented innovative ideas, explored successful entrepreneurial activities, exhibited excellence in design, shown progressive program operations, provided stellar customer service or supportive services in a unique way, or created a lasting impact on their communities.

The Bellamy is PAHRA's highest recognition of outstanding achievement. 2023 **Bellamy Awards** were awarded to the following:

## Housing Authority of the County of Beaver (HACB) – Community Block Parties

Mental health crises, suicide rates, and hospitalizations continue to rise as residents still suffer lingering effects of long-term isolation and other issues resulting from the pandemic. Yet partnerships and processes for obtaining needed services have been affected due to staffing shortages, burn out, early retirements, etc. HACB service coordinators were focused on providing on-site services for residents. Inspired by a meeting with Highmark Wholecare, a plan was developed to hold community block parties at ten public housing sites with local partners and service providers including mental health counselors, suicide prevention teams, churches, healthcare providers, Children and Youth representatives, Head Start, and others. Each event was tailored to that community's unique needs and activities included: educational and parenting information; books and baby item giveaways; free dental checkups and teeth cleaning; free vision screenings; healthy cooking and nutritional tips; connection with fire and police personnel; CommuniCycle provided free bikes; and so much more! In addition to a day of fun, these block parties provided an opportunity for residents and staff to build relationships, and to establish a solid network of social service partners who are available to provide assistance when needed.



## Jefferson County Housing Authority (JCHA) – Operation Volunteer Military Share

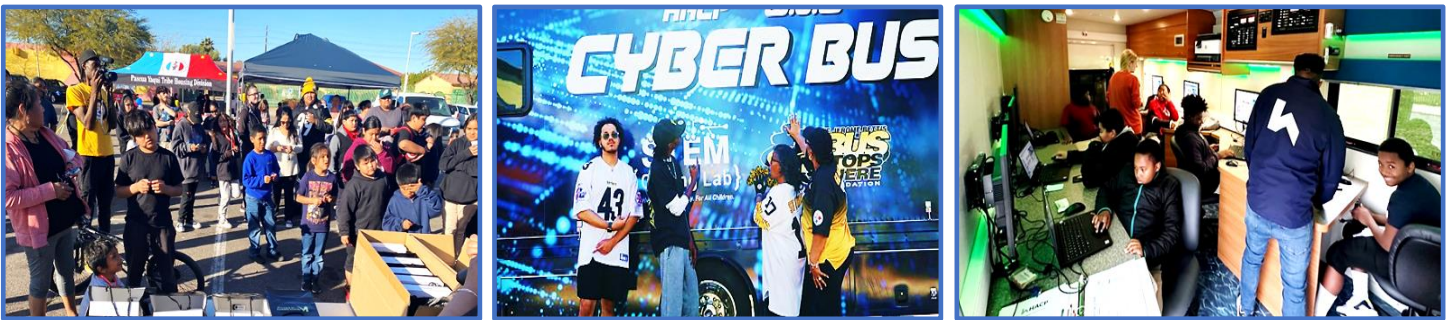
The Second Harvest of Northwest Pennsylvania is a member of the Feeding America network. Second Harvest serves 11 counties in the northern region of the Commonwealth, including Jefferson County, which was committed to expanding services to bring the Military Share Program to their service area. Military Share is designed to provide fresh, nutritious foods for veteran families. It relies solely on donations and volunteers. The Jefferson County Shelter Task Force, Office of Veterans Affairs, and Second Harvest set to the task of identifying a distribution location and securing a network of volunteers to make this goal a reality. That is where JCHA came in. A typical distribution requires 15-20 volunteers, of which the majority are usually JCHA employees. Their volunteer time does not require PTO, but is granted to them to give back to those who have served. Beyond their distribution duties, members of the JCHA team also deliver Military Share packages to those lacking transportation to the distribution site. Since its establishment just one year ago, the Jefferson County Military Share has served an average of 163 veterans for each distribution, and is the largest Military Share in the Northwest Region.



Earning **Best Practice Awards** were Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh and the Reading Housing Authority for these excellent programs:

### Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) – WiFi on Wheels Cyberbus

HACP identified digital literacy as a priority for many resident households and set a goal to bridge the digital divide within public housing communities and surrounding low-income neighborhoods. Through partnerships with the STEM Coding Lab and the Jerome Bettis Bus Stops Here Foundation, the WiFi on Wheels (WOW) Cyberbus was launched. Equipped with laptop computers and high-speed internet access, the Cyberbus enables remote instruction, computer science education, and digital literacy classes. By providing mobile computer and internet access, residents learn basic programming and internet navigating skills which aides in attaining self-sufficiency through access to employment and educational resources and other relevant services. The program has become a cornerstone of HACP’s digital literacy efforts. Program hours were expanded for summer 2023, and additional expansion is being considered to add a second mobile learning vehicle. Technology has the power to bring people together and provide opportunities for growth and innovation. Unfortunately, not everyone has equal access to these benefits. The WOW Cyberbus helps to address these disparities.



### Reading Housing Authority (RHA) – Oakbrook Homes Center for Community Services

Reading Housing Authority’s Oakbrook Homes community, built in 1952, consisting of 531 units housing 1,598 persons, offers no centralized location for residents to receive services intended to promote physical, emotional, or economic health and wellness. The Oakbrook Homes Center for Community Services will address that void through redevelopment of a 4-acre parcel, which includes a comprehensive plan to revitalize and invigorate existing indoor and outdoor resources. To address a long-term goal of increasing access to much needed services, RHA will repurpose two current structures to create a Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC) and a Family Services Complex (FSC). The NRC will offer a food pantry, small grocery store, large common areas for educational and vocational programs, a senior center, business center, and shared office space for human services agencies. The FSC will provide property management services that emphasize resident self-sufficiency and promote life beyond public housing, the likelihood of which will be amplified by the complex’s flagship offering – on-site childcare and an early learning center.



Additional agencies listed below that submitted an entry for the 2023 awards were recognized with a **Certificate of Merit** acknowledging their accomplishments.

## ALLEGHENY COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY (ACHA) – COMMUNITY BASED CARE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

It has long been recognized that access to safe, quality, affordable housing is one of the most basic and powerful Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). SDOH are defined as the non-medical variables that influence a person's length and quality of life. For those trapped in a cycle of crisis and housing instability due to extreme poverty, trauma, violence, mental illness, addiction or other chronic health conditions, housing is a major factor in their health trajectory. ACHA recently implemented a Community Based Care Management (CBCM) program in public housing communities to provide evidenced-based needs assessments and comprehensive screenings to reduce health inequities; improve access to resources for financial literacy and planning, workforce development, increase mental health supports, substance recovery treatment, improve accessibility and affordability for childcare, transportation, and more. One-on-one support from a program coordinator provides direct services as well as connections with major health system stakeholders to refer and reduce barriers to medical treatment and behavioral healthcare.



## HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ERIE (HACE) – FOOD RESCUE PROGRAM

Food insecurity can be a daily reality for residents of public housing where there is limited access to supermarkets, fewer healthy food items and fresh produce, higher prices, and lack of transportation options. HACE has partnered with local food pantries, non-profits, and a variety of community organizations to bring high quality food options and other services to their public housing sites including:



- Monthly food distribution is available to hundreds of families at John Horan Garden Apartments and Eastbrook Apartments
- YMCA Kids Club serves a nutritious after-school snack and dinner to participants daily
- John F. Kennedy Center provides a hot well-balanced meal to attendees daily
- Lake Erie Food Rescue delivers fresh produce, and ready-made food items to Friendship Apartments weekly. This program is so successful that Lake Erie Food Rescue has offered to add another day to their delivery schedule
- Erie Food Co-Op offers free memberships to residents of Friendship Apartments and Schmid Towers
- Second Harvest delivers senior food boxes to Schmid Towers/Ostrow and Curry Schell Apartments

Members of HACE staff coordinate the program by organizing site distributions and volunteers, notifying residents, and handling referrals. The HACE food distribution program addresses challenges and barriers faced by these underserved populations.



## PHILADELPHIA HOUSING AUTHORITY (PHA) – SHARSWOOD CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Sharswood is designated by HUD as a Choice Neighborhood, anchored by public housing where public and private dollars are leveraged to support local strategies in a comprehensive approach to neighborhood revitalization. Sharswood Ridge is part of the Sharswood/Blumberg Transformation plan through which PHA has:

- Imploded Blumberg Apartments - 158 new housing units have been completed with 457 more currently under construction
- Purchased the former Sharswood High School, reopening it as the Big Picture High School, housed in a building along with Section 3 and Workforce Development Centers, a health clinic, PowerCorps, Mighty Writers, CVS pharmacy technician training program, and the Choice offices. PHA provides an annual subsidy of \$500 per student
- Relocated PHA headquarters to the Sharswood business district, subsequently drawing Santander Bank and Everest Urgent Care to open within the development's commercial corridor
- Most recently opened the Sharswood Grocery Outlet, which provides much needed healthy food options and discounted goods in this former North Philly food desert. Approximately one-third of its workers are PHA residents

Thanks to the commitment of PHA and its partners, this once neglected neighborhood has become the talk of the town.



Feel free to contact any of the participating agencies if you are interested in obtaining more information or replicating one of these award-winning activities within your own organization.

Congratulations to our Best Practice Showcase participants, our award recipients, and to all of our member agencies who are putting forth their best efforts each and every day to provide award winning services. Watch your mailbox next spring for details on submitting your agency's Best Practices for our 2024 Showcase.