



# The Connection



*Blackwell Terrace  
Groundbreaking Ceremony*



### FROM RVA TO JPN

Dr. Jeniece Lusk, a former RRHA resident and Tomorrow's Promise Scholarship winner, now lives in Miyazaki City, Japan, and is currently a Sociology professor at Miyazaki International College.

### HISTORIC GROUND- BREAKING

Ray Miles is owner and CEO of Fastbreak General Contractors, LLC, the first ever minority-owned firm to be selected as the primary vendor on an RRHA project.

## RRHA CEO MESSAGE

Adrienne E. Goolsby

Welcome 2015 and Welcome to the RRHA CONNECTION! I am pleased to introduce you to the first edition of RRHA Connection! This new, quarterly newsletter will highlight many exciting things that are happening in and around our communities, including agency progress, new partnerships, upcoming events, and more!

*Cont'd on page 1*



## CEO MESSAGE (cont'd)

Each day, I have the opportunity to witness the devotion that our staff at RRHA has to creating vibrant communities where our residents have a safer place to live and an opportunity to move forward and enhance their lives. Today, we are poised to achieve new goals, to take public housing and the Richmond community to new levels of success. And we have a solid strategy to achieve those goals.

I am so proud of how RRHA, residents and partners continue to work together in their determination to ensure the future of our communities is a bright one. I want to make a promise to the Richmond community that I will challenge all of our staff members, management, leadership and most importantly, myself, to remain focused on our strategic plan and make sure we achieve our goals. We thank you for reading and hope you will enjoy this new publication!

I wish you all a prosperous new year. I look forward to sharing upcoming news with you throughout the year as we build vibrant communities!

Sincerely,  
**Adrienne E. Goolsby**  
Chief Executive Officer



## RRHA AND VISTA PARTNERSHIP CREATE STEM OPPORTUNITIES

Richmond Redevelopment Housing Authority recently launched a new partnership and welcomed Brendan Sostak, an AmeriCorps Volunteer(s) in Service to America (VISTA) worker. VISTA was created through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, aimed at serving and promoting the interest and needs of low-income families.

RRHA has partnered with VISTA to create long-term STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) opportunities for youth throughout its communities. Sostak, a Virginia Commonwealth University graduate and current VCU Environmental Studies Master's student, is working hard to enhance RRHA's current STEM clubs as well as develop new ones. These clubs, designed for middle school students ages 8-13, include hands-on projects, regional competitions, field trips and more.

"We want to expose the kids as much as we can to STEM in order to show them the opportunities that are available to them and the potential that's out there," says Sostak. The ultimate goal is to create a variety of clubs offering different subjects for each community. The Film and Technology Club just launched in Gilpin. "We are exposing students to the actual technology that's used in film, production and distribution. We even set up a few field trips to local movie theaters, film studios and with film directors," says Sostak. Local filmmaker Patrick "Praheme" Ricks recently visited the students to discuss the film industry and how they can launch themselves into the business.

RRHA CEO Adrienne Goolsby comments, "Our STEM initiatives represent a combined effort, including partnerships with Richmond International Raceway, HUD's Fatherhood initiative, West Point STEM Academy and others, to advance STEM education. This will help our young people focus on their potential while benefiting from vital family support."



# RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL PRESENTS RECOGNITION AWARD



Richmond City Council recently presented RRHA with a recognition award for the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) staff's dedicated service to the Richmond Region Ending Military Veteran Homelessness Project. The award was presented in City Hall during the December 2014 meeting of Council. The RRHA and its HCVP program were recognized for making a positive contribution on ending homelessness among U.S. military veterans in the Richmond Region. Representing RRHA were: Sharon Valentine, Vonnie Farmer, Y'Vette Winston, and Elaine Jackson. Virginia and the Richmond Region are at the forefront of helping to end homelessness.

The Richmond Region Ending Military Veteran Homelessness Project is a collaboration and partnership among non-profits, businesses and supporters to include, Homeward, Home Again, Hunter Homes McGuire VA Medical Center, Virginia Supportive Housing, Liberation Family Services, CARITAS, Daily Planet, Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, Virginia Housing Development Authority, Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Richmond Residential Services, and others.

## FROM RVA TO JPN

**Former RRHA Resident  
Now Teaching in  
Japan**

Living in both the Blackwell and Gilpin Court communities, Dr. Jeniece Lusk was a student of Blackwell Elementary, Thompson Middle School and

Open High School. She credits her teachers for much of her success, as "they made a world of difference in my life, and always believed that I had potential—even when I didn't know it," she says. While in high school, she applied for the Tomorrow's Promise Scholarship in 2001 and won. "Winning the scholarship was about more than just the money—although it did help to pay tuition, buy books, etc.; however, it was the relationship that I developed with RRHA that impacted me the most with the role models I found in Ralph Stuckey and Valena Dixon, as well as the camaraderie I built with fellow recipients and friends," Dr. Lusk adds.



**Dr. Jeniece (Lewis) Lusk, PhD**



Dr. Lusk, after graduating with both her Master's and Ph.D in Sociology from Baylor University, now lives in Miyazaki City, Japan, and is a Sociology professor at Miyazaki International College. Living just fifteen minutes away from multiple beaches and the Pacific Ocean, she loves the rich culture and tradition of the city and enjoys frequenting matsuris (festivals) and Shinto shrines. Though she often misses home, she notes, "I'm grateful for the new friends and family we've gained since our arrival." Dr. Lusk encourages her fellow residents back home to "think about your future, and what you want to be able to do in that future. Make decisions that honor the future that you want."



# HISTORIC GROUND- BREAKING: THE BLACKWELL TERRACE SENIOR COTTAGES

The culminating project of a multi-faceted effort to revitalize the Blackwell community is an 18-unit senior apartment community, including landscaping and a community garden. The announcement came with much fanfare at the November 2014 groundbreaking ceremony with the attendance of such community dignitaries as: Congressman Robert "Bobby" Scott, City Councilwoman Reva Trammell, HUD Deputy Regional Director Catherine Lamberg, RRHA CEO Adrienne Goolsby, RRHA Board Chair Samuel Young, City of Richmond Development Chief Lee Downey, and Fastbreak General Contractors, LLC CEO Ray Miles.

"RRHA could not be more excited about this venture as we finalize the revitalization of the Blackwell community," CEO Adrienne Goolsby said. "The fact several of our seniors will have brand new apartments to move into is a moment we are eagerly anticipating. The future residents of these units can expect several amenities and modern features upon completion next spring."

Ms. Goolsby continued, "This has been a long-term team effort. Every person, role and agency was vital in staying the course to help RRHA see this revitalization through. RRHA thanks all of its partners and the Blackwell residents for their part in helping bring vibrant communities to life." Funding for this effort was provided through HUD's HOPE VI revitalization program. The architect for the Blackwell Terrace Senior Cottages is Baskervill. The Timmons Group is its engineer.



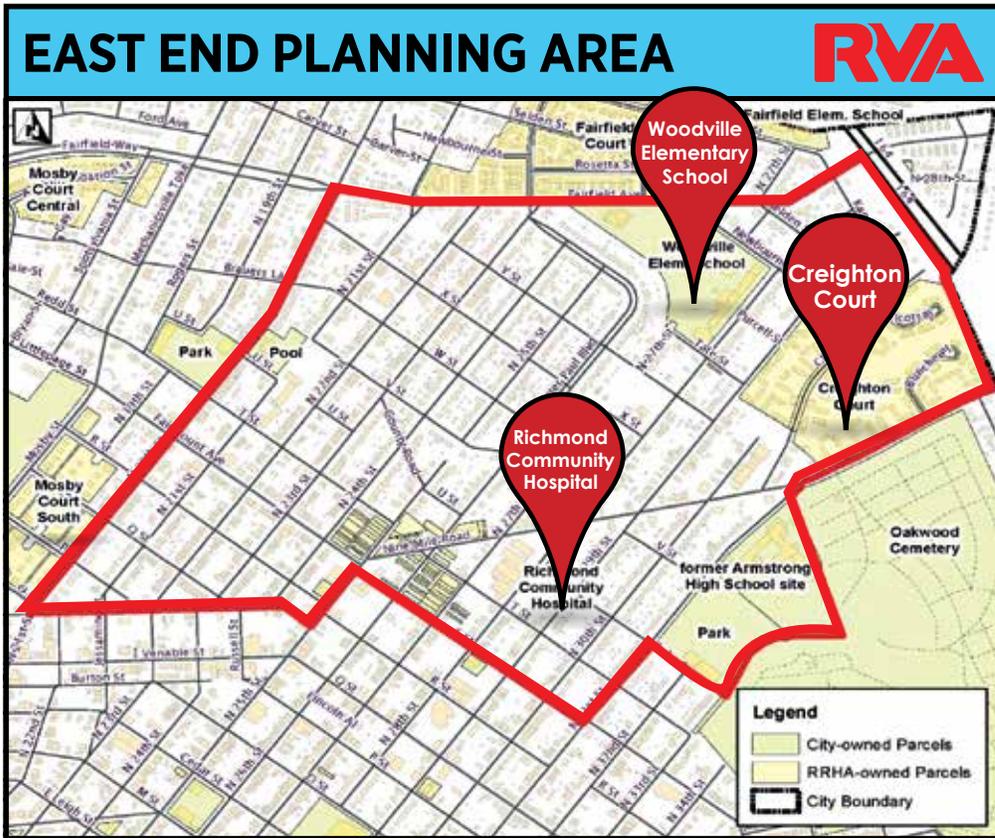
RRHA projects a completion date of April 2015 on the nearly \$1.85 million development. Residents are expected to move in to the 800 square foot ADA-compliant apartments shortly thereafter. RRHA is committed to providing contracting opportunities through its Procurement Department and is also proud to announce the award of this contract to a minority-owned business.

Located in Hampton, Fastbreak General Contractors, LLC's award of the \$1.85 million dollar construction of The Blackwell Terrace Senior Cottages marks the first time a minority owned firm has been selected as the primary vendor on an RRHA project. The project at Blackwell Terrace not only provided Ray Miles, owner and CEO, with an opportunity, but it met his personal mission to be supportive in community revitalization efforts.

"After researching the community, my team was excited to work within the community, as much as to provide a service to the community," said Mr. Miles. He will seek to employ residents of Blackwell on this project. He has already extended employment opportunities to several residents of the community for at least a one year tenure.



# REVITALIZATION DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE IN EAST END



Throughout 2014, the City of Richmond, Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority (RRHA) and The Community Builders (TCB) have continued revitalization efforts with residents, business and community leaders and other stakeholders through East End Transformation planning sessions. There have been a series of discussions regarding a collective vision for transforming the City's East End into a place where all children, families and individuals can live, thrive and have a bright future.



The revitalization will create 1,100 to 1,300 mixed income homes, including the replacement of 504 public housing units, apartments, retail opportunities, parks, yards and parking. Additionally, Armstrong High School will be rebuilt. Each effort will be done in phases, with Armstrong Phase 1 expected to start November 2015 and housing replacements to begin Spring 2017.

One goal of RRHA and Richmond City is to provide a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy or Transformation Plan, modeled after the federal Choice Neighborhoods Program. The public housing transformation process is planned to focus on three core areas: People, Housing and Neighborhood. The concept for the first phase was created



using the former site of Armstrong High School, approved by the Planning Commission. The City of Richmond and RRHA efforts have already resulted in the "Model Block" of affordable single family homes for first-time home buyers.

Together, RRHA, TCB and the City of Richmond are holistically rebuilding its neighborhoods, while creating enhanced economic, educational, health and safety outcomes for families. RRHA and the City of Richmond are excited to move forward with these transformation efforts and invite all to participate in this journey.

**To get involved, call RRHA at 804-780-4344 or email [info@rrha.com](mailto:info@rrha.com).**



# FAIRFIELD ROC-N-BOTS WIN 1ST PLACE IN ROBOT DESIGN

The next wave of engineers, architects and designers could very well reside in Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) communities! The Fairfield Court Boys and Girls Club “Roc-N-Bots” recently competed in a First Lego League qualifying event and won First Place in Robot Design. This is a national competition which combines robot-building and programming with project presentation work and character development.



The Fairfield Boys and Girls Club robotics program introduces children ages nine-to-fourteen to real-world engineering challenges by building Lego-based robots. Their creations then complete tasks on a thematic playing surface. In addition to winning first place in robot design, the team placed fifth overall out of 16 teams in the Division II category.



RRHA CEO Adrienne Goolsby shared, “We are excited with the achievements of the Roc-N-Bots! Participation in events such as this is how dreams are realized. RRHA is pleased to support the dreams and success of all of our youth!” Congratulations!

## RRHA GIVES BACK

The Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) team of staff and administration recently completed its annual giving campaign for the United Way and Richmond Opportunities, Inc. (ROI). The agency’s goal was to raise \$20,000. Thanks to contributions from RRHA employees, the agency raised over \$20,000! Contributions to the United Way go toward initiatives that help improve the health, education and income opportunities for families in need within the Richmond Metropolitan area. Donations to ROI go toward the Tomorrow’s Promise Scholarship fund for RRHA for high school seniors going to college and also support the Youth Sports and Fine Arts Academy.

RRHA thanks everyone for all of their donations and pledges! RRHA CEO Adrienne Goolsby notes, “I would like to deeply thank all of our amazing employees. Because of you, we were able to not only meet, but exceed our goal this year. Supporting our residents in their dreams to go to college just reinforces our mission of building vibrant communities.”



# RRHA, CITY HEALTH DISTRICT AND GILPIN WELCOME NEW RESOURCE CENTER!

Through its partnership with the Richmond City Health District, Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) is pleased to announce the opening of the Gilpin Resource Center, located in the Calhoun Family Investment Center, 436 Calhoun Street. The center began serving the community in September 2014. Amy Popovich, Resource Center Supervisor, Richmond City Health District, comments, "The purpose of the community resource centers is to create a community hub for health and wellness. We want to build trust among residents and connect them with the [health-related] services they need. The resource center serves as an entry point to connect residents with a primary care doctor."



Each resource center is staffed with Community Health Workers. During a designated "clinic" day, residents can see a registered nurse practitioner. The centers are open to residents and the general public. The centers are typically open Monday through Friday during select hours. Resources are available for various health-related needs, including flu shots, family planning, nutrition, blood pressure, and other areas.

"In 2013, we had over 2,000 patients and 3,000 visits. We typically see 12 to 14 patients a day," says Popovich. CEO Adrienne Goolsby notes, "We are excited to open our sixth resource center in an RRHA community. I would like to especially thank the Richmond City Health District, Dr. Donald Stern, and Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF). We are extremely proud of this partnership and look forward to being able to serve residents and the community with health services."

In addition to Gilpin, there are community resource centers at Fairfield, Whitcomb, Hillside, Creighton and Mosby neighborhoods. All of these centers have opened in the past 5 years. "Our goal is to work with RRHA to create healthier communities," says Popovich.



**Are you a high school senior living in an RRHA community?  
Apply today for the Tomorrow's Promise Scholarship Fund!  
Scholarships are available!**

**The application deadline is coming up soon!**

**For more information, call RRHA Resident Services 780.4835 or email [info@rrha.com](mailto:info@rrha.com)**

**Tomorrow's Promise Scholarship Fund**

# RRHA ENDS 2014 BY CELEBRATING STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS



In December 2014, RRHA hosted its "End-of-Year Employee Appreciation Meeting" with over 200 employees. CEO Adrienne Goolsby shared, "We wanted to show our appreciation to all

of the dedicated employees of RRHA. Everyone has worked so hard throughout the year, so we want to celebrate the achievements of our staff."

Certificates were provided to employees for five, ten, fifteen, twenty and twenty-five years of service. "I have enjoyed working throughout the agency, serving the community and providing the best customer service," said Arthur Cannon, Labor Trades Foreman, Specialty Crew.



RRHA Commissioners William Cooper and Robley Jones were also in attendance. "What the housing authority does for its residents is very important. The services for residents could not be done without the dedication of staff and employees at RRHA," said Commissioner Cooper. "Significant progress has been made in 2014 due to the good work of the administration and staff of RRHA, which reflects good for the City," noted Commissioner Jones.

**RRHA thanks all of its dedicated employees who help us serve the City of Richmond!**

## RRHA ANNOUNCES 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority is underway with the implementation of its five year strategic plan. This plan allows RRHA to serve Richmond's neighborhoods, while providing economic opportunities and expanded housing options for an improved way of life for public housing residents and those seeking quality affordable housing. RRHA's five goals include:

1. Protecting and educating consumers when they buy, refinance or rent a home while creating financially sustainable homeownership opportunities.
2. Providing sustainable communities for low income families; adding pride and safety to these communities.
3. Creating economic and educational opportunities to assist our residents in reaching their goals of economic independence.
4. Creating communities that are open and filled with a diverse population of people with equal opportunities.
5. Becoming one of the nation's highest performing Housing Authorities; meeting and then exceeding expectations for our team, our residents and our community.

The plan incorporates new affordable housing, family self-sufficiency opportunities for residents and the development of mixed-income communities. We will do this through partnerships with residents, businesses large and small and local, state and federal agencies, all to help us build vibrant communities.

The full Plan can be viewed online at [www.rrha.com](http://www.rrha.com)

