

**COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER**

**Special Points of Interest:**

**HCV Tenants & LL's:** We are still searching for two tenants. All landlord spots are filled on our HCV Advisory Committee. If you are interested, contact Brandy Cockrell @ 325-676-6385 ext. 6389 or at [brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org](mailto:brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org).

**Landlords:** Rent increases should be submitted to AHA 60-90 days prior to your tenant's recertification date. If you are unaware of these dates, contact Brandy Cockrell @ 325-676-6385 ext. 6389 or email her at: [brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org](mailto:brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org).

**REMINDER!**

**Landlords:** are responsible for enforcing their lease & collecting the tenant's rental portion.

**Tenants:** are responsible for paying their portion of the rent to the landlord by the date agreed upon in the lease.

**Landlords:** it is illegal to charge Housing Choice Voucher participants more in rent than you charge your open market tenants.

**Tenants:** removing the battery from a smoke detector is a safety risk. In addition, check to make sure that your smoke detectors are working properly. If not, bring it to your landlord's attention immediately.

**Landlords & Tenants:** landlords &/or tenants are not allowed to change who pays for utilities without the approval of Abilene Housing Authority.



**October 2011:  
Family Self-Sufficiency Program  
Graduates!**

**FSS Program: *From Assistance to Self-Sufficiency!***

In August 2011, Vonda Sills & Jessica Casarez successfully graduated from the AHA Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program! Both ladies graduated from the program early & are now off of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program! This will allow for two more low-income families, in need of rental assistance, to participate on the HCV program.

- Vonda, while on the HCV FSS Program, was able to complete her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology & has obtained a good paying job!
- Jessica, while on the HCV FSS Program, was able to work part-time volunteer jobs to gain valuable job experience & now has a great paying job!

During AHA's October Board Meeting, Vonda & Jessica were recognized for successfully completing the HCV FSS Program! Vonda & Jessica are **true success stories!** They were able to utilize the program as it was originally designed, which is to provide a rental subsidy that will allow families to save money & to increase job skills and/or education which will enable families to become financially self-sufficient. **Congratulations Vonda & Jessica!!!**

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(From left to right: Gene Reed - Executive Director, Larry Holmes - Board Chair, Jessica Casarez - FSS Part. & Tim Evans - FSS Coordinator)



(From left to right: Gene Reed - Executive Director, Larry Holmes - Board Chair, Vonda Sills - FSS Part. & Tim Evans - FSS Coordinator)



### Direct Deposit Payments

**Landlords:** Do you know about our Direct Deposit program? It allows for your Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) to be electronically deposited into your bank account on the first business day of the month! Not only does it give you quicker access to your money, but it is also more cost-effective for the AHA. The process to get set-up is quick and easy. For more information on "Direct Deposit" contact Paul Falade (CFO) at 325-676-6385 ext. 5320 or email him at [paul.falade@abileneha.org](mailto:paul.falade@abileneha.org)

As of July 1, 2011 Direct Deposit was mandatory for all landlords.

*"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."*

Winston Churchill



### Abilene Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Assisting families to achieve financial self-sufficiency. For more information about this program contact Tim Evans at 325-676-6385 ext. 5326 or email him at [Tim.Evans@abileneha.org](mailto:Tim.Evans@abileneha.org)

## Interested in Applying? *Online Application*

AHA has online applications for interested applicants on its website. When you access our website at [www.abileneha.org](http://www.abileneha.org) click on the second tab and follow the easy-to-use process. You can choose from the Public Housing Waiting Lists and/or the Housing Choice Voucher Waiting List. Once you complete the online application you are automatically placed on the Waiting List(s) of your choice!



## HCV Program Acquisition: *Brady Housing Authority*

On **October 21, 2011**, The Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) provided notice to the Abilene Housing Authority (AHA) that the Brady Housing Authority (BHA) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program acquisition was formally approved.

In 2010, BHA initiated the request, to HUD, to transition their HCV program to another Housing Authority. BHA had been experiencing difficulty in leasing-up the 85 vouchers in their program due to a lack of landlord participation. In 2011, AHA & BHA discussed the transition & began the process to formally request the transfer between the two agencies.

AHA's acquisition of BHA will be its third HCV program acquisition in the last three years. AHA & BHA will begin formal communication to present participants & landlords on the BHA program.

Meetings will be set-up in November 2011 to answer transition related questions from BHA participants & landlords.

The acquisition falls in line with AHA's mission to "...service the housing needs of low-income families" in West Central Texas.

The acquisition will also increase AHA's service territory to include 20 counties (now including McCulloch County). This acquisition will allow participants, presently on the program, to remain in their units or to seek residence within the 20 counties that AHA services through its HCV program.



*“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.”*

Michelangelo

**HUD-VASH PROGRAM**

The HUD-VASH program is designed to assist Homeless Veterans find counseling through the VAMC and housing with rental assistance provided by AHA. **54** families have been housed so far!



**Child Support Demonstration:  
Urban Fathers Asset Building!**

AHA hosted the Attorney General’s Office pilot program, “*Urban Fathers Asset Building*,” presentation on *October 19, 2011* at the Earl Williams apartment complex conference room. The program is a three-year federal initiative to integrate asset building into child support programs. The goal of the initiative is to strengthen Texas families and reduce the need for child support enforcement.

The presentation provided community practitioners with the opportunity to:

1. Learn about how the child support enforcement system works
2. Hear about pilot project and initiatives aimed at connecting child support with asset building strategies
3. Provide insight into effective strategies for fathers and families in the community
4. Learn about the policy and program successes of RAISE Texas in helping make our state more financially secure

This session was intended for frontline social workers and case managers to assist them in understanding the child support system and its role in asset building.

**Chris Giangreco** (Program Specialist - Family Initiatives, Child Support Division) from the Attorney General’s Office was the presenter.

AHA would like to extend a special thank you to everyone that attended! AHA will remain in contact with the Attorney General’s Office to continue dialogue about the feasibility of starting a program like this in Abilene, TX.



(Pictured above: Chris Giangreco, Presenter)



(Pictured above: Hester Woods, Abilene Convention Center & Visitors Bureau & Chris Giangreco, Presenter)





*“Those who say it cannot be done, should not interrupt the person doing it.”*

Chinese Proverb

**ARRA UPDATE:**

**AHA expended 100% of its \$391,884 ARRA Grant award in 2010!**



Lava Flow from Hawaii's Kilauea Volcano.

**Job Opportunities: *Always Seeking Go-Getters!***



Abilene Housing Authority (AHA) has the following job opening(s):

**Public Housing Manager**

Visit our website @ [www.abileneha.org](http://www.abileneha.org) for a detailed job description.

**Promoting the Program: *4th Annual Community Resource Fair!***

In October 2011, AHA was proud to have a booth at the **4th Annual Community Resource Fair**, at the Abilene Civic Center, to promote the service AHA provides to the community! The Community Resource Fair is a collaborative effort of the Community Connection which focuses on area resources & services which positively impact parents, students & the entire Abilene community. Approximately 60 community agencies participated.



The event was coordinated by AISD Special Education Department, Region 14 Education Service Center & the United Way of Abilene.



(AHA Employees pictured to the right: Daniel Wason, HCV Housing Counselor & Tanya Johnson, Resident Services Coordinator)

**AHA Website: *Promoting Business Opportunities!***

Businesses interested in working with AHA are invited to visit our website. AHA added the “Business Opportunities” section to its website in 2009 to offer a variety of procurement information to the public. In addition to providing printable versions of current RFP’s, IFB’s and RFQ’s, this section of the website provides information on becoming a vendor, contracting requirements, cooperative purchasing affiliations, Minority Business Enterprises and Women’s Business Enterprises (MBE/WBE’s), and Section 3 of the HUD Act of 1968.

*Section 3 is a policy for providing preference to low and very low-income residents of the community and the businesses that employ these persons; without consideration of race or gender. AHA has included a model plan on its website for businesses to follow.*

For more information concerning business opportunities and Section 3, please contact **Cynthia Rodriguez** at (325)676-6385 ext. 6332 or email her at [cynthia.rodriquez@abileneha.org](mailto:cynthia.rodriquez@abileneha.org).





**AHA — Providing Homes for Families**

# ABILENE HOUSING AUTHORITY

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Suite #200  
Abilene, TX 79601

Phone: 325-676-6385  
Fax: 325-676-6375  
Relay Services:  
711 or 1-800-RelayTX

Customer Service Email Address:  
[helpdesk@abileneha.org](mailto:helpdesk@abileneha.org)



## Mission Statement:

The Housing Authority's mission is to service the housing needs of low-income families in the Authority's jurisdiction in order to enhance self-sufficiency and promote community quality of life and economic viability.

## Vision Statement:

We will be recognized as a leading authority in moderate and low-income community development activities in West Texas.

**We're on the web: <http://www.abileneha.org>**

## AHA Board of Commissioners - Contact Email Addresses:

Larry Holmes - **Chair** - [larryholmes@aol.com](mailto:larryholmes@aol.com)

Vanessa Faz - **Vice-Chair** - [vfaz@ffin.com](mailto:vfaz@ffin.com)

Kiddy Boswell - **Secretary** - [kiddyboswell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kiddyboswell@sbcglobal.net)

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