Black History is American History

Black History Month is an annual celebration of the achievements of African Americans and a time for recognizing the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. The event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

Each year, school children and adults alike honor such noted historical figures as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, Ralph Bunche, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Madam C.J. Walker and Rosa Parks. While the list gets longer with the addition of more recent African American public figures like President and Mrs. Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey, there are many local unsung heroes who have made contributions that impact our lives daily.

Naa Dodua, founder of From Heart to Hand, is a widely respected community leader, mentor, educator, artist, and social entrepreneur known for her efforts on behalf of at-risk inner city youth. Reverend Carolyn Dyson, the manager of community health advocacy and outreach at California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC), beat breast cancer over 10 years ago. She now fights the disease on behalf of African American and other at-risk communities through the promotion of early detection, breast cancer education, and partnership building. These African American women and many more men and women like them deserve to be highlighted for their roles in shaping the lives of families in Oakland and the Bay Area.

Local television station KQED honors these unsung heroes each year with a special tribute during Black History Month. View your local listings for the 2012 honorees at http://www.kqed.org/community/heritage/black/heroes.

Memorial Day

Memorial Day is a United States federal holiday observed on the last Monday of May. Formerly known as Decoration Day, it originated after the American Civil War to commemorate the fallen Union soldiers. By the 20th century Memorial Day had been extended to honor all Americans who have died in all wars. Memorial Day is a day of remembering the men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces.

Typically Memorial Day marks the start of the summer vacation season, while Labor Day marks its end. Increasingly Bay Area families devote the long holiday weekend to family gatherings, fireworks, trips to the beach, and national media events such as the Indianapolis 500 auto race, held since 1911 on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend. For some, the weekend wouldn’t be complete without their tradition of visiting the gravesites of loved ones who have served and by flying the American flag at half-staff.
Family & Community Partnerships (FCP)

O HA’s Family & Community Partnerships department (FCP) helps our families achieve long-term financial strength and independence by connecting people to jobs and promoting home ownership. Read on to learn about the programs and support offered in your community.

Homeownership

Homeownership is a dream for many and is generally considered a key to building financial wealth and independence. The OHA Homeownership Program helps program participants save toward the down-payment of a home purchase and prepares them for the joys and challenges of maintaining a home. Once the participant identifies a home for purchase, the program coordinator will assist the family with the home purchase and closing process.

Upon purchasing a home, OHA provides housing subsidy which previously would have been used for rent but is now applied toward the monthly mortgage payment. This program is open to all OHA program participants who meet the homeownership eligibility requirements.

To be eligible for the program the resident must be in good standing with OHA, a first-time homebuyer (speak with Homeownership Coordinator for exceptions), and working full time. Eligibility also requires that you have been working consistently for at least one year and earning more than $14,500 per year. There is no minimum income requirement for the elderly (62+) or for a disabled head of household (or their spouse).

By focusing on long term goals, Homeownership Program participants are well on their way to financial security. For more information contact Hanan Albabtain, Resident & Community Service Coordinator (510) 587-5132.

Family Self Sufficiency Program

The Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program is a 5-year program that helps families acquire the skills and experience necessary to obtain work that pays a living wage. The head of household enters into a contract with the FSS program and the FSS Coordinator assists the family with accessing the resources needed to achieve their goals by providing referrals for community services and employment opportunities. The FSS program also offers families a unique savings opportunity, called an escrow account, as their earnings increase.

FCP will soon be accepting new participants into the FSS program. New participants will be required to attend an orientation which includes a program overview and the eligibility requirements. For more information about the FSS program or to attend an upcoming orientation, please contact FCP at (510) 587-5127.

Employment Development

One of FCP’s objectives is to assist residents in establishing and reaching goals that enable them to achieve self-sufficiency. Key steps in this process are developing job skills, seeking career opportunities and obtaining gainful employment.

FCP is excited to offer the Employment Assistance & Referral Service. This service connects OHA residents with employment and job training opportunities. Employment coordinators assist with resume writing, cover letter development and referrals to partner agencies that provide employment related services. Many OHA residents have successfully completed job training programs and gained employment through the services we offer.

Residents who meet the following requirements are eligible:

• Listed on the lease of an OHA Public Housing or Section 8 Household;
• Be in good standing with OHA; and
• Attend a mandatory Employment Assistance & Referral Orientation (EARO)

OHA will also begin recruiting for upcoming resident paid internship positions. Residents are invited to visit our website regularly at www.oakha.org to learn about all available OHA jobs. Feel free to contact FCP staff members, Patraya Lowe-Smith at (510) 587-5107 or Andrew Frankel at (510) 587-5104, for further information and/or to reserve a seat in the next EARO.

Technology and Learning Center

The OHA Technology and Learning Center, which opened April 2011, is expanding the list of programs and services offered to meet the growing demand of OHA residents.

The center is an onsite resource to support residents by providing open access hours for those wishing to use a computer and by offering a series of workshops covering basic computer functions.

Residents may use the computers for employment searches, educational and/or recreational purposes during open access hours Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:00am - 4:30pm, and Wednesdays from 9:00pm to 2:30pm.

The following computer-based workshops are available Wednesdays from 2:30pm - 4:30pm:

- 1st Wednesday - Basic Computer Concepts
- 2nd Wednesday - Word 2003 and Keyboarding
- 3rd Wednesday - Email
- 4th Wednesday - Internet

New programs will be offered soon. If you have interest in a specific topic please contact Shawn Johnson at (510) 587-5129 or Hanan Albabtain at (510) 587-5107.
The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) has four Visions that they will be focusing on this calendar year to improve OHA communities. RAB members invite you to attend future meetings where they will discuss their visions in greater detail.

The RAB Visions are:

**Vision I** - Successfully advocate for ourselves, for OHA and for the larger community, at the local and national level.

**Vision II** - Improve the educational success of OHA youth and increase resources to enhance parental engagement by educating the entire family.

**Vision III** – Expand Community Enrichment/Community Building by creating a vibrant, interdependent community within OHA that addresses disparities and reduces the effects of poverty in our neighborhoods.

**Vision IV** - Improve communication agency wide, (person-to-person and digitally). Implement modern communication mediums (i.e. Twitter, Facebook) & improve computer literacy by providing systems and Internet to most OHA sites.

If any of these topics interest you, we encourage you to come to one of the upcoming meetings. All meetings are listed on the At-A-Glance Calendar portion of the newsletter.

**Q: Does OHA offer summer camp for kids?**

**A:** While many of us are still thinking about the holidays and New Year’s resolutions, summer vacation might be the last thing on your mind. However, the end of the school year is just around the corner and now is the time to start looking into summer camps and programs for school your aged-children.

For the last 2 years, OHA has sponsored as many as 80 OHA youth at Camp Mendocino summer camp offered in partnership with Boys & Girls Clubs of Oakland. More information can be obtained by contacting Family & Community Partnerships (FCP) at (510) 587-5127, beginning March 5.

In the meantime, to learn about other summer camp opportunities visit acacamps.org, summerscamps.com, and y-camp.org. If interested, don’t forget to inquire about financial aid availability.

**OHA resident and RAB member Bettye Lou Wright takes great pleasure in knitting and crocheting. For many years she has not only shared her passion by making things for others but also by donating hats and scarves to individuals in need. The RAB has made it one of their visions to make good use of skills readily available within our communities. Bette Lou and other RAB members are forming a small craft group that will meet regularly to make items that can be purchased for a small contribution or made available to those in need. Funds received will be donated to the Oakland Housing Authority Foundation, which was established to assist in providing services to Oakland Housing Authority residents. The Foundation supports programs which give back to residents such as the Senior Holiday Splendor, Back-to-School Backpack giveaways and much more. If you knit, crochet, sew or enjoy patchwork or would like to learn any of these skills please reach out to Betty Lou Wright who will be coordinating future meetings. Bettye can be reached at (510) 444-4996.**

**People’s Federal Credit Union (People’s), a division of the Self-Help Federal Credit Union, is a community development financial institution (CDFI) located in Oakland. Individuals and families who earned less than $50,000 in 2011, can receive free tax preparation from January 18, 2012 through April 17, 2012. Appointments and walk-ins are accepted. Please contact People’s at (510) 267-0450 ext. 305 or visit them at Mandela Gateway, 1350 7th Street Oakland, CA 94607 (across from West Oakland BART).**

**What can we do to improve OHA communities?**

**To ensure that OHA Public Housing Residents and Section 8 Participants actively participate in the decision making process regarding OHA policies and procedures and are actively engaged in their community as leaders.**
Education Initiative

OHA is firmly committed to expanding opportunities for children whenever possible. The Education Initiative connects all OHA households with school-aged children to educational programs and leadership opportunities for youth.

Through OHA's partnerships with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and community-based organizations, FCP is able to provide life enrichment activities and other services such as summer youth employment, summer camp, back-to-school giveaways and free summer lunch programs.

More information will be provided to residents in the coming months as new programs are implemented. By contacting FCP's new Education Coordinator, Leticia Henderson at (510) 587-5127, you can learn ways to get involved in the education of your child(ren). Ms. Henderson is eager to help your family set and achieve your child's educational goals.

Housing Authority Insurance Scholarship

The Housing Authority Insurance Scholarship Program is designed to help residents achieve their higher education goals by providing financial support. This year, forty (40) scholarships will be awarded, worth $2,500 each. To qualify, an applicant must be an OHA resident, a current high school senior, college student or an adult with a high school diploma or GED, and have a GPA of at least 2.5. For more information and a copy of the application, call 1(800) 873-0242 ext. 639 or visit www.housingcenter.com/RiskControl/Scholarship.aspx.

For assistance with completing the application or to request a reference letter from OHA, contact Letitia Henderson at (510) 587-5127 or Lhenderson@oakha.org by Friday, April 13th, 2012. Completed applications will be entered into a lottery and scholarship recipients will be notified by U.S. Mail by June 1, 2012.

College Financial Aid

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (known as the FAFSA) is a form that can be prepared annually by current and prospective college students (undergraduate and graduate) in the United States to determine their eligibility for student financial aid (including the Pell Grant, Federal student loans and Federal Work-Study). Despite its name, the application is not for a single federal program, being rather the gateway of consideration for:

- the nine federal student-aid programs
- the 605 state aid programs
- most of the institutional aid available

The U.S. Department of Education deadline for academic year 2012-2013 initial awards is March 2, 2012. Additional deadline information is available at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/fotw1213/pdf/deadlines.pdf. Each application period is 18 months; most federal, state, and institutional aid is provided on a first come, first served basis. Students are advised to submit a FAFSA as early as possible for consideration for maximum financial assistance.

St. Patrick's Day Word Search

Shamrock
Irish
Leprechaun
Pot of Gold
Saint
Potato
Green
Rainbow
Snakes
Patrick
Ireland
Jig

S T P A T I R S H G D R T Y
S L N C H B R W O R S N L E
H K F C E F A I F A J K E S
A I C K N C I E S R V E P B
M D I U N F N O U H O D R W
R R E Q R O B X J M P E E E
O W H P O T O F G O L D C R
C B A T M B W N D A M T H D
K O Y E L K P O J I G D A I
K J V S L E G D T Y R W U K
P O T A T O W L P C E H N J
A I R B R E Z O S L E O P I
T M Y I R E L A N D N Z W E
R X B O V O F G A E Y U R E
I T A N P Q U I K X V V J K
C B A T T R I P E T N Q M A
K C I N T B R D S A I N T H

Share your ideas and accomplishments with the OHA Community!

See Contest on reverse.
Two-party system

Since January 3, 2012, the Republican party has been actively assessing and voting for candidates as they narrow down to one, the Republican nominee who will face off against the incumbent president, Barack Obama in the November 6, 2012 election. During election cycles, the process of selecting a candidate is done on both sides of the aisle. However, the Democratic Party intends to nominate Barack Obama as its candidate, therefore, no primary elections are taking place for the Democratic Party.

What started as a wide open field with Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, Rick Santorum, Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Rick Perry, Ron Johnson, Buddy Roemer and other lesser known candidates, has been reduced to only four remaining candidates as of this printing. Romney, Gingrich, Santorum and Paul are still in the race with Romney, Santorum and Gingrich each scoring victories in the first four contests in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Florida.

We will likely see several more shifts in who holds the lead position as the candidates make daily campaign management decisions and continually adjust their strategies to accommodate changes in the political climate.

The Republican National Convention will be held August 27-30, when Delegates will choose the Republican nominee for president. Delegates are representatives who commit to vote for candidates based on the number of actual votes the candidates received in the state primary elections and caucuses. Each state has its own method of allotting delegate votes to candidates based on state party by-laws. Any candidate who has reached the required 1,144 committed delegate votes will become the Republican nominee for president to run against President Obama. If no candidate obtains that magic number, then the Republican National Committee will hold what is called a “brokered convention” and all delegates who had previously committed to a particular candidate will be released to an open forum where delegates will vote for their preferred candidate. The highest vote recipient will become the party's nominee. If this scenario actually occurs, real politics will be on display for all to see.

In the American two-party system, the Republican and Democratic parties account for over 70% of the registered voters. Of course, voters can choose to vote for candidates other than those nominated by the two major parties. The Libertarian Party, Green Party, Independents and others are often on the ballot and voters can choose to write in the name of a person for whom they wish to vote. However, choosing to vote for Independents or 3rd party candidates has its pros and cons. Generally, a person who is not part of the two major parties will not have the financial backing or name recognition necessary to be competitive in a national race against the established party candidates; and historically, votes cast for third party candidates come at the expense of the major party candidates. This can sway an election by significantly impacting the vote count for either the republican or democratic nominee. Third party candidates can and have had a major influence on the outcome of elections.

Regardless of who ultimately wins the republican nomination, we are assured a very aggressive competition between the republican nominee and President Obama. Whether you vote for a democrat, republican, a third-party candidate or a write-in candidate, please participate in the election process by voting. In order to vote in a presidential election it is critical that you are registered to vote. Learn about the issues that affect you and plan to show up on Election Day at your assigned polling place or take advantage of early vote-by-mail options.

When all the campaigning is over, on November 6, 2012, a presidential election will be held and a nominated candidate will be chosen to lead us forward. The President-Elect will be sworn in at an inauguration ceremony on January 20, 2013. Will that person be one of the current slate of republican candidates? A new entrant into the race? Or, our current President, Barack Obama? Your vote and every vote counts!

To follow the 2012 presidential race visit http://www.c-span.org/Campaign2012/

Submit a story or story idea for the YOUR VOICE section or provide an entry for the SPOTLIGHT section and if your content is selected you will be rewarded with a $10 gift card. Selected entries are subject to space limitations and appropriateness for the entire OHA community. A maximum of 10 winners will be selected.

Rules: Submit your entry via e-mail at oha.communications@oakha.org, drop off at any of our business offices or mail to:

Oakland Housing Authority
935 Union Street, Oakland CA 94607
Attn: Family and Community Partnerships

Entries must be received no later than March 31, 2012 to be eligible for prize.
### At-A-Glance • Fall/Winter 2011-2012

#### February
- 02/02/12: Resident Advisory Board Meeting
- 02/02/12: Groundhog Day
- 02/14/12: Valentine’s Day
- 02/20/12: President’s Day

#### March
- 03/01/12: Resident Advisory Board Meeting
- 03/11/12: Daylight savings time begins
- 03/17/12: St. Patrick’s Day
- 03/20/12: Spring begins
- 03/26/12: Cesar Chavez Day

#### April
- 04/05/12: Resident Advisory Board Meeting
- 04/08/12: Dongzhi Festival
- 12/25/11: Easter
- 04/16/12: Tax Day
- 04/25/12: Administrative Professionals Day

#### May
- 05/03/12: Resident Advisory Board Meeting
- 05/05/12: Cinco de Mayo
- 05/13/12: Mother’s Day
- 05/28/12: Memorial Day

Visit the Board of Commissioners webpage for Board meeting schedule, agendas and minutes at [http://www.oakha.org/boc.html](http://www.oakha.org/boc.html)

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**Chinese New Year**

Lunar New Year, also referred to as Chinese New Year, is the longest and most important festivity in the Chinese calendar. It is a time for celebration and preparation for good fortune to come in the new year. Visit Oakland Asian Cultural Center at [www.oacc.cc](http://www.oacc.cc) to learn more about the rich traditions associated with Chinese New Year in 2012, the Year of the Dragon!

**Cinco de Mayo**

Cinco de Mayo is observed each year on May 5, in celebration of Mexican heritage and to commemorate victory in the Battle of Puebla. Learn more about Mexican culture and history by visiting La Pena at [www.lapena.org](http://www.lapena.org).

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**SAVE THE DATE:**

**Mother’ Day**

May 5th

Things to do for Mom!

- Cook Her Breakfast
- Make a Homemade Card
- Watch Her Favorite DVDs
- Write Her A Song or Poem
- Pamper Her

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Oakland Housing Authority

1619 Harrison Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Language translation services are available in 151 languages at all offices at no cost.

Los servicios de traducción en 151 idiomas están disponibles en todas las oficinas sin ningún costo.

Trương chinh thông dịch đầy đủ cho tất cả 151 tiếng nói miễn phí cho quý vị đang có tài nhiều văn phòng gần đây.

所有辦公地點都會免費提供151種的外語翻譯服務。