Introducing Patricia Wells

In October after a national search, the Oakland Housing Authority Board of Commissioners named Patricia Wells as OHA’s new Executive Director. Ms. Wells succeeds Eric Johnson, who served in the role for 11 years and retired after more than 30 years in the affordable housing industry. Wells is only the eighth Executive Director and the first woman to hold the position in the agency’s 81 year history.

Wells will lead OHA’s 370 employees in service to the 16,400 households who rely on the professional staff to administer the Public Housing, Section 8 and Special Programs, as well as manage programs that assist clients on their paths to self-sufficiency and civic engagement. Since joining OHA in 1998, Wells has been wholly committed to improving access to life-enriching services through innovative programs that prioritize respect and dignity.

Many of OHA’s residents may have known Wells from her days as the Director of Resident and Community Services, and then as Director of Property Operations during difficult and transformative times. She was able to extend her influence, on behalf of OHA clients, with city, state and federal government leaders, helping to craft programs that make a difference. Further, Wells has worked with the local non-profit community and national industry organizations on projects from grassroots organizing to award-winning pilot programs that have been replicated across the country. That work, in part, has led to her involvement in the affordable housing industry’s largest advocacy group, the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

In addition to being named OHA’s new Executive Director, Wells was recently elected to serve as Senior Vice President of NAHRO. Her work with NAHRO enables her to learn alongside her industry peers new and creative ways to improve the services being offered in Oakland, while simultaneously sharing the success of OHA, one of the nation’s most revered housing authorities.

Wells shares, “I’m eager to transition into my new role and excited to lead us forward as we continue to develop more units with the type of sustainability that has become our hallmark, and to also strengthen our partnerships and service delivery capabilities.” This forward thinking approach to housing more Oaklanders in clean, safe and affordable housing will set Wells onto a journey of success in which we can all participate in and celebrate.
**Spotlight**

**Homeownership Program (HO)**
The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) is keeping the dream alive! In 2019, four Section 8 families successfully purchased homes through the Homeownership Program, three of whom were also graduates of OHA’s Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program—an employment-based program that enables savings accrual of increased employment earnings. These four families patiently worked hard to meet the minimum income, credit and savings requirements for the program in order to purchase in a competitive market, where multiple offers are common. This program is open to Public Housing Residents and Section 8 Participants, who may then qualify for partial mortgage assistance.

For more information on the FSS program, please call 510-587-5115.

For more information on the Homeownership Program:
Phone: 510-874-1540
Email homeownership@oakha.org
Visit www.oakha.org
(and look for the Family & Community Partnerships Department)

If you are an OHA resident and are interested in participating in these, or any other, Family and Community Partnerships programs, please contact FCP at (510) 587-5115 for more information.

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**OHA Foundation Here to Help**

On December 5, 2019, the OHA Foundation (OHAF) hosted its 39th Annual Holiday Splendor at Fairview Metropolitan Golf Links in Oakland. This year’s theme, Mardi Gras, celebrated the spirit of New Orleans, while guests donned festive attire and masks in true carnival-like atmosphere. OHAs senior residents and their guests enjoyed a delicious dinner, dancing to music spun by a DJ, raffle prizes, as well as a fashion show that added flair to the party.

As always, a dedicated Holiday Splendor committee worked for months to make this a memorable evening for those seniors who chose to kick off the holiday season with their OHA friends. Staff from all OHA departments took part in the festivities and volunteered to tend to the evening’s details so the committee was able to sit back and enjoy the evening they helped create.

Holiday Splendor is one of the many activities offered throughout the year that presents an opportunity for the staff at OHA to volunteer to serve the clients of the agency. In addition to the regular duties of OHA’s employees, many choose to give back by working at events during their personal time and by making financial contributions to OHAF, a personal way to give from the heart. Through OHAF, thousands of families served by OHA, as well as nearby community members, are able to participate in after school and summer programs for K-12 students, college scholarship application assistance programs, senior wellness programs, and family activities like the Winter Wonderland (and toy drive), where families are provided holiday gifts, warm winter coats, access to community resources, information about emergency services and more. In particular, Winter Wonderland is one of the most popular of OHA events as it helps bring families together during a time of year that can be filled with stress, with many reporting the festive atmosphere and positive environment has become a high point of their family’s holiday season.

To learn more about OHAF visit: https://www.ohafoundation.org/

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**Help During the Holidays & Year-Round**

Every year, many organizations including the Alameda County Community Food bank (ACCFB), the Oakland Black Firefighters Association, and De Fremy Park distribute food to families who need additional assistance around the holidays. If you are interested in more information regarding holiday food distribution events you may contact the Family & Community Partnerships Department at (510) 587-5115.

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**Recycle Right After the Holiday Season**

The holiday season brings festive decorations, bigger family meals, laughter and lots of artfully wrapped gifts! But along with the many things we look forward to, comes getting rid of the excess waste and trash that tends to pile up. Whether disposing of extra wrapping paper, leftover food waste or your holiday tree, it’s a good idea to make sure you know how to recycle properly. In addition to being good for the environment, it’s also the law.

The appropriate bins for all types of recycling have been provided at each OHA-owned or managed property. If unsure if an item can be recycled, look for a symbol on the label. The grey recycling container is for recyclables, but first make sure they are clean, dry and empty. The green compost container is for food scraps, food-spoiled paper and plants/flowers. Please remove wires, holiday lights, and ribbons from wreaths and floral arrangements before composting. Metallic or glitter gift wrap, bags and boxes should be put in the trash when they can no longer be reused or repurposed. Remember, saved wrapping supplies can be used to wrap gifts that won’t be presented until after Christmas Day, saving both money and the environment.

**How to properly recycle holiday trees:**

Oakland residents, including those living in apartments and condos, can place holiday trees for free pick-up on your regularly scheduled Compost service day. Cut taller trees to four (4) feet—no flocking, ornaments or stands. Place curbside.

*For buildings with more than 100 units, Property Managers will call Waste Management to arrange the best method of collection and schedule service. Check for dates with your Property Administrator. Don’t forget to properly set out your holiday tree for collection from December 26 to January 10, or as directed by your Property Administrator.*
Recycle Right After the Holiday Season

Paper, leftover food waste or your holiday up. Whether disposing of extra wrapping gifts! But along with the many things we FCP at (510) 587-5115 for more information.

Partnerships Department
Phone: 510-874-1540

For more information on the FSS program:

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OHA Foundation Here to Help
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Q: How can I prevent my packages from going missing this holiday season?
A: With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season around the corner, and the increasing convenience of shopping online year-round, people now utilize options that allow them to avoid large crowds and hectic traffic. According to a poll this year, 76% of U.S. consumers shop online. But with this convenience, comes some risk of packages going missing when delivered to homes and left unattended. To prevent becoming a victim, consider these helpful tips:

- Request a pick-up location such as an Amazon Locker at check-out or pick up from the UPS store instead of your home address.
- Have the packages delivered to your work place or to a trusted neighbor.
- Require signature upon delivery.
- Install a security camera with a motion sensor light—theft deterrent.

The most effective way to prevent packages from going missing is to shop in stores, which also saves you money on shipping. Plan ahead by shopping during non-peak hours and have more time to find the perfect gift! But remember, homemade gifts, handwritten notes, kind gestures and public service are other ways to spread the warmth of the season without breaking the bank. Happy Holidays and happy shopping!

RAB Blog
The OHA Resident Advisory Board (RAB) is seeking new members!

Do you want to make change in your community? Do you want to share your ideas with people who will listen and support you? Do you have 3 hours per month you can share with others? The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) might be for you! The RAB meets once a month and continues to provide valuable input to OHA's Annual Plan as well as other issues that impact the agency.

The ideal candidate has the following:

- Interest in developing personal skills by working on community projects as a team
- Available the 2nd Wednesday of every month from 5-7pm for monthly meeting

Details:
- RAB meets once per month
- Dinner, transportation and childcare assistance are provided for each meeting
- Meetings are held at 1540 Webster Street in downtown Oakland

For more information, please call Annabelle at 510-587-5129 or email asibthorpe@oakha.org.

Success Stories
Treyvon Davis enrolled in the Job Plus program in March of 2018. The goal of the program is to increase participant’s earnings and advance employment outcomes through work readiness, employer linkages and educational advancement. Mr. Davis took full advantage of the program by returning to school to complete his diploma, participate in workshops, enroll in job training/certification and apply for a position with OHA. Treyvon’s charismatic personality and determination is deeply rooted and evident; which created an opportunity for him to co-facilitate youth workshops for OHAs youth group, “Youth R.O.C.K.S.” Treyvon is now an Education Ambassador for OHA and continues to pursue his education. Treyvon’s persistence and participation proves that taking full advantage of resources and building meaningful relationships can catapult one’s journey toward success.
Teen Vaping on the Rise

Protecting our children from danger has been the number one priority of parents since the dawn of time. With so many challenges lurking around every corner, it’s hard to know where to focus, but an emerging concern has taken center stage in the media and in national policy circles. In recent years, the use of e-cigarettes has skyrocketed and unfortunately information about long-term impacts is not yet available. E-cigarettes are battery-powered devices that heat a liquid into an aerosol that is then inhaled by the user. The liquid usually has nicotine, which comes from tobacco, flavoring, and other additives. E-cigarette products can also be used as a delivery system for marijuana and other illicit drugs.

Although vaping is marketed as a healthier alternative to smoking cigarettes allegedly producing fewer chemicals it can be just as addictive depending on the concentration of nicotine or THC, and there is no evidence that it is “healthier,” especially since in addition to nicotine, e-cigarettes can contain harmful and potentially harmful ingredients, including:

- ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs
- flavorants such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to serious lung disease
- volatile organic compounds
- heavy metals, such as nickel, tin, and lead

There are dozens of brands of e-cigarettes on the market and the JUUL E-cigarettes are currently the most popular devices used with tobacco products among teens. Studies show one JUUL pod has as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes and the frequency with which many users take regular puffs on the devices, makes it difficult to monitor exactly how much nicotine is being consumed. In addition to marketing product flavors that appeal to children (such as watermelon, strawberry milk, grape and mint), vaping ads feature young people appearing independent and carefree, much the same as tobacco products from years past, making these tactics very successful in sparking teen demand. Vaping products can be easily purchased online without age verification and access to vaping products is surprisingly easy.

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration has not been able to keep pace with the growing popularity of vaping making it harder to effectively regulate the products that have been linked to certain cancer-causing chemicals. As of October 2019, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) confirmed 1,299 cases of lung injury associated with vaping, 26 of them resulting in death. Fifty-four percent of reported patients are under the age of 25, and 70% are male.

For help quitting smoking or vaping, or to learn more and to get tips for talking to your teen about marijuana and vaping call or visit:

I-800-QUIT-NOW
https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/
The Evolution of Sidehows

Sidehows were known as the first “pop-up parties,” —part car show, part block party—long before the term “pop-up event” was even coined. Sidehows got their start in Deep East Oakland, with participants coming together in mall parking lots in the 1980s. Originally intended for bringing out and displaying customized 1960’s era candy-colored American Muscle cars with leather interiors, wire or custom rims, and modified high performance engines, these events were an opportunity to show off cars that were the pride and joy of members of the local community. People would cruise around in souped-up whips blasting the latest beats, and as the sidehows spread so did the creative culture. There was nothing particularly dangerous or nefarious about them…at that time.

Nowadays, however, sidehows have evolved, or more accurately, devolved into the bane of police departments throughout Alameda County. Increasingly, sidehows have popped-up spontaneously in public intersections and highways, and draw large crowds of all ages, gathered around demonstrations of reckless car stunts inclusive of high-speed donuts, figure-8s, and “ghost-riding” (in which a driver exits the vehicle mid-stunt or does some antics outside of the vehicle while it is still in motion before re-entering the car). These incidents exhibit lesser quality and non-customized cars, as well as loud music blasting from the speakers or a sound system set up nearby. Known for blocking intersections in residential neighborhoods and attracting police attention, sidehows over the past two decades have grown exponentially unsafe, resulting in death and injury.

This past 4th of July, a person was struck by a participating car, where an estimated 400 spectators were gathered—some with shooting off fireworks…and guns. Sidehows have become associated with increased crime, gun violence and suspected gang-related criminal activity.

For OHA resident families and children, we urge you to increase awareness of these events taking place in your neighborhoods, as well as take the following steps to increase your safety:

• Attempt to stay indoors if you hear loud, screeching tires, music blasting, unrecognizable sounds, and a large crowd assembled nearby.
• Avoid large crowds gathering around cars performing stunts when you observe nearby intersections becoming congested.
• Move away from and/or take different paths or roadways to reach destinations or alternate freeway entrances instead of attempting to pass through the congested intersections or crowds.
• Report sidehows by calling the Oakland Police Department non-emergency line: (510) 777-3333

There are serious penalties for participating in a sidehow, including arrest, citation, and having your vehicle impounded. In addition, penalties may lead to fines that can add up to thousands of dollars. Stay safe!

New Public Charge Rule on Hold

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently published the Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds final rule that codifies regulations governing the application of the public charge inadmissibility, which changes the way the department completes the process for determining whether a non-citizen will be allowed to enter or remain in the United States. However, as of October 11, 2019 this rule was blocked by multiple courts. Even though the Public Charge Rule is currently on hold, and it does not change OHA’s admissions and occupancy process, it still may directly impact non-citizen household members of OHA participant families because public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8) are covered by this new rule.

OHA staff cannot provide advice regarding the public charge rule or on how the ongoing receipt of housing assistance may impact a client’s current or future immigration status, but we do encourage people to be aware of their legal options.
For public safety, it may be necessary for PG&E to turn off electricity when gusty winds and dry conditions, combined with a heightened fire risk, are forecasted. This is called a “Public Safety Power Shutoff” or “PSPS.”

While customers in high fire-threat areas are more likely to be affected, any of PG&E’s more than five million electric customers could have their power shut off. This is because the energy system relies on power lines working together to provide electricity across cities, counties and regions.

Learn More about PG&E’s Community Wildfire Safety Program
Call us PG&E at 1-866-743-6589
Email wildfiresafety@pge.com

Visit pge.com/wildfiresafety

Public Safety Power Shutoff

Oakland Housing Authority
1619 Harrison Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Literacy(

December

1/2/20 President’s Day*
1/2/20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day*
1/20/20 Chinese New Year
1/24/20 Valentine’s Day
1/27/20 President’s Day*
1/31/20 MLK Day

January

12/22/19 First Day of Hanukkah
12/25/19 Christmas Day*
12/26/19 Christmas Day*
1/1/20 New Year’s Day
1/1/20 New Year’s Day
1/20/20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day*
1/25/20 Chinese New Year

February

1/26/20 President’s Day*
1/31/20 St. Patrick’s Day
2/19/20 Chinese New Year
2/20/20 President’s Day*
2/23/20 Valentine’s Day
2/27/20 President’s Day*

March

2/19/20 President’s Day*
2/20/20 President’s Day*
3/3/20 Daylight Saving Time Begins
3/8/20 St. Patrick’s Day
3/12/20 Easter Sunday
3/14/20 Tax Deadline
3/15/20 Tax Deadline
3/17/20 Cinco de Mayo
3/18/20 Mother’s Day
3/25/20 Memorial Day

April

3/25/20 Memorial Day
4/5/20 Easter Sunday
4/12/20 Easter Sunday
4/13/20 Easter Sunday
4/19/20 Easter Sunday
4/20/20 Easter Sunday
4/21/20 Easter Sunday

May

4/27/20 Tax Deadline
5/05/20 Cinco de Mayo
5/12/20 Cinco de Mayo
5/13/20 Memorial Day
5/20/20 Memorial Day
5/25/20 Memorial Day

AT-A-GLANCE • WINTER/SPRING 2019-20

Election Day is the one day when average citizens wield as much power as the most affluent and well-connected among us, but that power only works if you use it. March 3, 2020 is Super Tuesday, a day when at least 16 states, including California, hold their presidential primary elections, allowing registered voters to help nominate their preferred presidential candidate.

Register to vote today! In order to vote in the upcoming primary, your registration must be postmarked or submitted electronically no later than February 18, 2020. After voting in the primary election, follow and participate in the national discussion leading up to Election Day, on November 3, 2020!

Register to vote:
https://registertovote.ca.gov/
Learn more: https://www.sos.ca.gov/