Housing Authority Receives 2011 County of Los Angeles Green Leadership Award

“The Green Leadership Program is important because it promotes awareness and responsibility, shares best practices, and inspires others to follow their leadership.”

- Los Angeles County Mayor Michael D. Antonovich

On Tuesday, April 26, 2011, The Growing Experience (TGE) was recognized by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors as part of the Third Annual Green Leadership Awards Program for outstanding community energy conservation and environmental efforts.

The Green Leadership Award is a true affirmation of TGE’s efforts to transform a once abandoned 7-acre parcel of land into its current use as a thriving urban farm and eco-friendly community resource. These efforts have directly benefitted the 700 families that reside at the Carmelitos Public Housing Development, as well as the residents of the surrounding North Long Beach community.

TGE operates a 2.5-acre community garden and 4.5-acre urban farm, which offers residents the opportunity to grow their own food in individual raised plots. There is a gathering space for social interaction and community events throughout the year, including farm dinners, Earth Day Celebration, and a Fall Harvest Festival. There are demonstration areas, and a native and drought-tolerant garden, both of which use no chemical pesticides or synthetic fertilizers. The result is a clean, open, green space, within a community that has little or no access to safe, outdoor space, or recreational opportunities.

Additionally, to combat a growing trend of obesity and diabetes among area residents, TGE introduced a Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in July 2010. The CSA Program gives local residents immediate access to nutritious, locally grown produce.

Participation in the CSA results in a wide variety of nutritious produce being consumed by residents who would normally be prone to fast food options. Nearly 100 families subscribe to the affordable CSA program, which operates year-round and offers a diverse range of seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Finally, through TGE, young adults in the community are able to participate in paid jobs and skills training programs. Participants learn about sustainable agriculture and drought-tolerant landscaping, through hands-on field training and classes. Young adults are provided onsite nutrition education workshops which expose them to new foods and enable them to make smarter food choices.

Sean Rogan, Executive Director of the HACoLA stated, “I am proud to receive this honor and recognition. TGE exemplifies how a government-sponsored project can fulfill innovative strategies to improve environmental sustainability, and provide benefits to the residents of Los Angeles County.”
Design Development Begins for Orange Grove Park

During the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2010-11, design development began on the new $4 million Orange Grove Park located in unincorporated Hacienda Heights. The new park, funded by the Fourth Supervisorial District, will be a natural, passive, recreational site that will beautify the residential neighborhood and provide expanded recreation and education opportunities for neighbors and adjacent school use. The park design reflects specific elements chosen by the community including:

- lawn areas and trees;
- par course areas for low-impact exercise;
- walking and jogging trails;
- picnic areas with shelters;
- a toddler playground area;
- demonstration and seasonal planting; and
- on-site parking.

The park is designed with infiltration areas to manage storm water without extensive re-grading of the topographically sensitive site; the area is historically famous for its citrus groves, and the site is currently bordered by California native plant species. To preserve the natural landscape, seasonally blooming California natives and low rolling landscape berms are a dominant design feature for the new park. The entrance to the new 5.5-acre park will include trellises and a pavement in-laid sun dial which will educate users about seasonal solar changes through interactive features and design.

Katherine Spitz Associates is designing the park which is being managed by the CDC's Construction Management Division from pre-development through construction completion. Construction is anticipated to start Spring 2012, with completion anticipated Spring 2013.

CDBG Program Receives Exemplary Recognition

The CDC’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Division is responsible for monitoring over 100 agencies, which carry out more than 280 economic and community development programs throughout Los Angeles County each year. Administering the largest Urban County CDBG Program in the country is a task that is not taken lightly. The Division’s dedicated staff works diligently to oversee a wide range of quality programs and services. HUD routinely monitors the County to ensure that its programs are properly administered according to CDBG regulations. In April 2011, a local HUD representative visited the CDC to examine the Program and assess its effectiveness.

HUD’s primary purpose was to determine whether CDBG activities were delivered with timeliness, reporting accuracy, eligibility verification, as well as compliance with national objectives, and agreements. Approximately 15 of the County’s CDBG activities were selected for review, including one of the County’s homeless programs, a Sheriff’s youth intervention activity, and a senior meals project.

The County’s CDBG Program was determined to be outstanding, with zero findings and no concerns. Based on the visit, the County’s CDBG Program received an Exemplary Recognition, a remarkable achievement that is unusual for such a large Urban County Program.

The CDBG Division will continue to strive for excellence, knowing that the hard work done today translates to quality programs benefitting the low- and moderate-income residents across the County in the future.
Housing Highlights

Harshfield Terrace

Retirement Housing Foundation (RHF) held a grand opening for Harshfield Terrace on April 20, 2011. The 75-unit senior housing development, located in Quartz Hill, received $1,343,324 in HOME Program funds from the CDC during FY 2009-10 for predevelopment and construction costs. The project consists of a three-story building with 74 one-bedroom units and one two-bedroom manager's unit. The units range in size from 540-800 square feet and are all handicap accessible and adaptable. Harshfield Terrace also includes a multi-purpose room, laundry room, library, as well as an arts and crafts room. All units are leased to age- and income-qualified seniors earning 50% of the Area Median Income, or below. In addition, rents are being subsidized through the HUD Project Rental Assistance Contract.

For over 50 years, RHF has prided itself on serving older adults, and recognizes that senior's needs are continually changing as a result of the aging process. RHF's vision of providing a location for aging in place expanded with this new housing development. Harshfield Terrace will increase senior affordable housing, but more importantly, it will provide seniors with an enhanced quality of life.

Assisted Housing Division Welcomes Back Special Needs Housing Unit

As part of its ongoing efforts to reduce costs and streamline program functions, HACoLA's Assisted Housing Division will be welcoming back the Special Needs Housing Unit beginning July 5, 2011. Special Needs Housing was previously under the CDC's Housing Development and Preservation Division. The move will better align participant needs with staff and program services. The Special Needs Housing Unit administers the following programs:

**Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)**

This program was designed to provide housing assistance and services to low-income persons with AIDS and AIDS-related diseases and their families.

**Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)**

This program was designed to provide rental assistance to homeless veterans and their families in conjunction with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)**

This program was designed to provide rental assistance to homeless veterans and their families in conjunction with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Homeless Housing Choice Voucher Set-Aside Program**

This program helps subsidize housing for homeless individuals, families, and persons with disabilities.

**Shelter Plus Care (S+C)**

This program is designed to connect permanent housing assistance with supportive services for persons with disabilities. It strives to help eligible participants to live independently and attain greater self determination.

The Special Needs Housing team will be reporting to the Contract Maintenance Unit, currently administering the Division's Special Programs Unit (Family Self Sufficiency and Moderate Rehabilitation). The Assisted Housing Division looks forward to providing support for the Unit's continued success.
Other Highlights

On May 19, 2011, after a 5-year hiatus, the Run for the Fun(d) returned to the CDC. Traditionally a CDC-employee sponsored event, this year’s event was hosted by the Community Development Foundation (CDF). The CDF was established in 1997, and has since played the role of a non-profit partner to CDC/HACoLA. The primary purpose of the CDF is to help bridge the financial gap between public funding and the human needs of Public Housing residents and Section 8 participants.

More than 100 CDC employees and public housing youth participated in the event by running, walking, biking, or volunteering. All participants received, and those unable to physically participate could buy, a Run for the Fun(d) t-shirt designed by Gilbert Ortiz, a 15-year old resident of HACoLA’s Sundance Vista Public Housing Community, whose drawing was selected from over 40 youth drawing submissions.

Through the generous support and enthusiasm of CDC employees, the Run for the Fun(d) was able to generate over $6,000 (net) in scholarship funds which will be used to grant scholarships to Public Housing and Section 8 residents attending a university, community college or vocational school in Fall 2011.

Four CDC staffers, Veronica Alvarez, Mercy Cavazos, Lynette Johnson, and Angelina Romero, volunteered to be part of the Scholarship Review Committee, which reviewed over 55 applications from Public Housing and Section 8 residents countywide. On June 22, 2011, thirteen scholarships valued between $750 and $1,000 were awarded to students to attend the following schools in Fall 2011:

- California State University, Dominguez Hills
- East Los Angeles College
- LA Harbor College
- Long Beach City College
- Paine College
- United Education Institute (UEI)
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, Santa Barbara

Through events like the Run for the Fun(d), the CDF will continue to meet its mission of inspiring Public Housing and Section 8 residents by providing positive life-changing opportunities.