

Home Front

FALL-WINTER 2002



538 N. Detroit Street
 Xenia, Ohio 45385
 376-2908/429-7736
 www.gmha.net

ATTENTION!
HOMEFRONT
 newsletters are an official means of communication with residents and Section 8 Landlords by GMHA.

Vision
*Housing That Works
 To Enhance Life In
 Greene County!*

Mission
To provide quality affordable housing and services in an efficient and creative manner.

WINTER CRISIS PROGRAM

The Supporting Council of Preventive Effort (SCOPE) in partnership with DP&L and Vectren Gas Co. began a new season of The Winter Crisis Program, formerly E-HEAP.

This program provides up to \$175 to income eligible customers experiencing energy emergencies. Funds from the Winter Crisis Program may be used to:

1. Keep utility service connected if threatened with disconnection
2. Reinstate utility service that has already been disconnected
3. Transfer service or pay for reconnect fees or security deposits.

Customers who have both gas and electric in their home will split their payment between DP&L and Vectren. The program runs through March 31, 2003, or until funds are exhausted. All customers must bring account numbers for DP&L and Vectren. For an appointment call 376-7747 or 427-3377.

Submissions for the "Home Front" are welcome. Please send to GMHA, Attention: Connie Paoliello.

GMHA'S 2003 ANNUAL AGENCY PLAN

GMHA's 2003 Annual Agency Plan is available for review at GMHA's office; all elderly developments in Fairborn, Xenia, and Yellow Springs; and at the public libraries in Beavercreek, Cedarville, Fairborn, Xenia, and Yellow Springs. We welcome your comments in writing up until December 5th, 2002. In addition, a public hearing will be held on December 6th at 2:00 p.m. in GMHA's Board Room.

CHRISTMAS ASSISTANCE



To qualify, you must provide proof of residency and proof of participation in a public assistance program.

Xenia's VISIX program applications are available at the Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, and the Fire Departments. Please complete and turn in your application as soon as possible.

Fairborn's Christmas Project registration on November 20th, 9-11 a.m. & 1-3 p.m., will be at Knights of Columbus Hall. Registration on December 4th, 3-5 p.m. & 6-8 p.m., will be at Fairborn Senior Center.

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Agency Wide

OHAC SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY – 2003

The Ohio Housing Authority Conference (OHAC) will be awarding \$1000 scholarship this year. This is an increase from \$500 that was awarded last year! The scholarships are to aid students residing in assisted housing to attend an institution of high learning or to further their education in a recognized program in which satisfactory completion will lead to gainful employment. Scholarships will be awarded in three categories: 1) Graduating high school seniors 2) Continuing students 3) Re-entry adults. OHAC will award one scholarship in each category.

OHAC will make the final selection of scholarship recipients based upon grade point average, two letters of recommendation, and the goals of the student as ex-

pressed in the application. There is a minimum requirement of a 3.0 grade point average for continuing students and re-entry adults, or a passing score of 60 for GED participants.



GMHA will have applications on hand starting in January. Please contact our receptionist to have an application mailed to you. Or, you may come by our office and pick one up in January. If you have any questions about the process, please

call Keith Gunderkline, Assistant Director.

The deadline for completed applications and supporting documents will be 4:00 p.m. Friday, March 7th.

LIFELINE TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Low-income customers may be eligible for the Lifeline program. The Lifeline program is a federal program offered by all of Ohio's local telephone companies. The Lifeline program offers eligible customers several important benefits:

- Monthly credit toward local telephone service
- Waiver of the telephone line installation and connection charges
- Waiver of any deposit requirements

For more information, including eligibility and application information, contact the Ohio Consumers' Counsel toll free at 1-877-742-5622.

TELEPHONE SCAMS – PROTECT YOURSELF

It is very difficult to get your money back if you've been cheated over the phone. Before you buy anything by telephone, remember:

- Don't buy from an unfamiliar company. Legitimate businesses understand that you want more information about their company and are happy to comply.
- Always ask for and wait until you receive written material about any offer or charity.
- Always check out unfamiliar companies with your local consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, state Attorney General, the National Fraud Information Center or other groups.
- Always take your time making a decision.
- Legitimate companies won't pressure you to make a snap decision.
- It's never rude to wait and think about an offer.
- Never respond to an offer you don't understand thoroughly.
- Never send money or give out your credit card or bank account number to unfamiliar companies.
- Be aware that any personal or financial information you provide may be sold to other companies.

Project TOTAL

Project TOTAL (Teaching Our Tenants And Landlords) provides non-monetary outreach case management to families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of eviction. Project TOTAL social workers work one on one with families in need to insure that families maintain permanent, stable housing. Project TOTAL also provides information and support to Section 8 landlords.

HEART & HOME PEER SUPPORT GROUP

Project Total offers a support group to families who have either experienced homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless. The Heart & Home Support Group is open to any family who is currently working with Project TOTAL. The group meets every Wednesday from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. If you are interested in attending, please contact Mary Jo Post or Bernice Brett at GMHA. A variety of topics from nutrition to parenting are discussed. Recently, Project TOTAL held a client retreat at John Bryant State Park in Yellow Springs. Participants enjoyed the afternoon in the park.

LANDLORD MEETINGS



Project TOTAL continues to provide support and information to Section 8 landlords through monthly landlord meetings. Over the past few months, a variety of topics were discussed during these meetings. Project TOTAL would like to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals for agreeing to be guest speakers and providing landlords with valuable information: Detective Steve Lane, Drug Task Force; Ray Foeller, Ohio's Consumer Counsel; Liz Hale, G.C. Fair Housing; David Wilson, GMHA Maintenance Supervisor; Byron Bonar, Legal Aid Association; Doug Wickline, Wickline's Florist and Garden Center.

Look for notices of upcoming Section 8 landlord meetings in the mail with the landlord rent checks and on our web site www.gmha.net. All Section 8 landlords are invited and encouraged to attend.

VOLUNTEERS

Project TOTAL has a new volunteer. Melissa Wagner, a Cedarville University Social Work Student, has recently started with this program. She will be working one on one with families. We would also like to thank Andrea Plaisted for continuing to volunteer with this program. Andrea provides child care services to children during the Heart & Home Peer Support Group.

If you are interested in volunteering with Project TOTAL please contact Mary Jo Post at GMHA 376-2908 or 429-7736.

Low Rent

LOW RENT UPDATES

- Annual Recertifications: Effective immediately, Low Rent Housing Managers are asking every resident who pays their own gas bill to bring in their most recent gas bill to their recertification meeting. For most residents this bill is from Vectren utility company. Staff will make a copy of this and return it to you. This will help GMHA get the information it needs to do its annual utility analysis in order to determine reasonable utility allowances for each unit.
- Residents are reminded that they must maintain utilities in their name and pay them in a timely manner. Failure to maintain utilities is a serious lease violation and could result in lease termination. If you are having trouble paying your bills, please contact your Housing Manager.
- Residents are only allowed three late payments in a twelve month period of time. Any more than three late payments may be grounds for lease termination.
- Residents in need of job search skills, referrals, and resume writing skills are encouraged to contact JC Craig, Low Rent Housing Manager/Social Worker.

The Family Resident Advisory Board is always looking for new participants. Meetings are held once every three months. This is a wonderful way to become more involved with the relationship between GMHA and residents! If you are interested, please contact JC Craig, Low Rent Housing Manager/Social Worker.

FURNACE FILTERS

Furnace filters are typically made of thin fiberglass batting with a cardboard edging, sized to fit a particular furnace, and cost less than \$5 apiece. Most of the time they are visible between one edge of the furnace and the blower fan which pulls air into the furnace. Replacing furnace filters when they are dirty makes your furnace fan run more efficiently, thus **reducing your utility bill**, and helps to keep the air in your house or apartment cleaner. Cleaning and vacuuming out furnace duct openings and return air grates will also improve air quality. If your furnace filter gets so dirty that it needs replacing more than several times a year, you should call in a work order so that maintenance staff can investigate and make sure that there are not any other furnace problems. Finally, do not store anything within two feet of the furnace. This may prevent proper air flow and may also create a fire hazard.

GMHA's Procedure for Replacing Furnace Filters:

Residents in Senior or Disabled Developments: There is a routine, preventive work order done twice a year for all of these units and replacing furnace filters is a standard part of completing this work order. These are the only times GMHA automatically replaces the furnace filter.

Residents in Family Housing: Furnace filters are checked at every annual inspection and normally a work order is written to replace the filter. This is the only time that GMHA automatically replaces the furnace filter.

ALL Residents: Our units vary greatly regarding how many additional times the filter may need changing, if at all. If residents notice that the filter is very dirty or the furnace fan acts sluggish, they should call in a work order. For residents who know how and are able to change the filter themselves and just want us to supply the filters, a work order can be made to drop off the filters for use as needed.

Section 8

UPDATES AND CHANGES

- Section 8 tenants are not permitted to use a P.O. Box. All correspondence and utility checks must be sent to the assisted unit. The only exceptions are Cedarville and Wilberforce tenants.
- If you have been in your unit for at least one year and you wish to move, you must first complete the Notice of Intent to Vacate form and have it signed by your landlord. The form is due the last working day of the month prior to the month of move. For example: if you wish to move 12-1-02 the Notice must be submitted no later than 10-31-02.
- Once you submit a Notice of Intent to Vacate and decide to stay in the unit, you must complete a Continued Occupancy form. The Continued Occupancy form must be submitted no later than the last working day of the prior month that you intended to move. For example: If you intended to move 12-1-02, you must submit the Continued Occupancy form no later than 11-30-02.
- Landlord checks will usually be mailed out the first working day of the month. As a result, the checks may not be received until the third or fourth working day of the month.
- Tenants that have zero income will be receiving notices from the Section 8 department on a regular basis to re-verify your status. Zero income status is a temporary status and not expected to last for an extended period. Please remember, any income or service provided to the household must be reported. For example: Money received from a friend or relative, or anyone who pays a bill for you.



- Annual Recertifications must be completed in a timely manner. There has been an ongoing problem with tenants not providing forms and verifications to Section 8 on time. All recertification packets are due the last working day of the month. Tenants will be sent a reminder notice the first of the following month for any needed documents. After a week, a termination notice will be sent to the tenant and a copy to the landlord. The tenant has until the last working day prior to the 20th day of the month to provide the verifications or the assistance is terminated. There will be very few exceptions to this guideline of due dates. Examples of exceptions that may be made are: hospitalization or death of a family or household member.
- Please keep in mind that Section 8 annual inspections must be completed timely. The inspector has over 100 annual inspections to complete each month in addition to the recheck inspections from the previous month. Therefore, after two failed attempts to inspect the unit, tenants will be sent a termination notice.

Fair Housing

Security Deposits: What Repairs and Cleaning Can Landlords Charge For?

When tenants move out of a unit, they are expected to leave it in the same condition that they found it, except for ordinary wear and tear.

Landlords can charge tenants for actual costs of any cleaning or repairs needed to return the unit to the condition it was in at the beginning of the lease period. Landlords can't charge for ordinary wear and tear. Some examples:

Wear & Tear: Landlord's Responsibility

Faded curtains
Faded/chipped/cracked paint
Worn carpet
Moderately dirty/faded mini-blinds
Wobbly/running toilet
Toilet flushes poorly due to mineral deposits
Stains on old porcelain fixtures that have lost their protective coating
Warped cabinet doors that won't close
Loose hinges or door handles
Loose wallpaper
Dirty screens
Dents in wall where door bumped it
Linoleum worn thin
Worn seal on refrigerator
A few small nicks or nail holes in walls

Loose/inoperable faucet handle

Damages: Tenant's Responsibility

Burned/torn curtains
Unapproved tenant paint job
Torn/stained/burned carpet
Missing/bent mini-blinds
Broken toilet seat or toilet tank
Toilet won't flush because clogged with diapers/toys
Grime-coated bathtub and toilet

Broken cabinet doors or dirty doors or interiors
Damage to a door from forced entry
Torn/marked up wallpaper
Torn/missing screens
Door off its hinges
Torn linoleum
Broken shelf in refrigerator
Holes or gouges in walls that require patching as well as painting
Broken/missing faucet handle

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- Landlords must return security deposits, along with itemized costs for any deductions (i.e., \$40 for cleaning is not sufficient), within 30 days after tenants move out. Tenants must provide a forwarding address.
 - Landlords who wrongfully withhold any part of a security deposit can be sued for double the amount wrongfully withheld plus attorney's fees.
 - Landlords can't automatically deduct a fixed sum from security deposits (i.e., costs for professional carpet cleaning) or require tenants to produce documentation (i.e., receipt from a professional cleaning service) that could be considered an automatic deduction.
 - Landlords can't deduct "re-rent costs" (i.e., advertising) from security deposits.

To learn more about security deposits and your rights and responsibilities under Ohio Landlord Tenant Law and the Fair Housing Act, call Greene Co. Fair Housing at 562-5350 or 1-800-376-1575.

Spotlight

CONGRATULATIONS!



Mary Mullins, a GMHA resident who resides at the Hawthorne Apartments in Fairborn, was presented with a Citizens Award of Merit by Fairborn Police Officer, Bill Titley, on September 23rd. Mary was chosen for this award by the Fairborn Police Department for her quick response in obtaining emergency services and saving a neighbor's life.

Aletha Hughes, a participant in our Resident Initiatives Program, was employed at GMHA for the past 18 months. Her motivation and dedication were a positive asset to the agency. In October, however, she moved on to full-time employment with SCOPE. Thank you and congratulations Aletha!

Moving To Work/IDA

MOVING TO WORK PROGRAM TO BE EXTENDED

GMHA's innovative Moving To Work (MTW) Program is currently seeking a two-year extension from HUD. GMHA anticipates approval of this extension within the next several months. This extension would allow GMHA to re-open enrollment for MTW and to recruit approximately 40 additional families for participation.

MTW is a three-year program that fosters self-sufficiency through a reduced rent schedule, education, and work requirements. Participants pay a flat rent of \$50 per month the first year, \$100 per month the second year, and \$150 per month the third year which gives participants a unique window of opportunity to pay off debts and save money for homeownership, education, etc.

MTW Participants must attend three series of classes pertaining to money management, home maintenance, and homebuyer education. MTW participants must also maintain full-time employment, at least 30 hours per week, for the entire three years as well as abide by their lease and all of GMHA's regular requirements. Applicants must be under 60 years of age, have children living in the household, submit to drug testing, and have an initial gross annual income below the following:

- \$24,100 for a two-person family
- \$27,100 for a three-person family
- \$30,100 for a four-person family
- \$32,500 for a five-person family

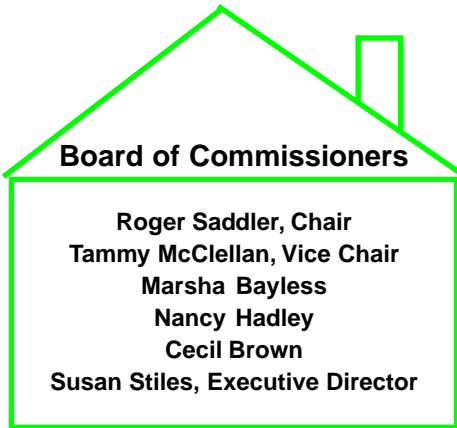
IDA SAVINGS PROGRAM

TIME IS RUNNING OUT! Don't miss the opportunity to double your money.
Enroll in the **IDA SAVINGS PROGRAM** today!

If you are interested in participating in these exciting programs please contact Carrie Dingus at (937) 376-2908.

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Greene Metropolitan Housing Authority
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HOME FRONT FALL-WINTER 2002

SPOTLIGHT

GMHA announces its new web site! We invite you to visit the web site...It's loaded with helpful information.

WWW.GMHA.NET



STAFF ADDITIONS AND CHANGES

Max Elliott of the Low Rent Maintenance Department, retired October 31st. GMHA staff gathered for a retirement dinner to celebrate his 17 years! Congratulations Max, we will miss you!

Greg VanHoose started with the Low Rent Maintenance Department on September 30th. He comes to us from Kettering where he was a Maintenance Supervisor for 11 years. Welcome Greg!

GMHA application information is now available in SPANISH. Just ask at the front desk.