

Better Homes.
Better Communities.
Better Lives.

Betternews

Better Housing Coalition changes lives and transforms communities through high quality, affordable housing.

Leaders Acclaimed at 2nd Annual Groundbreakers

Yes In My Back Yard Theme Showcases Large-Scale Neighborhood Transformation in Southside



BHC Chair Lissy Bryan, John Purnell, Dan Slone, Bob Mooney, Karen Stanley, BHC President/CEO T.K. Somanath

After a public nomination period, a selection committee at the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership Studies determined the award recipients. "These four 'Groundbreakers' have given their leadership and talent to make Richmond a better place to live," says Lissy Bryan, BHC Chair. "We salute them as we draw inspiration from them to continue to transform lives and communities."

This year's theme to Groundbreakers was YIMBY - Yes In My Back Yard. YIMBY coincides with BHC's bottom-up planning and holistic approach to community revitalization. Through sustainable design, high-quality construction and compassionate support services, BHC brings lasting change to neighborhoods and creates healthy communities. BHC opened two of its newly-constructed homes for tours during the event to exhibit the transformation in progress. While consistent with the surrounding classic period architecture, each home in Oak Summit at Goose Creek is equipped with the latest green features - including solar hot water heating systems and the highest quality insulation - to reduce energy costs for residents. At the time of the event, ten of the 45 homes had been completed and eight were either under contract or sold to first-time homebuyers.

BHC thanks Laura Lafayette of Richmond Association of Realtors, Derek Battle of Bon Secours, Tom Silvestri of the Richmond Times-Dispatch and Pam Faggert of Dominion for presenting this year's Groundbreaker Awards, as well as our sponsors for their support (see reverse of newsletter). We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!

Better Housing Coalition's second annual

Groundbreakers took place in South Richmond at Oak Summit at Goose Creek - BHC's new neighborhood of 45 eco-friendly affordable homes. More than 350 people attended the celebration on April 29 which highlighted four community leaders during the Groundbreaker Award Presentation. BHC congratulates the 2010 Groundbreaker Award winners:

Community Revitalizer

Bob Mooney, CenterStage

Changer of Lives

John Purnell, Friends Association for Children

Creative Collaborator

Karen Stanley, CARITAS and The Healing Place

Henry David Thoreau Environmental Conservator

Dan Slone, McGuireWoods

Picnic Tables Donated to First-Time Homebuyers

As part of the Groundbreakers backyard celebration, BHC partnered with F.I.R.S.T. Contractors, Inc. to provide a new picnic table and benches to each first-time homeowner in Oak Summit at Goose Creek.

F.I.R.S.T. Contractors aims to increase the opportunities for success for young adults preparing to transition out of the foster care and/or court systems. Several young adults who participate in the program construct picnic tables to serve as a symbol of hope and forever backyard memories.

BHC thanks all picnic table sponsors who made these gifts to our home owners possible. Our home owners were happy to receive their house warming gifts commemorating this special milestone in their lives. These sponsorships also support services for BHC residents in our multi-family communities.



Mosaic and local caterer Louisiana Flair partnered to provide a unique taste of the neighborhood.



Guests tour BHC's new eco-friendly, affordable homes on E. 13th Street. View more pictures on our Facebook page.

Gov. Bob McDonnell Tours Lincoln Mews, Announces Plan for Virginia's First Executive Housing Policy



Above: Gov. McDonnell meets Willie James, a resident of Lincoln Mews.



Left: BHC President/CEO T.K. Somanath guides Gov. McDonnell through Lincoln Mews.

“For people to afford this, with the economy the way it is now and the way jobs are...I call it a vision,” says James.

On the morning of Wednesday, April 28, Governor Bob McDonnell toured BHC's newly-renovated apartment community in Northside, Lincoln Mews. During his visit, the governor announced his plan to create Virginia's first executive housing policy. The comprehensive policy will promote an increase in sustainable, affordable housing as well as effective coordination of transportation.

“Affordable and safe housing is a fundamental component of healthy and prosperous communities. Every Virginian deserves a safe, warm and secure residence to call their own,” commented McDonnell.

Willie James, a resident Lincoln Mews, looks forward to learning more of the policy details when they are announced. His move to Lincoln Mews changed his life. The new energy-efficient appliances and features have significantly lowered his monthly energy costs, making life on a retirement income easier. The physical transformation of the apartments, including the construction of a new community center, also encourages interaction among residents and has lowered crime in the area.

The governor has formed a Housing Policy Advisory Committee, which will be comprised of representatives from state government, private industry groups, local governments, and nonprofit housing providers and consumer representatives. Senior economic advisor to the governor and former BHC board member Bob Sledd will chair the committee. The policy is expected to be finished this fall.

Oak Summit Resident Realizes Dream of Home Ownership at 72

Mary Walker moved to Richmond in 1980 and since then has been employed at Virginia Union University. A Library Technical Assistant, Mary purchased her first home in November 2009 at 72 years of age. Her children helped her in the search for the right house; their search brought them to Oak Summit at Goose Creek. “Once we saw the house, we said that’s it,” she recalls.

Mary lives by herself, but does not go long without company. Her children and grandchildren visit her often in her new home and spend the holidays there. “I always wanted a dining room with a table big enough to seat my entire family,” says Mary. “I’m used to a big family and I like the tradition.”

Mary’s home was the one of the first homes completed in Oak Summit at Goose Creek. Since moving in, Mary has come to be very happy in the neighborhood. She has formed friendships with her neighbors and enjoys spending time on her front porch. She is also proud to have a place to call her own. “I thank God for all the people who pitched in to get me where I am,” she says. “I love my house.”



Mary Walker, along with her daughter Ruth, joins her new neighbors at the Groundbreakers celebration.



Mary Witt accepts the Earthcraft Builder Award on behalf of BHC.

Earthcraft Virginia Names BHC Affordable Single-Family Builder of the Year

Better Housing Coalition was one of various housing organizations from across the state honored at Earthcraft Virginia's First Annual Builder Awards on March 25. BHC received the award for Affordable Single-Family Builder of the Year. BHC has constructed every one of its homes to Earthcraft standards since 2006, lowering energy costs for residents and protecting the environment. BHC constructed and rehabilitated thirteen single-family homes in 2009, and has completed nine to date in 2010.

“We have strived to be a well-established industry leader in green building, and this has been possible thanks to Earthcraft Virginia,” says Mary Witt, BHC's Construction Coordinator.

Safety Net Grant Program Aids Families in Difficult Economy

Through May 20, the Safety Net Fund of The Community Foundation Serving Richmond and Central Virginia has prevented homelessness for 25 BHC families. Sixteen children are among those assisted. This internal rental assistance program is especially important during this difficult economy, as it helps families recover from a gap in their ability to pay rent due to job loss, short term disability issues, or one-time crisis situations.

The families who have been assisted by the Safety Net Fund are typical of many of the households in BHC communities, living-paycheck-to-paycheck. When they are faced with a crisis, they have to make very difficult choices. The one-month grant means the difference in having a place to live or not.

BHC has allocated \$18,437.70 of the Safety Net Fund for an average rent amount of \$683 per family. At the current rate of usage, BHC will be able to provide assistance to 50 families through nearly the end of 2010. As the economy improves, BHC hopes that the crucial need for the safety net funding will decline. The Safety Net Fund has, however, provided a much needed lifeline to families in our communities.

Collaborative Elevator Repair at Randolph Place Pleases Residents



BHC recently renovated the 112-year-old former school into an affordable senior community with 50 apartments.

When reopened, Randolph Place was upgraded with new green features including energy-efficient appliances, carpet and insulation made from recycled products, and low-VOC paint for healthier indoor air quality.

The only elevator at Randolph Place recently underwent repairs after two months of planning. Prior to repairs, resident meetings were held for suggestions and BHC's Community Social Work Department met with residents to identify their individual needs.

Repairs were originally estimated to take 30 days, but were completed in eight. During this time BHC Management monitored the project to ensure that it took place in a timely manner, and the repairmen from Virginia Elevator volunteered to carry groceries upstairs for residents.

"Everyone on your team worked very hard to assure that there was minimum inconvenience. They told us what to expect and how to cope. We are extraordinarily pleased that you were able to exceed our expectations. Many thanks for a job well done," says Lillian Simmons, President of the Residents Council at Randolph Place.

BHC Management, social workers, maintenance, Virginia Elevator, and residents all collaborated to achieve a great experience for all.

New Civic Organization Forms in Church Hill

The Church Hill Central Civic Association (CHCCA) was recently established to provide a representative voice for the greater Church Hill community, especially areas between E. Broad Street, Nine Mile Road, N. 25th Street, and N. 31st Street.

CHCCA holds meetings on the third Monday of every month from 7:00 - 8:30 pm at the Robinson Theater (2903 Q Street), covering topics such as neighborhood rezoning, trash clean up, community safety, the decennial U.S. Census, and support of neighborhood schools. Meetings are open to anyone interested. The April meeting included speakers from Lifetime Homes, the Richmond Police Department, and Better Housing Coalition.

In collaboration with the Robinson Theater, CHCCA has organized a summer session of health and fitness classes. Dr. Eric West of the VCU Recreational Sports Department and Betsy Hart, both BHC homeowners, have assisted in coordinating these classes.

To learn more about CHCCA, please email chccainfo@gmail.com.

Celebrating 20 Years at BHC

BHC President/CEO T.K. Somanath and CFO Audrey Kramer celebrated 20 years at BHC in April. Congratulations T.K. and Audrey!



Volunteers Help BHC Transform Communities

BHC thanks the volunteers who contributed to the landscaping of Lincoln Mews during Affordable Housing Awareness Week, as well as the volunteers who painted porches at Spring Hill on Church Hill. Your efforts help keep our communities attractive and are much appreciated by our residents.

"We can't wait to do this again!" says Sharon MacKenzie.

For upcoming volunteer opportunities, visit Better Housing Coalition's page on Facebook. Please show your support for BHC and become a fan!

Right: Mulching at Lincoln Mews, Affordable Housing Awareness Week

Below: Spring Hill porch painting



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These gifts of \$1,000 or more were received since December 2009.

You Can Change Lives

Maximize Your Gift: When you make a gift to BHC, it may be eligible for state tax credits. A gift from an individual of \$500 and above is eligible for a 40% tax credit. For businesses, the gift must be at least \$1,000 to receive the 40% tax credit.

For more information contact Drew Melson at 804-644-0546 x23 or d.melson@betterhousingcoalition.org.

Designate Your Gift: When you give to United Way, use code 3158 or simply write "BHC". Use code 3624 when you make a gift to the Combined Virginia Campaign, and your donation will go to BHC.

BHC WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Philip A. Brooks, Berkadia Commercial Mortgage, LLC

"Last fall, I took a tour of some of BHC's properties. I was overwhelmed with the scope, the quality, and the mission of BHC. I knew at that moment, this was an organization with which I want to be involved. I am excited to have been appointed to the Board of Directors and look forward to helping BHC continue its mission. It is an organization that every person in the Richmond-area should be proud to have in the community."



Penny Johnson, Wachovia

"It's an honor to serve with BHC to impact the lives of families in our region. BHC has an excellent track record and reputation in strategically revitalizing communities in need of sustainability and stabilization. BHC not only focuses on the bricks and mortar, but cares about the long term impact on the individuals they house and serve and considers the residual impact of the surrounding neighborhoods."



Wally O'Brien, Community Volunteer

"Early on, Better Housing Coalition's leadership had an insight which recognized that people sleep in their houses, but they live in their neighborhoods. That's why BHC transforms neighborhoods with eco-smart construction and day-to-day services to sustain the transformation. That's why BHC is a 21-year success story."

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