



Rock Island Housing Authority

DECEMBER 2009

RIHA Becomes the Administrative Arm of YouthBuild Quad Cities

YouthBuild Quad Cities and Rock Island Housing Authority (RIHA) recently joined forces to provide on-going services to at-risk young adults, ages 16 to 24. YouthBuild Quad Cities is a comprehensive youth and community development program. It addresses multiple core issues including education, housing, jobs and leadership development. As part of the program, young men and women enroll in a YouthBuild alternative school to earn their GEDs or high school diplomas. They gain job skills by working on affordable housing projects for low-income families. Nationally, many YouthBuild projects are attached to Housing Authorities because their missions are complimentary, and that is certainly the case between RIHA and YouthBuild Quad Cities.

"RIHA is renewing neighborhoods from within by establishing a range of programs designed to increase economic independence and housing self-sufficiency for its residents," states George Guy, Asset Manager for RIHA. "(We) pool the resources from a variety of service providers and collaborators to provide a diverse selection of support services and YouthBuild compliments those efforts beautifully."

While YouthBuild will remain a separate non-profit with its own identity, RIHA will administer the program in the same way it administers other grant-

funded programs. YouthBuild will also retain its own advisory board which will continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

"My goal for the YouthBuild Quad Cities program has always been to expand the program and reach out to more kids," says Rufus Greer, "and by joining forces with the Housing Authority, we can do just that." Mr. Greer joined YouthBuild in 2007 as the Executive Director of the program and will continue to serve in the same capacity under the RIHA umbrella. "My dad always told me that there is a big room waiting for all of us, and it's the biggest room in the world - it's the room for improvement. I think that the Housing Authority and YouthBuild combination will add tremendous value to the Agency's Self-Sufficiency program while enhancing the positive growth of YouthBuild - and that's a nice improvement for both organizations," he concluded.

If you or someone you know is between the ages of 16 and 24, are interested in earning your GED or high school diploma, are unemployed, interested in learning construction and helping to build homes for people with low-to moderate incomes, and are committed to being the best you can be, call 309.788.0899. You won't regret it!

RIHA Neighborhood Network Centers Receive National Certification Status

Rock Island Housing Authority's (RIHA's) Neighborhood Network program has been recognized by HUD as a "Certified Neighborhood Network Center." The nationally recognized classification was established in 2005, by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Neighborhood Networks Initiative. The three-levels of classification correspond to three different levels of achievement: (1) Designated; (2) Certified, and (3) Model. Certification encourages Neighborhood Network (NN) Centers by both acknowledging their current accomplishments and presenting "model" examples of potential and possibility.

RIHA was designated as a NN Center in 2006 when it established four computer labs within the City of Rock Island. Locations include Spencer Towers, Sunset Heights, Manor Homes and the Martin Luther King Community Center serving both Lincoln Homes and the community at large.

The second level of classification (Certified) requires a minimum of 12 consecutive months of operation; the RIHA Neighborhood Network program has been operational for 36 consecutive months. The Agency was also required to submit a business plan for HUD approval and successfully complete a Center assessment and evaluation.

As a Certified Neighborhood Network Center, RIHA received a plaque identifying it as such, have access to additional grant funding opportunities, have access to additional local and national NN partners, have the opportunity to serve as mentors to other NN Centers, and serve as a pilot

project for other related programs. The four RIHA NN Center locations will also have access to NN hotline and technical assistance and remote and on-site technical assistance. Additional benefits include:

- Being listed in the national NN Directory and on the National website
- Being identified as Certified on the NN National website
- Linking RIHA website to the National NN website
- Being highlighted in NN publications
- Having the opportunity to share success stories with other centers nationally
- Receiving special recognition during national NN week
- Being recognized at national NN meetings

RIHA installed the four fully equipped Neighborhood Network Center computer labs to provide computer and Internet access, customized computer training and certification, and communications, educational and information-sharing tools for residents. To date the labs have provided an opportunity for hundreds of persons who have never been exposed to technology to experience it in a non-threatening and safe environment. The RIHA NN Centers and related training have resulted in employment and job training opportunities and represents many positive partnerships with local community-based organizations.

For more information, or to sign-up for the next computer class, call Adrian Blackwell at 309.788.0825 ext 210.

FOR RENT: Voss Brothers Retail Space

The Voss Brothers retail space is located at 2125 3rd Avenue near downtown Rock Island, IL. The space is on the ground floor level of the redeveloped warehouse building that is home to the Voss Brothers Lofts and the Rock Island Housing Authority's (RIHA) administrative offices.

The 3,000 square foot newly remodeled space is well insulated, is handicap accessible, includes two private front entrances, new independent central air conditioning and heating units, new floor covering, large display windows, and multiple plumbing and electrical connections.

The Voss Brothers retail space is directly across the street from the former 3rd and 22 restaurant. It is near the Robert Young Center, the Illinois Casualty building, D-Philms Studio, and Tri-City Motor Cycle Sales. The Voss Brothers building is four blocks from downtown Rock Island and dozens of businesses, professional offices, galleries and retail shops. In addition, the space is within easy walking distance of hundreds of downtown residents.

RETAIL SPACE ideal for a professional office space, small grocery, deli or retail business.

Incentives for renting the space include build-out funds through the Commercial/Industrial Revolving Loan Fund (CIRLF). Funding includes a 4% loan for up to 5 years. The property is also part of the Enterprise Zone. As part of this program, businesses will receive a tax break on all building materials utilized for the build-out. There is also a Façade Improvement program for outdoor signage and green or sustainable improvements.

For additional information and a personal tour, please call Gail Brooks at 309.786.0485 or housing@riha4rent.org.

