

The Sunflower News



Fall 2009

Housing+Solutions

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Dear Friends We are happy to report on our spring and summer gardening efforts. We have had a bumper crop of flowers and vegetables in Brooklyn, thanks in large part to the efforts of Housing + Solutions board member Erika Collins and forty Paul Hastings Summer Associate volunteers who spent a Saturday in June planting, painting and playing—everyone had a good time and as you can see we have a harvest to be proud of. We are also grateful to the fifteen Moody's Investors Service volunteers who spent a day at Drew House painting and cleaning.

Recently I overheard a tenant asking another "How do you cook eggplant?" She promptly recited her eggplant parmigiana recipe and asked "How do you cook collard greens?" We have had lots of tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, parsley, collard greens and eggplant—for tenants, staff and even neighbors. Maybe there is a mini farmers market or a cookbook in the making. We also had the most gorgeous sunflowers in the

backyard—a painting is in the works for our year end annual report.

We are happy to congratulate Christina, who is our first high school graduate. She has enrolled in a two year college program and dreams of attending John Jay College to pursue a degree in criminal justice. We ran a successful summer jobs program with some of our teenagers, who worked alongside maintenance staff cleaning, painting and gardening. They earned spending money and saved enough to buy back-to-school clothes. This was their first work experience so we are hopeful they will be lucky next summer when they are fourteen and can apply for the city wide summer youth employment program.

We are all working hard on finding solutions.

Rita Zimmer, Executive Director

Expanded Employment Program

Women@Work, Housing + Solutions' vocational and employment program is helping tenants move beyond part-time and temporary work into jobs with benefits and a future. This multifaceted program addresses the many obstacles women face. Little or no employment experience, minimal education and histories of incarceration are some of the issues that hinder efforts to secure and maintain employment. Women find work but the jobs are low-paying, part-time, temporary or seasonal, and generally lack benefits.

According to Sharon White-Harrigan, Housing + Solutions' full-time Employment Specialist, working one-on-one with tenants offers significant advantages given the great variety in tenants' level of experience and the confidence they need to pursue employment. Individualized support also helps tenants

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Summer Associate volunteers from Paul Hastings law firm.

The Real Deal: How Tenants Make Ends Meet

This is the budget for Janet, who works part-time:

Annual Income	\$9,832
Stipend	639
Total	\$10,471
Annual Expenses	
Rent (1/3 gross income)	3,490
Food (no food stamps)	2,000
Transportation	2,200
Phone	600
Total	\$8,290

Leaving \$2,181 or \$181 per month to pay for medical expenses, clothing and everything else.

Board of Directors

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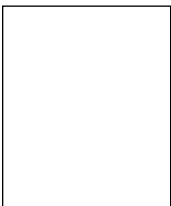
Expanded Employment Program...con'd

deal with repeated rejections. Besides helping tenants manage their job search, Ms. White reaches out to local firms to build relationships with potential employers for Housing + Solutions' tenants.

To aid tenants who have very little or no job experience, we recently established a stipend work program. Since its inception in March, 2009, six tenants have already participated in this program, two at a time, doing maintenance work in the Sunflower Houses under the guidance of our House Managers. This program is building employment readiness and other skills which will make these tenants more employable. To date three of these tenants have found jobs.

Women@Work has been successful in placing and keeping tenants in employment. Currently out of 39 tenants, 25 have jobs. The duration of employment is: 6 tenants for less than 6 months; 6 tenants for 6 months or longer; 5 tenants for 12 months or longer, and 8 tenants working for 18 months or longer.

We are always seeking job opportunities. If you know of anyone to contact please email or give us a call.



**Please visit our
website
HousingPlusSolutions.org**

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