

door to door

Housing with compassion...Development with a vision



Hudson River Housing, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that works to develop and sustain diverse housing options and provide support services to those who need them.

About Us

Hudson River Housing develops and manages affordable housing and neighborhood preservation efforts in our communities. The expertise of Hudson River Housing is increasingly relied upon to inform local planning related to housing, community development and homelessness.

Our Services

Housing with Compassion

Family & Adult Services

Emergency Housing

After-Hours Emergency Placement

Dutchess County Coalition for the Homeless

Transitional Housing

Hudson River Lodging

Hillcrest House

LaGrange House

Supported Permanent Housing

Shelter Plus Care

COACH

Follow-Through

Maximize

Youth Services

Emergency housing

River Haven Shelter

Transitional housing

River Haven Transitional Living

Supported Permanent Housing

Home Base I & II

Independent living skills building

River Haven Independent Living

Excel

Street Outreach

Development with a Vision

Real Estate Development

Property Rehabilitation & New Construction

Multifamily Rental Housing

Single and Two Family Homes

Historic Preservation

Neighborhood Revitalization

Community Development

Community Relations

Organizational Development

Community Building & Organizing

Property & Asset Management

Workforce Rental Opportunities

Harlow Row

Garden Street

Townhouses

Senior Housing

Cannon Street Senior Housing

Maybrook Gardens

Homeownership & Education

NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center of

Dutchess County

Homebuyer Education

Foreclosure Intervention

Inclusionary Housing

Credit Building

Financial Literacy Education

Landlord Training

For more information on our programs and services, please contact (845) 454-5176.

Greetings!

Although things never really slow down at Hudson River Housing, as the weather heats up, it does us all good to take a moment to breath, relax, and take stock of where we are and what we have accomplished. That is what this issue is all about—celebrations of the communities in which we work and live in, and the people and places that make them important and unique. From an Open House celebrating one of our oldest, yet recently expanded projects, the Dutchess County Coalition for the Homeless; to a neighborhood celebration highlighting a decade of work in the City of Poughkeepsie and an amazing community partnership; to a profile of one staff member who is out on the streets working with the community every day, we all benefit greatly from the chance to leave our desks and computers and see, hear and feel why we are here and how we are making a difference. With that in mind, don't forget to cut out the "save the date" on page seven and tack it to your refrigerator! On September 18th, we will celebrate once again with the 15th Annual Evening by the Hudson—another chance to join us in supporting our communities.



With best wishes,

Gail V. Webster

Gail V. Webster

Executive Director

In This Issue Summer 2008

Volume 17, Number 3

- 3 **Project Spotlight**
DCCH/Hillcrest House Celebrate Renovations with Open House
- 4 **On the Cover—In Depth**
Youth Help Hudson River Housing Create Affordable Apartments
- 6 **In The Field**
Staff Profile—Chantelle Walsh, River Haven Life Skills Coordinator and Outreach Counselor
- 7 **In Brief**
Hudson River Housing Celebrates National NeighborWorks Week 2008
15th Annual Evening by the Hudson
- 8 **Back Cover**
Save the Date!
Membership Opportunities

Door to Door Writer & Editor ~ Elizabeth Celaya

Dutchess County Coalition for the Homeless and Hillcrest House Open House Celebrates Extensive Renovations

A warm June evening is the perfect time for a celebration, and the Dutchess County Coalition for the Homeless (DCCH)/Hillcrest House Open House felt like just that—a celebration. Heart-wrenching stories are often the norm for those who work at or support DCCH and Hillcrest House. On any given night, the individuals who make their way through the shelter could tell of a multitude of circumstances and choices that have led them to seek out Hudson River Housing (HRH) as a safe haven and a warm bed for the night, and possibly an opportunity to forge a new path. But this evening did not present a litany of sad tales, but rather offered a different view of the shelter—as a bright, welcoming place staffed by caring workers who value the opportunity to interact with guests and residents and celebrate them as individuals. This is the way the shelter and Hillcrest House operate every day, but that may not be known to the general public. The Open House was an opportunity to bring people into the shelter and show them that it is not a frightening or dismal place. “It is not a huge empty space with dozens of cots strewn about,” says Linda Malave, Hillcrest House/DCCH Project Manager. “We had people tour the shelter during the open house who were surprised at how homey it is. That is what we strive for. The unfortunate reality is that this does substitute as a home for many people.”

DCCH was created in the early 1980s by a group of Dutchess County residents concerned about the growing problem of homelessness in the area. “Back then, homelessness was often thought of as an issue that was confined to more urban areas like New York City,” says Gail Webster, HRH Executive Director. “But the reality was that it was a very real problem here, too.” HRH took over operations of the shelter in 1988. In 1992, HRH renovated the building that now serves as home for the shelter, as well as Hillcrest House, a transitional housing program for single adults. An imposing brick building in the Town of Poughkeepsie, the structure now contains 58 individual and shared rooms for Hillcrest House residents, and 60 emergency shelter beds. Formerly, the shelter only contain-

ed 12 beds, which wasn’t sufficient to meet the needs of those seeking shelter. “There were always many more people looking for a bed for the night than beds available,” says Malave. “Increasing from 12 beds to 60 beds may seem like a large jump, but it is really just a reflection of the numbers we had been seeing.” HRH had been providing shelter for up to 60 individuals a night since 2004, but

space restrictions meant they were often housed in scattered locations. Completion of the renovations at Hillcrest House now means everyone will be in one central location. “It is more efficient for our staff,” says Barbara Vitale, Hillcrest House /DCCH Operations Manager. “And we are able to provide much more coordinated care and support for the [shelter] guests.” Individuals in need of a bed for the night are met by HRH staff at a screening site in downtown Poughkeepsie, where staff check to ensure they meet some very basic criteria. Guests are then transported by van to the shelter, where everyone receives a meal and a shower. Guests also have the opportunity to meet with a case manager to receive information or referrals to programs that may help them alleviate their current situation. “Our goal is not just to give someone a bed for the night, but to give them the tools and support they need to achieve *their* goals,” says Vitale. For many shelter guests, the first step might be entering the Hillcrest House program. “We have a very unique continuum of care, from the shelter into Hillcrest House, and out into independent housing,” says Malave. Residents can stay for up to two years at Hillcrest House, renting a room for a nominal rent. Residents are required to meet regularly with case managers and develop a service plan to help them articulate their goals and track progress. “The ultimate goal for everyone is to get their own place,” says Malave. Hillcrest House and DCCH are both funded by a variety of public and private grants, and DCCH in particular relies heavily on volunteer support and in-kind donations. “So much of what we provide to guests is provided to us by generous members of the community,” says Malave. “We have volunteers in the shelter cooking and serving food every night of the year. Linens and toiletries all these things that are so basic to most of us are the things we are most in need of at the shelter, and much of it comes to us in the form of donations.” DCCH is the only emergency walk-in shelter in Dutchess County, and it operates 365 nights a year. In 2007, nearly 500 individuals were served. “It all goes back to doing for others what we would want done for ourselves,” says Gail Webster. “No one really *wants* to be in a situation where they have to rely on emergency shelter. But if it happens, we are here, and we will continue to be here for those in need.” For more information on the DCCH or Hillcrest House programs, or for information on how you can help, please contact (845) 452-5197.



Clockwise from top: Linda Malave, Hillcrest House/DCCH Project Manager greets guests at the open house; a view inside the shelter; a sign welcomes visitors to the open house.



Youth Help Hudson River Housing Create Affordable Apartments

Hudson River Housing Partners with Nubian Directions II, Inc.



For several months, Lisa Lofton, 22, was getting up at four o'clock every morning to get a ride from her home in Staatsburgh, NY to Poughkeepsie, twenty-five minutes away. The single mother of two, a five-year-old son and a fifteen-month-old daughter, knew what it meant to put in long hours. She spent her days hammering, framing, and putting up sheetrock at 60 Catharine Street, an affordable housing project owned by Hudson River Housing, while also studying the subjects needed to prepare herself to enter nursing school in the fall. Lisa is a participant in the New Directions Youthbuild Partnership, a stepping stone to obtaining the skills and education she needs to make a better life for her children. Every day, Lisa, along with five other classmates, including Corey Shorts, 17, and Nathaniel Almeida, 20, traveled the few blocks from the Nubian Direction offices to 60 Catharine

Street, where they put in several hours of on-the-job training in all aspects of the construction field. 60 Catharine Street, once a vacant, blighted building, was rehabilitated by Hudson River Housing to create six affordable apartments for formerly homeless families. The project is one of the last rehabilitation projects undertaken by the agency in its Anchor-Based Neighborhood Revitalization area, a three block neighborhood that has seen the development of 19 affordable homeownership opportunities, 40 affordable rental units, four commercial spaces, and twelve emergency beds for youth since the initiative began in 1999.

New Directions Youthbuild Partnership is a project of Nubian Directions II, Inc., a Poughkeepsie-based nonprofit known for offering computer training and related services to help people acquire and develop the skills they need to live independent and productive lives. The organization's Youthbuild program works with unemployed young men and women, ages 16-24, most of whom have not completed high school, and all of whom come from low-income families. Through the Youthbuild program, students learn construction skills that they put into action on community development projects that help create affordable housing, while also furthering their education, building sound working habits, and developing leadership skills, all with support from the programs counselors and instructors. New Directions Youthbuild Partnership is an affiliate of Youthbuild USA, a national program dedicated to creating and sustaining a broad-based movement in support of policies and programs that enable young people to take responsibility for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Hudson River Housing partnered with New Directions YouthBuild Partnership in 2006, when the Nubian Directions staff were in search of a real-life construction project for their students. While on the job, the students worked hand-in-hand with the project's general contractor, Roy Johnson, while under the close supervision of Nubian Direction's site supervisor, Christopher Boston. Mr. Boston began working with the New Directions Youthbuild Partnership almost two years ago. "I learned about the project through a mutual friend of myself and Robert Wright [Nubian Directions II, Inc. Executive Director]," he says. Before starting as construction supervisor, he observed the workings of the program for a while. It didn't take long before he knew this was the place for him. "I decided this was a really good program, and I wanted to be a part of it." Mr. Boston has a degree in building construction and worked previously as a private contractor; he oversees the students as they work on framing, wiring, plumbing, and sheetrocking projects.

The Nubian Directions Youthbuild Partnership is about more than learning the ropes of the construction field—



60 Catharine Street before (above) and under construction (below).



“To be part of this project is the greatest experience I’ve had... when I’m at the project site working, I can’t think of anything else that I should be doing.”



Left to right, Nathaniel Almeida, Corey Shorts and Lisa Lofton, Youthbuild participants who worked at 60 Catharine Street.

it’s also about academics. Nathaniel Almeida, born in Port Chester and raised in Yonkers, was a self-described “troublemaker” whose mother brought him to Poughkeepsie six years ago to get him away from bad influences at home. Nathaniel signed up for New Directions Youthbuild Partnership last summer at the suggestion of a few friends. “I had been out of the education loop for a while,” he says. “A friend of mine was talking about wanting to go back to school. I asked him where he was going to do that, and he said he wasn’t sure. A few days later a bunch of my friends were leaving the house and I asked where everyone was going. They said they were going to sign up for GED [general equivalency diploma] classes at Nubian Directions, and I decided to go along.” Two of those friends are still in the program with Nathaniel. Nathaniel took his GED test in mid-March, and is awaiting results to see where he may need to continue focusing his studies. “I feel pretty confident,” he says. “Except in math. I’m not sure I did so well in math.”

One of the strong points of the New Directions Youthbuild Partnership is the individual attention it gives students, which allows them to work at their own pace. Corey Shorts enrolled in the program at the suggestion of his mother. Corey dropped out of school because of an eye condition that made it hard to concentrate. “My grades dropped, and I couldn’t catch up,” he says. Now, he’s studying to take his GED test, and gets the individual attention he needs to stay on course. But he gets most excited when describing the work he is did at 60 Catharine Street. “I’ve put up sheetrock,” he says, outlining the steps he took to get the job done right. “Every time I went [to the project site], I got better and better,” he says. “You learn new tricks for getting the job done.”

The program helps students build confidence and realize that they are capable of being part of something positive in the community. It also provides the students with leadership opportunities and helps them get involved in extracurricular activities. The program operates a Student Council—Nathaniel is the current president. Extremely well-spoken, program staff are confident that Nathaniel will achieve his dream of working in the local public service arena, and they are doing everything they can to equip him with the skills he needs to succeed. They have encouraged Nathaniel to take on an internship with the Dutchess Regional Chamber of Commerce, shadowing President and CEO Charles North as he travels to businesses and events around the County. Corey, one of the youngest of the group, is less sure about his future, but the program has definitely influenced his plans. “I may keep going in the

construction,” he says. “I am thinking about looking for a summer job in the field.” The program also encourages students to take a long-range view of their future. “I want to be a homeowner someday,” Nathaniel says, “and this has helped me. I know better what to look for [in a house] now.”

All the students feel good knowing they helped build affordable housing for formerly homeless families. Such projects are a hallmark of Youthbuild programs, which places students at affordable housing projects to help achieve its community development goals. “This was a give-give situation,” says Nathaniel. “We gave something of ourselves and gave back to the community.” The 60 Catharine Street rehabilitation was completed in June 2008. All six apartments in the building will be rented to low-income, formerly homeless adults. Residents will receive case management services, and will also receive assistance in accessing other community support services, many of which are in walking distance of the project. This combination of low-cost housing with individualized support services is designed to avoid the reoccurrence of homelessness and increase the participants’ level of self-sufficiency. “Knowing what you are doing makes you feel good about it,” says Corey. “I’m not really a hands-on kind of person,” says Nathaniel. Even so, he admits, “making something out of nothing for someone who needs it is a great feeling.”

And it all begins with a hammer and some nails, and the commitment of a few young people dedicated to bettering themselves and their community. “I hope someone would be there to do this for me if I was in that situation,” says Lisa. Hopefully, with the new skills she has acquired, she never will be.

“It feels good to know I can do this work on my own now, and I won’t have to ask someone to do it for me.”



Lisa Lofton on the job at 60 Catharine Street.

To read about the Hudson River Housing’s celebration of the 60 Catharine Street project during NeighborWorks Week 2008, see “In Brief” on page 7.

To learn more about the Nubian Directions II New Directions Youthbuild Partnership, visit www.pkyouthbuild.org. Information about Youthbuild USA is available at www.youthbuild.org.

Photo, opposite page: Youthbuild students install sheetrock in an apartment at 60 Catharine Street. Photo credits: Christopher Boston.



Chantelle Walsh, Life Skills Coordinator and Outreach Counselor at River Haven

expanding. The energy was great, and there was a lot of ‘go get ‘em’ spirit,” she says. Not long after, River Haven received funding for a full-time life skills coach and street outreach worker, and offered Chantelle the job. As the “newborn on the block,” as she called herself, Chantelle had a lot to learn about the services available to youth in the county. “I never knew how big Dutchess County was until I started doing outreach in more than just the towns along the river,” she says. Chantelle needed to know about all of the programs for youth in the area, not just those offered by River Haven, because many times she would meet young men and women who weren’t eligible for River Haven’s programs or who weren’t willing to commit to taking part. Chantelle is able to explain to them the various options they have available.

Conducting outreach itself is all about building relationships and trust. Chantelle usually starts by going to the parks and basketball courts in a town and just learning about where youth hang out. After introducing herself, she offers the youth a give-away item with information on River Haven’s programs, and uses that to try to get them talking. Often, they want to know more about the services available, but, she says, it doesn’t always happen that way. “Sometimes they’ll take the item, look at you, and walk away,” she says. “Sometimes they ask you all kinds of questions.” An important part of Chantelle’s job is helping youth understand that there are no freebies, and that River Haven isn’t a magic wand. “I have to put everything in perspective for them and clarify some ideas about what it is to live on your own.” Chantelle does her best to perceive the youth’s needs, offering information to younger kids on the River Haven shelter, and information about River Haven’s Independent Living program to older youth, especially those that are on the street during school hours. She also lets them know about the program’s open door policy, which allows youth to drop-in at any time to talk and get some advice. “It can be intimidating and wearing at times,” she says. “You wonder, am I really getting through to these kids? But it all comes with it, and you just

have to do what you can do.”

As one may imagine, Chantelle has no set schedule. Recently, River Haven has undertaken a big push to do more outreach in schools, and if there are presentations scheduled, those come first. Chantelle usually pounds the pavement doing street outreach on Thursdays and Fridays after school hours and on the weekends. In addition, Chantelle co-facilitates River Haven’s “Excel” group every Wednesday with River Haven staffer Mike Teamer. With funding from a grant from the Dutchess County Gang Prevention Initiative, administered by the Dutchess County Youth Bureau, the Excel program serves youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who are returning to the community after leaving residential facilities operated by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services. “The requirement is that when the kids are released they participate in an after-care period of four weeks to six months,” says Chantelle. They come once a week to the life skills workshops, and also work one-on-one with Chantelle to develop a service plan that outlines their goals. River Haven’s Excel program is the only after-care provider in Dutchess County.

Recently, River Haven expanded its outreach services with the addition of another full-time outreach worker. With two full-time staff members, the outreach programs can cover more hours and territory, including attending evening events and trying to reach into areas that weren’t safe for one person to go to alone. The extra help means Chantelle can also concentrate on herself a little. In May, she received her Bachelor degree in Social Work from Marist College, and is now considering where to go for her Master degree and what area of social work she wants to concentrate on. For now, she is just taking it one day at a time. “I’m willing to see where the wind takes me,” she says.

For more information on River Haven’s programs, please contact (845) 454-2300.

For Chantelle Walsh, an ability to be open to a variety of experiences and unending energy are just two of the qualities she needs to tackle her job every day. As River Haven’s Life Skills Coordinator and Outreach Counselor, Chantelle spends her days in schools, basketball courts, and parks trying to spread the word about the services Hudson River Housing provides to Dutchess County youth. Introduced to Hudson River Housing just over two years ago, Chantelle has become an integral part of the River Haven team, making over 1,400 contacts with youth every year.

Originally from California, Chantelle is the oldest of three. She moved to New York in 1998 and began attending Ulster Community College shortly thereafter. After taking a human services course, she became very interested in public service and enrolled in Marist College’s adult learning program in Social Work, an advanced program that allows working adults to earn a Masters degree in three years. It was during an internship doing street outreach that Chantelle first became interested in the work of Hudson River Housing. “I worked with Robin Seale, Independent Living Case Manager, and Emmanuel Hemi, former Independent Living Supervising Case Manager. I had a great introduction to the program from them.” Outgoing and armed with a wealth of knowledge about the community, River Haven staff helped introduce Chantelle to the daily work of interacting with youth on the streets. “That first summer, the outreach program at River Haven was really

Don't forget to join us under the tent for the 15th Annual Evening by the Hudson!

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark your calendars for **Thursday, September 18th**, when the 15th Annual Evening by the Hudson will take place at the Poughkeepsie Grandview. The evening is Hudson River Housing's premier annual fundraiser, and features a full dinner, live music, and silent auction. We are currently seeking event sponsors as well as donation of auction items. Tickets are \$100 per person. Call (845) 454-5176 for more information.



The crowd gathers under the tent at last year's Evening by the Hudson.

IN BRIEF

Hudson River Housing Celebrates Neighborhood Revitalization by “Milling Around Mill Street” During National NeighborWorks Week 2008

This year, as National NeighborWorks Week celebrated its 25th anniversary, Hudson River Housing celebrated a decade's worth of work, and the difference it has made in the area of Catharine, Conklin and Garden Streets in the City of Poughkeepsie, with a community event focused on the Upper Mill Street neighborhood. The warm June morning of Friday the 13th turned out to be lucky, as dozens of people turned out to enjoy a series of open houses and participatory activities at HRH's various sites in the neighborhood. Altogether, HRH has built or rehabilitated 45 rental units, 19 homes, and four commercial spaces in these three blocks alone. HRH's NeighborWorks Week event was one way to celebrate not only these successes, but those of a whole community that has contributed to reviving the area, as residents, neighbors and supporters were invited to see how things have changed in recent years. The celebration kicked off with an open house at 60 Catharine Street, HRH's latest project in this area. Formerly vacant, this 100-year-old building has now been converted into six affordable studio apartments for formerly homeless adults. Gail Webster, HRH Executive Director, and Robert Wright, Nubian Directions II, Inc. Executive Director, provided remarks, followed by two students from the New Directions Youthbuild Partnership—Corey Shoats and Nathaniel Almeida. HRH partnered with Nubian Directions II, Inc. and the New Directions Youthbuild Partnership to complete the building's renovation (see story pages 4-5). Following the 60 Catharine Street open house, guests could visit 313 Mill Street, HRH's administrative offices, which featured a slide show of images from the neighborhood and a “community empowerment wall” where guests could add their thoughts about the neighborhood in words or pictures. At 305 Mill Street, home of HRH's River Haven programs, staff offered tours of a Transitional Living program apartment for youth and let guests add to a sidewalk art project. At 291 Mill Street, home of HRH's NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center of Dutchess County, guests got a sneak peek at the next phase of the Poughkeepsie Homeownership Assistance Program and information of HRH's homebuyer education courses. At the end of the day, HRH had handed out dozens of free gifts and crowned a raffle winner. Most importantly, staff had a chance to interact with the community, and take a time-out to enjoy the fruits of a whole community's labor. “It was an interesting mix of people that turned out,” said Mary Linge, HRH's Director of HomeOwnership & Education. “I think they all learned something about HRH that they didn't know before, and that was the whole idea.”



Robin Seale, River Haven Independent Living Case Manager, lends her artistic talent to the community empowerment wall project.



Nathaniel Almeida, a participant in the New Directions Youthbuild Partnership, speaks about his experiences working on the 60 Catharine Street project.

At 305 Mill Street, home of HRH's River Haven programs, staff offered tours of a Transitional Living program apartment for youth and let guests add to a sidewalk art project. At 291 Mill Street, home of HRH's NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center of Dutchess County, guests got a sneak peek at the next phase of the Poughkeepsie Homeownership Assistance Program and information of HRH's homebuyer education courses. At the end of the day, HRH had handed out dozens of free gifts and crowned a raffle winner. Most importantly, staff had a chance to interact with the community, and take a time-out to enjoy the fruits of a whole community's labor. “It was an interesting mix of people that turned out,” said Mary Linge, HRH's Director of HomeOwnership & Education. “I think they all learned something about HRH that they didn't know before, and that was the whole idea.”

Special thanks to Mill House Panda Restaurant for their support of the event.



*Housing with compassion...
Development with a vision*



Hudson River Housing
Board of Directors

President

May Mamiya

Vice-President

Nancy Romaine

Secretary

Ella Spooner

Treasurer

Robert Hankin

Directors

Bernadette Barrett

Loretta Best

William Carroll

Robert Collier

Jack Efron

Roderick MacLeod

Mary Paden

Janet Ready

Noel Tepper

Lorna Thompson

Stephen Wing

Executive Director

Gail V. Webster

NON PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Permit #76

Pok., NY 12601

SAVE THE DATE!

15th Annual Evening by the Hudson ~ *September 18th*

Help Support Hudson River Housing by Becoming a Member

Join the growing group of supporters that is working to help HRH continue its commitment to providing affordable housing in our communities. Becoming a member will ensure you have access to the latest news about HRH by continuing to receive our quarterly newsletter; invitations to open houses and other events; and the opportunity to help HRH make a difference in our communities.

Membership Levels:

- Student \$15
- Basic \$25
- Sustaining \$50
- Sponsor \$100
- Business \$200
- Lifetime \$1,000

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution to:

Hudson River Housing, Inc.
313 Mill Street
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Other: Please accept my contribution of \$_____ in support of HRH's programs and services.

Thank You!