

# ONE VOICE

Housing Authority of the  
City of Austin  
P.O. Box 6159  
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[www.hacanet.org](http://www.hacanet.org)



# ONE VOICE

Creating and sustaining healthy  
communities that promote individual  
responsibility, economic growth, human  
dignity and hope for the future.

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Housing Authority of the City of Austin

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Frances Vrana, 95 years old, holds  
a handmade blanket of pansies.

Frances Vrana patiently waits to play her hand in dominoes. A small framed woman with a warm smile and bright eyes, she laughs with the other residents in the room. This month a search was made to find the oldest resident at HACA. Frances is

the oldest at 95 years old. She is a three time domino champion and regular card player at North Loop Apartments. Her niece and nephew, their spouses and children visit her in the recreation room to spend time with the jewel of their family. She scores another 15 points just before joining them to talk about the times when she grew up.

Born on June 24, 1914 in Granger, TX, Frances was raised on a farm with 10 other siblings. She was born in America; however her parents and five older siblings were immigrants from Czechoslovakia. She shared a modest room with four of her sisters. Frances says, "Our farm house was very close to a gravel road where cars would drive by." Her family traveled in a horse and buggy until the family purchased a vehicle from Ford in her late teens. She says she never obtained a driver's license and never drove a car. Traveling to school was accomplished by foot. She says, "We walked three miles each day to and from school." To keep the house warm in the winter, cast iron stoves fueled by coal or wood were used. Frances liked to crochet, embroider, play hopscotch and softball.

Most days of the week, especially Sundays, Frances and her family would worship at Saints Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church. She also attended grade school there. Her community consisted of eight or nine neighbors who would take turns to host huge dinners on Sundays. Frances was an excellent cook and many times cooked for her entire family as well

as sew clothes for her sisters and brothers.

Frances remembers earning \$1.00 per week, plus room and board, for her first job as a housekeeper. She continued on with her career as a cook, nanny and housekeeper to eventually earn up to \$35.00 per week. She worked for families in Houston, Buda, Round Rock and Austin. She stayed with one family for forty years! Frances was loved so much by the families they sometimes called her "mother." Frances never had any children of her own and was never married; however she worked into her eighties caring for the needs of others.

Frances Stojanik and Raymond Motloch, Frances' niece and nephew, speak fondly of their aunt. Her niece says, "Ponchie has such a happy demeanor. We rarely see her sad or upset." Frances' family call her Ponchie, a nickname given to her by one of the families where she worked. Her niece remembers Thursdays were Ponchie's day off and she would always come to their house to bring the children candy and treats.

For eleven years, Frances has lived at North Loop. She eats healthy, but loves a little sugar on everything. Frances has traveled to Salt Lake City, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite National Park, and Carlsbad Caverns; however her favorite place to visit is Las Vegas. Frances reads, writes, and speaks fluent Czech. When she is not traveling, she may be found crocheting beautiful blankets with intricate details. Frances had a massive collection of salt and pepper shakers she shared with her nieces many years ago. She also collects rosaries and crucifixes. Frances says life was simpler when she was young, however the children today have it much easier. Frances wants to pass on this important life lesson to today's youth, she says, "Be thankful for what you have."



## Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

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## Our Mission

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin is a public agency whose business is to:

- ◆ Ensure that safe, quality affordable housing opportunities exist for families of low income,
- ◆ Break the poverty cycle by serving as a catalyst for our residents to become economically self-sufficient,
- ◆ Create meaningful partnerships to maximize available community resources for our residents,
- ◆ Efficiently and effectively meet federal, state and local mandates

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin will pursue entrepreneurial opportunities to address emerging trends and respond to the challenges of the future.

## Important Phone Numbers

HACA Administration	477-4488
24 Hour Resident Hotline	495-1897
Maintenance Work Orders	477-8518
Section 8	477-1314
Fire/Police	911
Non-Emergency Police	311
Poison Center	800-764-7661

## ONE VOICE Newsletter

Published by the Housing Authority of the City of Austin  
Judy Paciocco, Sr. Director of Operations

Comments, articles and photographs are welcomed for the  
One Voice newsletter. E-mail submissions to Monique Hennington.

[moniqueh@hacanet.org](mailto:moniqueh@hacanet.org)  
Or by mail to:  
HACA, Attn:Media Relations  
P.O. Box 6159  
Austin, TX 78762

All submissions must have a name and phone number to be  
considered. Due to space limitations, the editor reserves the right to  
reject or edit copy as necessary.

The offices of the Housing Authority of the City of Austin will be closed  
Monday, September 7, 2009 in observance of Labor Day.

## VETERAN'S HOMELESS ASSISTANCE VOUCHERS

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin is excited to have the opportunity to assist homeless veterans to obtain affordable housing in the Austin Area. The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program provides voucher rental assistance with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Veterans Administration facility will refer all eligible homeless veterans to the Housing Authority and the Housing Authority will assist homeless veterans with obtaining a quality home or apartment in the private rental market. The funds provided by HUD will assist approximately 70 homeless veterans paying 30% of their income towards rent with the remaining rent balance being paid by these grant funds. The grant funds total to \$583,843 and will help stabilize the homeless veterans' housing situation and connect them with the necessary services so they may thrive in the Austin community.

## COMMISSIONER'S CERTIFICATION

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) recently recognized Commissioner Carl Richie Jr. of the Housing Authority of the City of Austin for receiving the NAHRO Commissioner Certification.



Commissioner Richie is one of the first Housing and Redevelopment Commissioners to be certified under NAHRO's new certification program. An acknowledgment ceremony was held in Portland, OR during the NAHRO Summer Conference. Commissioner Richie was one of forty-seven Commissioners recognized during the recognition ceremony.

## Survey Return

HACA launched its Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey in June. To date over 21% of the surveys have been returned. Please help us by returning your survey by mail or in person to the HACA Administration Building, 1124 South IH-35 Austin, TX 78704.



**Your feedback is used to determine how to better serve you!**

## Homeowner: CAREN BLACKMAN



Caren Blackman lived in assisted housing over 18 years. She has two sons, Willie, 18, and Rajee, 9. For the first time, Caren and her sons, have a home to call their own. Caren participated in HACA's Downpayment Assistance Program. The program aids potential home buyers with funds to use towards the downpayment of a home. For families like Caren's, the program allows them to buy a home they may not otherwise be able to afford.

Like many first-time home buyers, Caren's obstacle to purchasing her first home was bad credit. She worked hard to clear her credit to become a qualified applicant for homeownership.

Caren earned her Master's Degree while living in assisted housing. She works for the Criminal Justice Department. Caren was recently promoted from Parole Officer to Warrant Analyst. Her education and career have afforded her to purchase the home of her dreams. She closed on her 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home June 15, 2009. "It's peaceful with lots of trees," Caren says. Caren also has another new beginning to look forward to in September. She will be getting married!

Caren is most excited about feeling the pride of homeownership. Caren says, "This was a huge personal accomplishment to own my own home." Her advice to others is, "Believe and don't have fear. You can become a homeowner. Work on your credit and pay your bills on time. Take home buyers classes and money management classes. Stay employed. Make sure to work with professionals and do not be taken advantage of by fly-by-night companies."

## KEEPING YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RATE HIGH "8 REASONS FOR AN EXCUSED ABSENCE"

1. Extracurricular Activity: The student is participating in an extracurricular activity and has to miss class due to this activity
2. Mentor: The student is participating in a mentorship
3. Medicaid Appointment: The student is Medicaid-eligible and is participating in the Early & Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program.
4. Religious Holy Day
5. Illness: The student may be excused due to personal illness or doctor's appointment by providing a written note on the day that they return to school.
6. Court Proceedings: The student is involved in court proceedings or is participating in an activity related to those court proceedings.

7. Human Services: The student has been referred to the Texas Department of Human Services or a county or local human services agency on the basis that he or she has been abused or is neglected.

8. Pre-Approved Reason: A student required to attend school may be excused for temporary absence if approved by the principal of the school in which they attend.

### SMART TIPS:

- Remember, that if a student is absent for a reason not listed here, then the absence is unexcused.
- Notes are required for all absences.
- Notes should be turned in to the teacher or school attendance clerk within 48 hours.

Excerpt used from [www.austinisd.org](http://www.austinisd.org)

## Citywide Advisory Board Notes

The next meeting is September 8, 2009 at 9:30 am

Last month's Citywide Advisory Board meeting was held August 11, 2009 at the Central Office.

CWAB Vice President and VP of the Gaston Resident Council, Alice Merida, conducted the meeting. Gary Woods from Austin Free-Net announced the upcoming computer classes at the elderly/disabled sites. Classes will be held every eight weeks. Each class will hold 4 students and last for a hour and a half. For more information, please see your Resident Services Specialist.

Transportation is provided. Call at least one day in advance. North properties call Mary Gonzales at 589-7451. South properties call Angie Cortez at 589-7985.

## HACA

### Property Improvements

The Planning and Development team is dedicated to making the Housing Authority of the City of Austin a place residents are proud to call home. The following are improvements that are either currently under way or are scheduled for the near future:

- **Street, Drainage & Parking Improvements**—*Santa Rita—Re-Bid*—Street repair and drainage project designed to widen Corta St. and add over 40 parking spaces to the site. Currently collecting insurances, bonds and other preliminary items prior to on site work. Approximately 90 days to complete. UPDATE! New sidewalks were added to maintain resident access to all site areas during street construction, now underway.
- **Playground Improvements**—*Rosewood, Georgian, Northgate*—Designs complete, meeting with the site staff so they may approve the components selected and schedule orientation to the site prior to procurement. Northgate and Rosewood are complete. Georgian product selection complete, ordering process in the early stages, with installation complete in approximately 8 weeks pending board approval.
- **Park & Drive Improvements**—*Rosewood, Meadowbrook, Bouldin, Georgian, Goodrich, Shadowbend, Manchaca II, and Manchaca Village*—Asphalt repairs, crack sealing, seal coating of parking and drive areas, as well as re-striping and marking at all sites. Currently in design.

## Energy Conservation Tips

by Energy Manager James Bean "Phantom Loads"

Many appliances continue to draw a small amount of power when they are switched off. These "phantom" loads occur in most appliances that use electricity, such as VCRs, televisions, stereos, computers, and kitchen appliances. In the average home, 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off.