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For Immediate Release

NRHA Receives Six NAHRO Awards of Merit; Four Programs Nominated for National Awards of Excellence

Norfolk, VA (July 21, 2009) – Six Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) programs received Awards of Merit from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) last week at the organization's annual summer meeting in Portland, OR.

The annual competition recognizes the most innovative housing and community development projects, programs and services across the U.S. Four of the six programs also received nominations for National Awards of Excellence that will be announced in October.

The following outlines the programs in greater detail.

ShareNet

(National Award of Excellence Nominee)

ShareNet is a new home network for NRHA that encourages collaboration, provides better access to information and improves efficiency for employees.

NRHA set out to educate its employees utilizing a new home network, or intranet, to meet changing requirements and make the best use of resources by developing a new approach for the delivery of products and services. Using an intranet system to alert employees to changes, highlights of the organization, new projects and the like, would make such information more readily accessible.

NRHA's intranet approach was established in three categories: knowledge management, collaboration and communication, and task completion.

The site is set up for easy access to information, with regular updates made to the Home Page and a scrolling text box at the top that allows for timely information to be circulated. Also located on the Home Page are links to NRHA's new vision and mission statements, strategic plan and annual plan, budget, NRHA news, publications and award information as well as an event calendar and external links. There is also a Quick Links section at the top of the Home Page, allowing employees to access a business card request site, calendar, Human Resources information, forms and other information easily.

Overall company information has been broken down into three main sections on the site, which are the Home Page, Leadership, and Departments. All employees can now easily

access information about the Board of Commissioners and their meeting schedule, the Executive Team, and an organizational chart under the Leadership headline.

The new intranet was introduced to employees in the fall of 2008. ShareNet has been enthusiastically received by the Board of Commissioners as well as employees and has already become an important tool for all involved at the Authority.

Business Centers – Contracting Shops

(National Award of Excellence Nominee)

NRHA's Facilities Management Department has expertise in specialized trades such as master plumbing, carpentry and automotive repair. NRHA has marketed this capacity and expertise as a service to other housing authorities in Virginia at a fair market rate through inter-agency agreements.

NRHA owns and maintains electrical and water distribution services, which including delivery of domestic hot water from an onsite boiler system. The Authority has retained Master Electricians and Master Plumbers to maintain these systems. NRHA uses onsite carpentry shop staff to manufacture and install cabinets for assisted-rental units, utilizing Capital Funds. Because of the skill set of in-house staff, NRHA is able to provide front and rear porch replacement, concrete and tuck point repair, exterior door replacement, electrical distribution upgrades and the like.

NRHA also has a large vehicle fleet which includes heavy equipment, electrical bucket trucks and lawn mowers. Because NRHA retains certified mechanics, repairs on these vehicles and equipment can be conducted onsite. Furthermore, annual vehicle inspections can be conducted, which is monitored and audited monthly by the Virginia State Police.

HUD mandated that Specialized Shops could not simply spread costs to assisted-rental properties, the department's fundamental customer base. The department had to be able to charge the actual costs to each Asset Management Project (AMP) and demonstrate what was accomplished.

NRHA in its new five year strategic plan adopted a "Business Center" approach that will give a better understanding of the income and expenses associated with each of the products and services offered by NRHA. The Facilities Management Department is providing a prototype framework for a "Business Center." It is demonstrating what it takes to operate as a semi-autonomous business by offering a variety of skilled, trades-related maintenance services to other area/regional housing authorities and to Virginia as a whole.

Grandy Village Revitalization Project

(National Award of Excellence Nominee)

The initiative, a model environmental partnership between NRHA, Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) and the City of Norfolk is taking place along the shoreline of NRHA's 44-acre Grandy Village Community. NRHA will create wetlands, uplands and open space connecting the adjacent newly reclaimed HRT wetlands mitigation site. Linking the two sites will be a trail system that Norfolk Public Schools will utilize in conjunction with their educational programs and the upcoming Community Center. These projects, along with a

forthcoming senior apartment building, will assist in transforming Grandy Village into a quality mixed-income community.

NRHA began a major revitalization effort in 2001 using Capital Fund Program (CFP) resources, which included completely renovating the interior and exterior portions of the buildings, adding landscaping and fencing and a new road, 22 EnergyStar duplex units, and designing a new community center and senior apartment building. This effort included restoring roughly two acres of shoreline along the river and creating an environmental trail system.

HRT's light rail project that will run throughout Norfolk was impacting wetlands causing a need for a mitigation plan. Through a collaborative effort with the City of Norfolk, NRHA was able to partner with HRT to provide 1.2 acres of Grandy Village shoreline to serve as the mitigation site.

In addition to improving the shoreline at Grandy Village, an outdoor environmental and educational learning laboratory, built to LEED standards, will be constructed on the riverfront. Complete with a wetlands nature trail, canoe and kayak launch, and a pagoda overlooking the water, both children and adults will be able to learn about the wetlands and the animals and organisms that make it their home.

Recognition and Honors Banquet

(National Award of Excellence Nominee)

NRHA promotes self-sufficiency by encouraging the achievements of residents. Because significant and sustainable achievement was occurring at a slow rate, NRHA developed a way to add incentives that are meaningful to the program participants. Understanding that the residents live in a tight knit environment and are judged by their peers, NRHA decided to develop a program that would showcase the achievement of the residents amongst themselves, Authority executives and the greater community. This would accomplish two things: encourage the program participants to continue on their path to economic independence and housing self-sufficiency and encourage other residents to enroll in and participate in various programs.

NRHA's Client Services designed and produced the Recognition of Achievement and Honors Banquet. Planning for the program began in August with the banquet taking place in June of the following year. Sponsors were sought to support various aspects of the Recognition Program, such as scholarship sponsors for youth graduating from high school, for the program speaker, and for gifts.

The program included the following categories: Young Achievers (elementary and secondary students who achieved honor roll report cards throughout the year, GED and high school graduates (residents young and old who completed the requirements to earn a high school diploma or GED during the year), Post Secondary Achievement (students who successfully completed program requirements to earn an Associates or Bachelor's degree), Vocational Achievement (students who successfully completed the requirements to earn vocational certifications), Employment (residents who have successfully maintained new employment for 6 months or more), Homeownership (residents who became homeowners during the past year), Volunteer of the Year (resident or group of residents who

volunteered and made a significant impact on the lives of others – excluded residents required to complete community service hours) and the Eulalie Bobbitt Award (given to a senior who dedicates themselves to empowering other seniors).

The success of the Recognition Program is evidenced by the consistent increase in the number of scholarship recipients and honorees. In 2006, NRHA recognized 9 college graduates, 19 GED recipients, 15 post secondary scholarship recipients, 39 newly employed, 19 high achievers and 24 homeowners. In 2007, NRHA recognized 11 college graduates, 13 high school graduates earning a total of 29 scholarships, 8 General Education Development (GED) recipients, 115 newly employed residents, 31 high achievers and 9 homeowners. In 2008, NRHA recognized 6 college graduates, 16 high school graduates earning a total of 37 scholarships, 8 GED recipients, 160 newly employed residents, 48 high achievers and 12 homeowners. During the past 2 years, NRHA has honored more than 600 residents in various categories of achievement representing 22% of the households.

The following two programs received Awards of Merit:

Reality Store

The “Reality Store” is an interactive youth program where students are given an opportunity to “experience life choices” in a simulated environment. Students are assigned occupations based on education options (high school diploma, college degree, high school drop out). Each participant receives a monthly salary commensurate to their occupation as well as various family scenarios (marital status, and number of children, if any, in the household). The participants spend their salary on elected purchases as well as mandated obligations such as taxes. At the end of the activity the youth are given the opportunity to discuss the experience.

Workforce Development Academy

The two largest challenges facing adult residents in NRHA’s assisted rental communities are unemployment and under employment. These problems result from lack of education, no skills or unmarketable skills and limited ability to physically get to better jobs. The Workforce Development Academy, a 12-week comprehensive program, offers soft skills refinement, personal development training, job training, placement and coaching in conjunction with non-traditional leadership building through an Outdoors Adventures program. The Workforce Development Academy takes residents from unemployment or under employment to sustainable employment or career.

About NRHA

Founded in 1940, NRHA is a national leader in community revitalization and fostering sustainable mixed-income communities. As the largest redevelopment and housing authority in Virginia, NRHA plays a key role in making Norfolk the city of choice to build, work, live and play.

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