

# Community News

A Quarterly Publication of the Greensboro Housing Authority

Spring 2011



## A Garden for Claremont

**Worried about the high cost of food? Cut the cost of fresh vegetables for your family by signing up for Claremont Courts' community garden today.**

The large garden will be located on vacant land between Patio Place and Buchanan Street. It will be fenced in with small plots for families that would like to try their hands at gardening.

A master gardener from the NC Extension Office will be available to help you get started, plan work-days and learn the valuable skill of growing your own food.

"Each gardener can pick what they want to plant, whether flowers, fruit, vegetables or ornamental plants," said Greensboro Housing Authority's Executive Director Tina Akers Brown, "Whatever you plant, take care of and harvest will be yours. We hope it will be a great experience and benefit for Claremont Courts residents."

Greensboro Housing Authority (GHA) would like to partner with residents in bringing programs to the community that will benefit



residents while providing a better environment for all involved. Community gardening is a program that has the potential to do both.

Anyone interested in having a garden plot should call Mary Beth Myers, Special Projects Manager, at 303-3171, or Octavia Bullock, Claremont Courts Management Assistant, at 303-3031, to sign up. If you have questions or would like additional information please give them a call or pick up a brochure at Claremont Courts' management office.

## Computer Labs Upgraded

Getting on a computer in the labs at Hampton Homes and Ray Warren Homes is easy these days thanks to an upgrade to newer and faster computers.

Both labs are at full strength.

"Now that we have new computers, we will be able to resume with offering the classes which are normally held in the computer labs," said Neighborhood Networks Program Coordinator Tiffany Dunlap. "These classes include but are not limited to Adult Computer classes and various classes and programs for GHA youth. The computer labs are also available for residents to

do homework, job searches and resumes."

Before the upgrade, only three of Hampton's eight computers were working. Things weren't any better at Ray Warren where only two of its four were up and running.

But, those days are gone.





*SURPRISE! - Residents Cynthia Marsh (left) and Olivia Williams got a free surplus computer after finishing classes.*

## **Computer Class Students Get Surprise--A Computer**

Six residents who completed adult computer classes at Ray Warren Homes and Hampton Homes got a big surprise recently--a computer of their own.

Not only do they now know how to use a computer, they also have one at home.

"As a result of upgrading staff computers, GHA was able to repair, restore and clean the old computers and donate them to participants who completed the computer classes," said Neighborhood Networks Program Coordinator Tiffany Dunlap. "They were very excited."

The residents, two from Ray Warren Homes and four from Hampton Homes, learned Computer Basics and Microsoft Word. The classes were taught by Reading Connections.

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## **Housing Counseling Grant Will Help Many Residents**

A few months after being named a HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agency, GHA has received a Housing Counseling Grant that will provide financial / budgeting management classes to very low-income and low-middle income families.

The service is available to both those in Public Housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

"This grant allows us to provide consistency for our clients, working with the same individuals in counseling that we are working with in the Homeownership Program," said Community Programs & Grants Supervisor Donna Fenner. "It is of great benefit to the clients of GHA."

## **New Upgrades Save Millions**

Work is expected to begin in June on new energy and water-saving upgrades at 13 GHA communities.

The investment totals about \$3.9 million over the next eight years, but the savings in energy and water costs is projected at \$5.8 million.

The project is part of a recent eight-year contract extension with the energy company Ameresco, which has helped GHA communities find ways to save energy and water over the last 12 years. During that time, GHA has spent \$1.8 million on energy and water conservation, which has so far generated \$4.9 million in cost savings.

"It's very creative and very positive," said Director of Operations Lee Staton.

Much of the new work, which will be financed over the eight years of the contract, will take place at Ray Warren Homes. Residents there will get new roofs, new high-efficiency heating and air conditioning units as well as water conservation upgrades that includes new water-saving toilets and shower heads.

Other communities will receive various water conservation measures.



*MONEY CLASSES - Residents of all ages learn about money*

## Youth and Adults Learn About Money

The Housing Authority has been awarded a "Future Fund" grant from the Community Foundation to help fund more financial literacy classes for GHA youth.

The effort will include children from elementary and middle schools as well as high school-aged children.

FSS Housing Counselor and Youth Services Coordinator Robert Cooper said this year's approach will be a little different.

"We're going to use a financial literacy game show format," he said. "We want to set up a competition. The questions will be age appropriate. It should be fun."

The competition might provide the motivation they need to take the classes seriously, he said. Plans call for the effort to culminate this summer with a competition that will be open for others to watch.

GHA began a series of youth financial fitness classes last year through the "Kids Money Matters" program aimed at ages 8 through 12-years-of-age.

In addition, GHA is offering classes for adults on similar topics, including Financial Management/ Budgeting, Predatory Lending, Homebuyer Education, Mortgage Delinquency and Default Resolution, Renters Assistance Counseling and Pre-purchase and Post-purchase.



## Youth Find "Nia" In New Play

When youth in the Operation Smart Choices program were asked to look inside themselves for the purpose in their lives, they took it one step further.

They began to wonder about the purpose in the lives of the people they see every day. That's how the play "Finding Nia" began. Nia is the Kwanzaa word for purpose.

"These young playwrights, ranging in age from 6 to 12, worked extremely hard to deliver such a wonderful piece of work," said Operation Smart Choices Coordinator Sabrina Abney. "They wrote scenes on recycling and why it's needed in our community, bullying in elementary school and disappointment. They portrayed such characters as doctors, nurses, coaches, teachers, managers, judges and athletes, because that's what they aspire to become."

The youth, from Smith Homes and Pear Leaf, performed March 19 to a full house of family and friends at the Caldcleugh Multicultural Center.



COMMUNITY NEWS is a publication of the Greensboro Housing Authority.

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Public Housing - FSS  
Resident Opportunities and Self Sufficiency (ROSS)  
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Public Housing Homeownership  
303-3002

Resident Services  
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Youth Services  
303-3225

GHA Maintenance Emergencies  
272-4137

Ambulance / Rescue / Fire / Police  
911

Crime Stoppers  
373-1000

Police Non-Emergency  
373-2222

The mission of the Greensboro Housing Authority is to provide safe, quality, affordable housing to low-income, elderly, and the disabled in the Greensboro Community; to maintain a safe and secure community environment; and to encourage personal responsibility and upward mobility of residents while maintaining the fiscal integrity of the agency.

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## Alson Wheeler is a Winner

Gateway Plaza Resident Alson Wheeler, who says he's been "drawing and doodling all my life," swept the first three prizes in the Silver Arts portion of the recent Guilford County Senior Games.

His paintings featuring women took first, second and third place in the Pastel Category of the Visual Arts competition.

"Everyone joked that I must have been the only one to enter," he laughed.

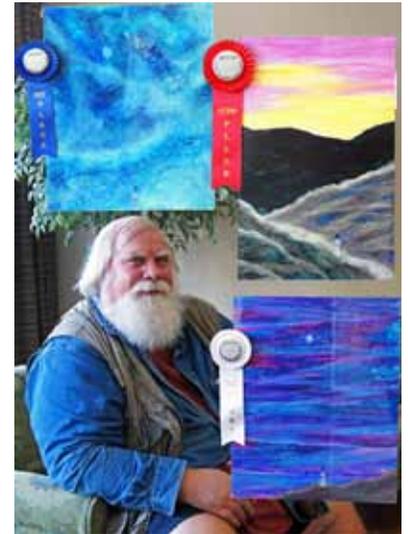
Wheeler, who paints with oil pastels, will take his work to the state competition next.

"I feel fortunate, blessed," he said.

Wheeler's painting, "Woman with a Red Belt," took first place. "Woman in a Sunrise" placed second, and "Woman in the Night Sky" finished third.

"I put women in all my pieces," he said.

Wheeler, who has degrees in both History and Art History, has been selling his work every Saturday and Sunday for the last six years from a booth in front of the coffee shop "Cheesecake by Alex" on South Elm Street. He invites everyone to drop by to view his work and "share a cup of coffee."



WINNER - Gateway Plaza Resident Alson Wheeler and his award-winning oil pastel paintings