



Volume 3, Issue 8

ABILENE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Newsletter Date:  
December 17, 2010

# 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 Melyssa Lafontaine @ 325-676-6385 ext. 6379 or at [melyssa.lafontaine@abileneha.org](mailto:melyssa.lafontaine@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!

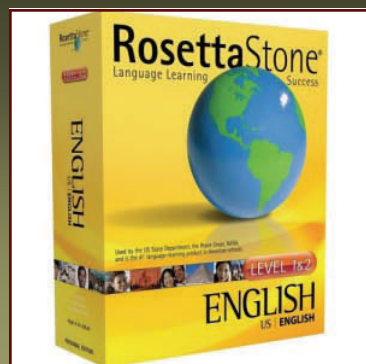
**Landlords:** Are responsible for enforcing their lease & collecting the tenant's rental portion.

**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 not a good idea. In addition, check to make sure that your smoke detectors are working properly. If not, bring it to your landlord's attention immediately.

**Abilene Housing Authority wishes you and your family a Happy and Safe Holiday**



## October/November/ December 2010: *Rosetta Stone Assisting Public Housing Families To Speak English!*

### Public Housing Residents: *Improving/Learning English!*

Over the past several years Abilene Housing Authority (AHA) has seen an increase in the number of refugee families applying for housing assistance. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is working around the world to assist in the relocation of refugee families. Abilene has been designated as good place to relocate refugee families. With this in mind, AHA has been working closely with the IRC and the refugee families that have chosen to live in our apartment complexes. These families face numerous challenges as they transition to a new country and culture. Refugee families have expressed a need for assistance in learning English. One challenge these families face is lack of communication skills which makes it hard for them to get and/or maintain jobs.

After brainstorming on ways to assist refugee families (and other resident families from other countries), Public Housing staff came up with the idea to purchase Rosetta Stone Language Learning software package and install in the computer lab. Since installation, resident families have been using the system with more and more frequency. Adults and children are taking advantage of the Rosetta Stone system.

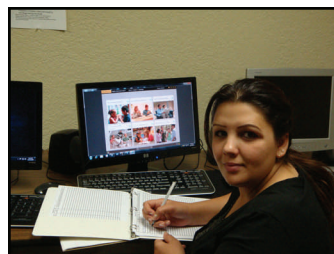
The concept of the Rosetta Stone program is to directly immerse users into the language. Rosetta Stone indicates that *"individuals learn more quickly, because you are forced to relate pictures and audio with written words. In this way, you tend to retain the information more easily and then formulate sentences and integrate these pieces into conversation."*

The computer lab is also made available to Public Housing residents for job searches, resume development, public assistance verification and homework assignments.

***AHA is committed to assisting families to become self-sufficient!***

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(Almajedi Rawaa, of Iranian decent, utilizing Rosetta Stone.)





### 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)

*"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity."*

Albert Einstein

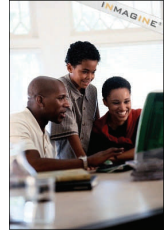


### Abilene Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Assisting families to achieve financial self-sufficiency. For more information about this program contact Adam Teer at 325-676-6385 ext. 6322 or email her at [adam.teer@abileneha.org](mailto:adam.teer@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!



## Position Changes at AHA: New HCV Manager!

AHA is proud to announce **Brandy Cockrell** as the new HCV Manager! Brandy has worked for AHA for one year as the Compliance & Procurement Coordinator.

Please join AHA in congratulating Brandy on her new role with AHA!

**Phone:** (325)676-6385 ext. 6389  
**Email:** [brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org](mailto:brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org).



## Position Changes at AHA: HCV Supervisor!

Abilene Housing Authority has experienced significant growth in its HCV program and would like to continue to increase the size of the HCV program in the future. With this in mind, Adam Teer has been named the HCV Supervisor! Adam has worked for AHA for a year and has added value to the HCV program in many ways. Please join AHA in congratulating Adam on his new position!

**Phone:** (325) 676- 6385 ext. 6322  
**Email:** [adam.teer@abileneha.org](mailto:adam.teer@abileneha.org)



## Community Collaboration: Family Unification Program!

On November 30, 2010, AHA submitted a grant application in conjunction with Child Protective Services (CPS) to secure an additional 50 vouchers to administer the Family Unification Program (FUP) in the 19 counties that AHA serves. The FUP program vouchers would be used to promote family unification of families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in the separation, or the threat of imminent separation, of children from their families or the delay in the discharge of the child, or children, to the family from out-of-home care. FUP vouchers under this program will also be used for youths 18 to 21 years old who left foster care at age 16 or older and lack adequate housing. In 2010, there is also a new category of families that will be eligible for the FUP program. This new category includes families or youths displaced by domestic violence and families or youths in imminent danger of losing their housing as a part of the definition of "lack of adequate housing." Program awards will be announced in the Spring or Summer of 2011.





**BCHA: Annual Meeting/Conference Held In Abilene!**

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

Abilene Housing Authority worked in conjunction with the Abilene Visitors Bureau to bring the Big Country Housing Association (BCHA) Annual Meeting/Conference to Abilene on November 18 & 19, 2010. The BCHA is a Regional Housing Organization that services the interest of small housing authorities in West Central Texas. Members and their families patronized Abilene businesses and had dinner at Frontier Texas! Area residents, Brittany Pelletz, KRBC –TV (Anchor/Reporter) and Mark Zachary, McMahon Surovik Suttle, P.C. (Attorney) were guest speakers during the conference (pictured below)!



Brittany Pelletz (KRBC)



Mark Zachary (McMahon, Surovik, Suttle, P.C.)

**HUD-VASH PROGRAM**

The HUD-VASH program is designed to assist Homeless Veterans, with mental illness concerns and/or chemical dependency habits, find counseling through the VAMC and housing with rental assistance provided by the AHA. 32 Families have been housed so far!



**Project Based Voucher Program Grant: Seeking Landlords!**

AHA is presently working on a grant for an additional 50 HUD-VASH vouchers. This new program will be a collaboration between AHA, Big Spring VAMC and Landlords that are selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. AHA will advertise the RFP in the Abilene Reporter News and on its website in the next couple weeks. AHA is interested in locating landlords that are interested in designating units to this program. Through this new program, locating a unit will be much easier for Homeless Veterans because there will be 50 units specifically designated for this program. If you are a landlord and would like to share your interest in the program with AHA, please contact Melyssa Lafontaine at (325) 676-6385 ext. 6379 or email her at [melyssa.lafontaine@abileneha.org](mailto:melyssa.lafontaine@abileneha.org). The application deadline is January 26, 2011.

**Family Self-Sufficiency Grant: Submitted!**

On December 3, 2010, AHA submitted a grant application for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. This grant would provide funding for a full-time FSS Coordinator. AHA currently has 30 participants on its HCV FSS program and if awarded the grant AHA will look to increase the number of participants on the program. FSS is a five year financial self-sufficiency program.





*“The future depends on what we do in the present.”*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

### ARRA UPDATE:

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



Frontier Texas, in Abilene, TX, a 14,000 square-foot facility on 6.4 acres, allows visitors to relive the Old West with the help of state-of-the-art technology.

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

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

#### Compliance/Procurement Coordinator

Interested candidates can submit their resumes to Gene Reed at Abilene Housing Authority (visit our website @ [www.abileneha.org](http://www.abileneha.org) for a detailed job description). Gene’s contact information is:



**Phone #:** (325) 676-6385 ext. 6379  
**Email Address:** [gene.reed@abileneha.org](mailto:gene.reed@abileneha.org)  
**Mailing Address:** 534 Cypress St., Suite 200  
Abilene, TX 79601

### New AHA Board Commissioner: Mica Jones!



Please join AHA in welcoming our newest Board of Commissioner, Mica Jones! Mica joined the Board in October 2010.

Mica Jones moved to Abilene in 2007 with her military spouse and two children. A native Houstonian, she has lived in Oklahoma; Guam; Tokyo; and Okinawa, Japan. As the co-owner of **Keep Movin’ Fitness**, she has a passion for helping people and believes that when we help others we ultimately help ourselves!

Ms. Jones, who is also active within the community, is a contract manager for a fitness program on Dyess AFB. Ms. Jones has a MBA from the University of Phoenix and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland.

### 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 Brandy Cockrell at 325-676-6385 ext. 6389 or email her at [brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org](mailto:brandy.cockrell@abileneha.org).





# ABILENE HOUSING AUTHORITY

534 Cypress Street  
Suite #200  
Abilene, TX 79601

Phone: 325-676-6385  
Fax: 325-676-6375

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 - [ksbabor@swbell.net](mailto:ksbabor@swbell.net)

Mica Jones - Board Commissioner - [semica.jones@gmail.com](mailto:semica.jones@gmail.com)

