On November 19, 2016, employees and families of the Community Development Commission (CDC) and Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA) put on their walking shoes and participated in the annual HomeWalk 5K Family Run/Walk to raise money and support ending homelessness. Hosted by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles (UWGLA), the HomeWalk attracts hundreds of participants representing various public, private, and non-profit organizations who march together to remind Los Angeles about the need to address the housing shortage and raise money to help create pathways out of poverty.

In addition to the team members walking or running during the event, HACoLA’s newly created Housing Advisory Unit hosted a booth along with other non-profit and County agencies. The Unit distributed information about the Homeless Incentive Program (HIP), one of HACoLA’s newest efforts to ending homelessness. The HIP encourages landlord acceptance of homeless individuals with a HACoLA voucher in hand and provides incentives for program participation.

The CDC and HACoLA raised a total of $6,349 that will help UWGLA in their efforts to reduce homelessness in Los Angeles; but more importantly were proud to share the message that all Los Angeles County residents deserve safe and stable housing.
Hundreds of Low-Income Families Receive Holiday Gift Baskets

Each year, the CDC and HACoLA enlist the help of local partners, staff, and volunteers to help make the holidays a little merrier for hundreds of Los Angeles County residents.

The Community Resource Center (CRC) in South Whittier was bustling with holiday cheer during its 20th Annual Holiday Basket and Toy Giveaway. Boxes filled with all the trimmings for a holiday meal were distributed to approximately 300 families, along with gifts for over 600 children. More than 75 volunteers from the Los Angeles County Fire Department, Sheriff’s Department–Norwalk Station, Shelter Partnership, the Los Angeles County Departments of Probation and Children and Family Services, California Highway Patrol, local Girl and Boy Scout troops, and various other community groups, dedicated hundreds of hours of their time to bring this wonderful event to life.

Additionally, HACoLA hosted a series of holiday events at its public housing developments, as well as at its administrative offices in the Cities of Alhambra and Palmdale, where over 400 Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program families were treated to food, games, music, and pictures with Santa to keep as a memento. Throughout the events, nearly 1,400 public housing and more than 800 FSS Program youth received holiday gifts, and over 800 public housing families received holiday food baskets. Further, Rick Lozano of KTTV Los Angeles selected 70 HACoLA youth to participate in a shopping spree at Toys R Us.

The agency’s County-wide holiday events were made possible through the generosity of the California Highway Patrol, Lomita Sheriff’s Department, Cottonwood Church, The Basket Brigade, East Los Angeles College Criminal Justice Department, and Target Stores. The CDC and HACoLA were also especially grateful for the outpouring of donations from neighboring businesses located in the City of Alhambra such as 85°C Bakery, Costco, AMC Theaters, Tom’s Toys, Starbucks, First National Book Bank, and many others who graciously donated toys, food, and monetary donations to help give families a holiday to remember.

In total, the CDC and HACoLA distributed gifts to over 2,800 low-income youth throughout Los Angeles County, spreading the holiday spirit!
In October 2016, the CDC completed its community participation process for the County’s 2017-2018 One-Year Action Plan (Action Plan). Beginning with a community meeting in September 2016, the CDC sought feedback from County residents on their economic, housing, and community development needs. As part of the survey distributed at the CDC’s annual community meeting and online, residents were asked to rank eligible activities according to the needs in their neighborhoods. The top five areas of need identified collectively by all of the County Supervisorial Districts were: (1) Anti-Crime Programs, (2) Health Services, (3) Healthcare Facilities, (4) Affordable For-Rent Housing, and (5) Services for the Elderly and Frail Elderly.

The CDC has made a great effort to use the Internet to provide transparency in the community participation process and to keep residents informed and engaged throughout each stage of the development of the Action Plan. A webpage was created last year and has since been further enhanced to provide updates on the survey results, proposed projects to be funded in the Action Plan, public hearing and community meeting notices, accomplishment reporting, and County services available to meet the public’s needs.

Through the community participation process, 1,101 surveys were completed, and 530 residents signed up to be informed of future planning events relative to the Action Plan. The CDC will now share the survey results with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for consideration of future funding. For complete survey results, please visit www.lacdc.org/annualactionplan.

Crystal Beacham, homeless since 2015, and a single mother of two young boys, found herself living at a shelter operated by the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC). Due to funding constraints, the shelter closed in September 2016, leaving Ms. Beacham with few available housing options for her family. While at the shelter, Ms. Beacham learned about the County’s Public Housing Program and its initiative for homeless families.

On September 16, 2016, Ms. Beacham and her two boys received a referral for permanent housing at HACoLA’s South Scattered Sites. Through the collaborative efforts of HACoLA and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), Ms. Beacham was leased into a two-bedroom public housing unit on October 24, 2016.

HACoLA has historically given priority to homeless families, Veterans, and victims of domestic violence seeking placement in public housing. On July 1, 2016, HACoLA’s Public Housing Program implemented a new initiative as an additional means of addressing the area’s homeless crisis. As South Scattered Sites Public Housing units become available, they are now offered to a homeless family first.

Through the Public Housing Program’s homeless initiative, HACoLA continues its mission of “Building Better Lives and Better Neighborhoods.” As in the words of WLCAC Case Worker Nicole Floyd, “It took a village of resources, to provide a stable living environment to the Beacham family.” HACoLA is proud to have been part of that effort.
On October 19, 2016, The Growing Experience (TGE) received the Bronze Eagle Award from the Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission (QPC) in recognition of its Environmental Resource Center. TGE’s Environmental Resource Center is comprised of three initiatives which aim to provide sustainable solutions for environmental challenges currently faced by Los Angeles County, specifically the issues of inaccessibility to local food systems, drought, and food waste reduction.

The first initiative is a water-efficient vertical tower Aquaponics System which sustainably generates large amounts of produce along-side edible fish. The Resource Center also features a community Food Forest, in which drought-tolerant plants with herbal or edible values are cultivated. The effort to develop sustainable communities through the Resource Center comes full-circle with the Food Waste Composting Program which addresses the growing issue of food waste. This portion of the project is in partnership with the City of Long Beach Office of Sustainability which delivers food waste from local restaurants and eateries to be turned into compost onsite at TGE.

The QPC recognized TGE’s multi-faceted approach and commended its emerging technologies in urban agriculture as a demonstration of best practices that can be replicated to create more sustainable communities. The QPC also recognized HACoLA with two additional plaques for its partnership with KIPP LA and its forward thinking solution for maintaining the integrity of its housing assistance programs.

On November 3, 2016, Los Angeles County officials joined in the ribbon cutting celebration for the CDC’s capital improvement project at the CRC to replace existing modular trailers with three new permanent buildings. In less than one year after breaking ground, the $4.2 million expansion project, funded by the office of Fourth District Supervisor Don Knabe, included a multi-purpose room, health clinic, and support spaces.

The new permanent buildings allow for a larger and more functional reception/waiting area with computer workstations for the public to access, a multi-purpose room that can serve as both a classroom and meeting space, staff offices, and redesigned outdoor open space to be utilized for passive activity, programs, and special events. The new medical clinic increased the number of fully functioning exam rooms from one to three and provides a separate waiting area for clinic visitors. The CDC’s Construction Management Unit provided management services and completed the development on time and within budget.

The CRC’s core services include education, health, and programming for youth, seniors, and families. The new spaces significantly improved public amenities and repurposed the space in the existing building to allow for additional onsite service providers and more efficient space in providing services to meet the needs of the residents in unincorporated South Whittier.