

Helping to
welcome you



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Dear Friends of Housing on Merit,

As this newsletter illustrates, we began 2020 excited to help lead the charge for innovative solutions to Southern California's affordable housing crisis; to expand the ways in which we help shape the trajectory of the affordable housing industry to ensure that families most in need of affordable long-term housing remain at the forefront of every conversation; to introduce new resident services programming at our communities; and to expand our support of women veterans in San Diego who are in need of stable housing. Then COVID-19 happened. While we remain resolute and focused on our affordable housing goals, we also acknowledge that the industry, our communities, and our day-to-day way of doing business have changed in ways that are not yet fully apparent, at least for now. During the last 30 days, as we carry on with Housing on Merit's important work, we have also made thoughtful decisions to help ensure our staff are protected, and our partners and communities feel supported.

There has never been a better time to give to Housing on Merit. In accordance with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, donors can make a charitable contribution and deduct the full amount up to their Adjusted Gross Income. Your donations go a long way in ensuring that Housing on Merit continues to create bridges to permanent affordable housing for vulnerable populations. You can donate [here](#).

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Luke'.

Patrick Luke
President
Housing on Merit Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer Litwak'.

Jennifer Litwak, Esq.
Executive Director
Housing on Merit

At HOM

Housing on Merit's Resident Services Programming

Housing on Merit kicked off the new year with stimulating youth, adult, and senior programming and provided over 870 hours of resident services programming across our communities during the first quarter. The following are programming highlights from our Learning Centers:



Valentine's Day Cookie Decorating with Sunrose Residents.

Center for Academic Excellence: *Promotes academic achievement for youth*

Youth programming at San Diego, San Ysidro and Chula Vista properties centered around STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, math) activities. In February, youth programming included arts and crafts projects in celebration of Black History Month and Valentine's Day. Educational games, such as creating a makeshift storefront with participants taking turns shopping and counting money successfully, honed attendees' math, decision-making and communication skills. After the activity, many reported that they felt more confident about their money-handling and communication abilities. Experts agree that learning practical life skills is an important component of early childhood development and helps children succeed later in life.

Center for Growth and Empowerment: *Mobilizes residents to create a vibrant community reflective of their communal and personal goals*

Senior residents at Harriet Tubman Terrace in Berkeley, California, participated in a Brain Fitness workshop, provided through a partnership with the Berkeley Age Friendly Continuum's Gateway Program. The workshop focused on the four pillars of brain health: physical exercise, balanced diet, stress management, brain exercise. Attendees learned examples of each pillar and were treated to healthy brain foods during the workshop. The Brain Fitness workshop was such a success, Housing on Merit plans to offer the workshop to residents on a monthly basis.



Registering for a Brain Fitness Workshop!

Center for Health and Wellness: *Addresses restrictions of access to quality health and wellness services*

Housing on Merit recognizes that a large part of staying healthy is maintaining a healthy mind. The Resident Services Coordinator (RSC) at Rio Vista Apartments in San Ysidro, California, challenged young residents to create an “emotion wheel” to illustrate how different situations made them feel. According to a study posted on Science Direct, an online academic journal, activities like this help build emotional intelligence, which is reliably linked to better mental health.

The Learning Center at Natomas Park, in Sacramento, California, has an “All-Star” board where selected participants place their autobiographies and portraits to share with everyone! All-stars are chosen based on their level of participation in various activities, willingness to help others, and adherence to Learning Center rules. The All-Star board motivates participants to engage in Learning Center activities and build relationships with one another, and provides participants with much-deserved recognition for their efforts. Boosting the self-confidence of our resident youth is a priority in our resident services programming.



Natomas Park All-stars' Self-portraits and Bios.

Highlighting Resident Services Coordinators



Monserrat (left) with residents at Vista La Rosa Apartments.

Housing on Merit’s Resident Services Coordinators (RSCs) facilitate vital resident services programming for residents at many of our multifamily and senior affordable housing communities.

Housing on Merit recently developed a “Resident Services Coordinator of the Quarter” program to highlight their accomplishments and dedication to the residents they serve. Each quarter we will shine a spotlight on the efforts of an RSC across Housing on Merit’s social media platforms, and the RSC will receive a gift card to her/his café of choice.

We are happy to announce that Monserrat Cubillas is our first Resident Services Coordinator of the Quarter! She provides resident services programming at two Housing on Merit multifamily affordable housing properties in San Diego, California. Monserrat is dedicated to empowering youth through positive reinforcement strategies. Her innovative youth programming has resulted in attendees at the Learning Centers showing improved behavior and being more engaged during Homework Help hours. Participants have reported improved grades and being more comfortable working independently.

According to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies Annual Report, “America's Rental Housing,” there is a correlation between growing up in Housing Credit properties (rental communities affordable to low-income households that offer residents resources and services) and higher earnings and educational attainment in adulthood.

Beyond HOM

According to the study’s findings, each year a child lives in a Housing Credit property as a child is associated with a 3.5 percent increase in the likelihood of attending a higher education program and a 3.2 percent increase in future earnings, compared to a child of the same income level living in a property that does not provide resident services.

In this section we highlight Housing on Merit’s professional development in nonprofit and resident services leadership, and our involvement in local and national discussions about innovative solutions to the affordable housing crisis.

City of San Diego Nonprofit Workshop: Building a Communication Plan

In February, the Nonprofit Institute and The City of San Diego collaborated to produce the City of San Diego Nonprofit Academy Workshop Series. This series included a workshop entitled “Building a Communication Plan” that our Executive Assistant, Valerie Nguyen, attended. The workshop highlighted the importance of building a cohesive communication plan that is executed consistently across social media platforms. Workshop attendees learned valuable tips on how to schedule and organize social media posts to maximize views and likes. The presenter, Colton Strawser, explained that having a social media plan in place creates a consistent message that is marketed to a targeted audience. The more structure an organization creates on their social media platform, the stronger their messaging. Valerie found creating a communication plan with fellow nonprofit staff insightful. As a group, they recognized that language used in nonprofit social media posts are sometimes vague so not impactful. Workshop attendees learned how to create a structured communication plan that limits ambiguity and delivers a clear message to their targeted audience. Also, tailoring posts according to specific platform designs is important. For example, LinkedIn and Facebook are geared for more lengthy and professional posts, whereas Twitter and Instagram are designed for shorter bits of information and effective imagery.

CREW Network’s Winter Leadership Summit & Chapter Challenge



National Delegates from CREW Network’s California Chapters.

In January, our Executive Director, Jennifer Litwak, traveled to Santa Clara, California, to attend Commercial Real Estate Women (CREW) Network’s Winter Leadership Summit. This annual summit provides an opportunity for CREW members to learn from leading experts about critical leadership skills that give them a business advantage. This year attendees heard from the Mayor of the City of East Palo Alto, Regina Wallace-Jones, who spoke about her unique approach to supporting her constituents during an evolutionary journey to realize the City’s potential as the gateway to and the conscience of Silicon Valley. Additionally, Jennifer attended the “Speaking with Confidence”

session, during which she learned new communications techniques to hone her public speaking skills that are critical to building Housing on Merit’s brand.

As a CREW National Delegate, Jennifer oversees CREW Network’s Foundation Chapter Challenge on behalf of CREW San Diego. The Chapter Challenge raises funds to support programs that attract women and girls to commercial real estate. CREW Network has over 75 regional chapters that compete in the following challenges:

1. Get 100% of your Chapter’s Board of Directors to give an individual donation;
2. Get 50% of your Chapter’s membership to give an individual donation; and
3. Get the Chapter to give a donation of \$1,000 or more to CREW Network Foundation.

Under Jennifer’s leadership, CREW San Diego became the first Chapter in the Nation to complete the [Chapter Challenge](#). Out of CREW San Diego’s 184 members, 110 members donated to CREW Network Foundation. These donations ensure that women continue to advance in commercial real estate.

Deloitte’s “Greenhouse Lab” Solutions Development Day

In February our Director of Housing Innovation, Charly Ligety, participated in a day of “design-thinking” affordable housing solutions with key stakeholders in the housing and community development industry in Los Angeles. This event was hosted by Deloitte as part of their daylong “Greenhouse Lab” working session in partnership with the Los Angeles Chamber of Congress. The goal of the day was to breakdown key areas of improvement in overcoming barriers to developing affordable housing in LA. Deloitte plans to present the collective observations and proposed solutions at a later date to influential government leaders as proposed policies and programs.



Greenhouse Lab Session Attendees Brainstorming as a Team.

MANA de San Diego’s Networking Breakfast

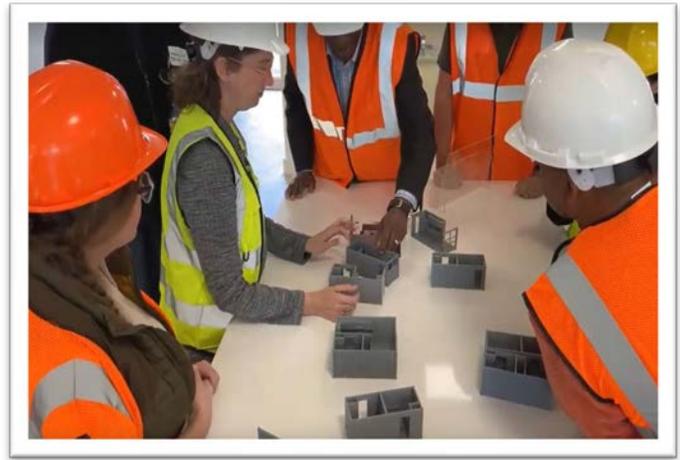
In February our Planning & Programming Coordinator, Vivian Preciado, attended MANA de San Diego’s annual Networking Breakfast at the Lafayette Hotel. This year’s sold-out event brought MANA members together for a healthy breakfast and an opportunity to meet other professionals in San Diego. This year’s theme was “Women’s Worth” and speakers Dr. Starla Lewis, her daughter ISHEE, and granddaughter Yahyah each spoke about self-validation for women of color. Dr. Lewis has been a college professor of African American studies for the past 39 years, and her work as a life coach teaches people to gain mastery over their lives. Dr. Lewis describes her presentation style as “edu-taining,” and her goal is to provide her audience with meaningful learning experiences. Her daughter ISHEE and granddaughter YahYah are recognized as creative visionaries. All three are leaders in women’s empowerment and were the first non-Latina speakers invited to a MANA de San Diego event.



Vivian with Speakers Dr. Starla Lewis, Daughter ISHEE, and Granddaughter Yahyah.

YIGBY Housing Innovation Bus Tour

In January HOM's Director of Housing Innovation, Charly Ligety, joined the nonprofit affordable housing organization YIGBY (Yes in God's Backyard) to tour new housing typologies with church leaders from the San Diego area. YIGBY was co-founded by one of HOM's Board of Directors, Monica Ball, to help faith communities learn how best to develop church-owned, underutilized land into affordable housing. The bus tour started with a visit to Potter's Lane, California's first multifamily housing development made from shipping containers, located in Midway City, California. The tour continued at the factory floor of Crate Modular, the State's first and only proven manufacturer of multifamily housing and school buildings made from recycled shipping containers.



YIGBY Model Versions of Shipping Container Homes.

Welcoming our Heroes HOM

San Diego Women Veterans Network Meeting

Housing on Merit's Vivian Preciado and Valerie Nguyen attended the February San Diego Women Veterans Network Service Providers Meeting. During the meeting, the group reviewed a variety of new resources available to women veterans and discussed upcoming events. Valerie introduced herself as the new lead for Housing on Merit's Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance program and outlined program guidelines. The group enthusiastically welcomed several new members, who introduced themselves and explained their role in supporting local women veterans.

2020 Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance Goals

Housing on Merit is excited to introduce Valerie Nguyen as the new program lead for our Awards of Merit for Housing Assistance program, which provides funding to eligible women veterans to help them secure and maintain stable housing. Valerie looks forward to working with our San Diego partner organizations to help identify women veterans in need of housing assistance.



Women Veterans Network Meeting Attendees.



Office Locations:

Los Angeles:
1901 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 395
Los Angeles, CA 90067

San Diego:
501 West Broadway, Suite 515
San Diego, CA 92101

Washington D.C.:
730 11th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20001

Your donations go a long way! Consider supporting our work by making a monetary or in-kind donation. See the various ways to give below.



Ways to Give

Online: housingonmerit.org/donate/

Checks made payable to:
Housing on Merit
1901 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 395
Los Angeles, CA 90067

Look up our EIN when you shop: 45-2991692
AmazonSmile
Ebay GivingWorks
PayPal Giving Fund

Connect with us on Social Media!
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