Tis the Season for Giving

CDC and Housing Authority Partner with Local Supporters to Ensure Low-Income Families Have an Enjoyable Holiday Season

Throughout the month of December 2013, the Community Development Commission/Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (CDC/HACoLA) helped to ensure that nearly 1,700 low-income families throughout unincorporated Whittier, as well as public housing residents, and Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program participants, had a merry and bright holiday season.

Through a series of holiday events throughout the County, children and their families were treated to holiday festivities that included food, games, music, and pictures with Santa to keep as a memento. The highlight of each event was seeing the children’s faces light up as they received toys donated by our generous sponsors.

With the support of our partners such as Shelter Partnership, the California Highway Patrol, Red Robin, Antigua Bread, Elite Entertainment Company, Rio Hondo College, California Pizza Kitchen, Arcadia Public Works Employees Association, the Los Angeles Lakers, Jarritos, Universal Studios Hollywood, Almost Christmas Prop Shoppe, Sanrio, Gathering Groundz, Heartfelt Foundation, Torres Construction, HACoLA employees, and other private donors, HACoLA collected toys, food, and monetary donations to give families a holiday to remember. Their investments were not limited to tangible donations. Volunteers rolled up their sleeves to help direct guests, wrap and hand out gifts, and even do face painting. In total, HACoLA distributed toys to over 3,100 low-income children throughout Los Angeles County.

Sean Rogan, CDC/HACoLA Executive Director said, “It is through the kindness and hard work of our donors and staff that have shown their support year after year, as well as those who recently joined our mission, that we are able to help as many families as we can, have an enjoyable holiday season.”

While CDC/HACoLA work diligently throughout the year to ensure that families maintain their affordable housing by offering programs that support their goals to attain self-sufficiency, it is through events like the holiday giveaways that we join with members of our extended community to do a little extra to show our commitment to Building Better Lives and Better Neighborhoods.
Every once in a while, new technological innovations come along that set the bar a little higher. SSIR, which stands for Self-Service Interactive Receptionist, is poised to be that innovation for HACoLA. SSIR is revolutionizing client and visitor management for HACoLA’s Assisted Housing (AH) Division.

For a division that is synonymous with heavy lobby traffic, SSIR is the first step to a shift in AH’s customer service organization and delivery. The AH Division provides subsidized rental assistance to over 24,000 families through partnerships with over 10,000 private property owners throughout the Los Angeles County area. The high volume of clientele, coupled with public interest and business associates, created a need for a front lobby operation that ensures optimal efficiency in customer service.

Developed internally, SSIR was designed based on AH’s need to maximize traffic flow, minimize waiting times, and improve its overall customer service. As of December 16, 2013, AH’s clients complete their check-in process through the SSIR system at an iPad station in the lobby, thus eliminating the wait to notify the receptionist of their arrival.

Touch-screen buttons, offered in various languages, navigate visitors through a series of questions directing them to the appropriate staff person to handle their request. SSIR then generates an e-mail message to the employee announcing the client’s arrival and check-in. Visitors can track their wait status on a queue system displayed on monitors throughout the lobby. These improvements eliminate excessive lines, expedite employee responsiveness, and provide clients the peace of mind knowing that their visit will be handled in a reasonable timeframe. HACoLA expects to implement future enhancements that will allow the system to be used agency wide.

The Community Development Commission Receives High Program Recognition from HUD

Annually, the CDC’s Community Development Division-Grants Management Unit (CDD-GMU) works with over 90 agencies, supporting the development and implementation of more than 200 economic and community development projects serving low- and moderate-income residents throughout the Los Angeles Urban County area.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) routinely monitors its participating agencies for Program effectiveness and compliance with Federal requirements. On November 5, 2013, the CDC received notification from HUD that it had completed its review of the 2012 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) for the 2012 Program Year, which summarizes the County’s annual performance for HUD’s formula grant programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME), and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG).

The results of HUD’s review were very complimentary indicating that, “The County continues to be a high performing grantee, and we recognize its many accomplishments.” HUD’s favorable review of the 2012 Program Year CAPER is a testament to the success of CDD-GMU and the good work done by its participating agencies in carrying out CDBG, HOME, and ESG activities.
On December 14, 2013, the CDC helped unveil the newly built Pico Rivera Library. In April 2012, the CDC began the demolition of the existing structure to make way for the new, approximately 16,000 square foot, single-level building. Supervisor Gloria Molina and the City of Pico Rivera provided the $16 million to complete this much anticipated project. The new library, which will be operated by the County of Los Angeles Public Library, is located on Mines Avenue and Rosemead Boulevard and gives community residents more than double the space of the City’s previous circular library and a variety of notable features.

The new library blends the best of contemporary and traditional design elements by featuring an expanded collection of 80,000 books and materials, reading courtyards designated for children and adults, teen space with state-of-the-art technology and cafe seating, two group study areas, 29 public computers for customers of all ages, and community meeting rooms with their own private entrances that can accommodate up to 80 people even after standard business hours.

In addition, many sustainable technologies such as solar panels, expressive double height interior spaces which maximize natural light and views of the surrounding park, and native California landscaping, make the new library an environmentally responsible addition to the community. For its extensive energy efficiency efforts, the new Pico Rivera Library will achieve a LEED Gold Rating or higher.

On December 13, 2013, the CDC joined the Filipino Worker’s Center (PWC) and Little Tokyo Service Center Community Development Corporation to celebrate the grand opening of the Larry Itliong Village, located at the gateway of Historic Filipinotown in the City of Los Angeles. Larry Itliong Village offers 45 units of affordable family housing including nine units set aside for transition age youth and 22 units for homeless individuals. All units are affordable and range from 30%-50% average median income.

The site underwent $1.5 million in brownfield remediation to eliminate soil contaminants. The CDC provided predevelopment and permanent financing of $1.7 million in City of Industry funds to assist with the development of the five-story multi-family complex.

Larry Itliong Village compliments the Filipino architectural elements of the area. Other amenities include two residential community rooms, 3,000 square feet of office space, and a 150 square-foot convenience store located on the ground floor. The lead service provider, PWC, will also arrange for onsite case management and supportive services for residents such as assistance in accessing affordable health care, employment or healthcare related issues or needs, job skills workshops including financial literacy, computer skills trainings, resume building; and a community technology center.
The Growing Experience (TGE) hosted its 4th Annual Fall Harvest Festival on Thursday, November 7, 2013. The event is an annual celebration showcasing the bounty of the season, and an open house for the community to learn about TGE resources. Residents from the Carmelitos public housing development and the surrounding community were invited to enjoy free samples of sustainable products such as tilapia tacos made from fish raised in TGE’s aquaponics system, jam tastings from preserves made at TGE’s new community kitchen, salad greens, fresh fruit, and a healthy cooking demo of squash-tortilla soup from the City of Long Beach’s Healthy Active Living Program. There was also a face-painter, compost demonstration, aquaponics education, farm stand sale of fresh produce, and tours of the urban farm. Over 150 Carmelitos residents, local Head Start students with their families, and neighbors from the community, came to join in the festivities. In addition, a group of Japanese delegates from Long Beach’s sister city, Yokkaichi, who came to a 50-year anniversary Long Beach celebration, heard about the event and made a stop. TGE was honored to be the last stop of their 2-day tour.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) is working to provide healthy snacks to public housing youth participating in HACoLA operated afterschool programs that promote high academic achievement through homework assistance and tutoring. Through a grant from the Ronald McDonald House of Charities of Southern California (RMHCSC), on October 31, 2013, CDF provided spooky snacks at the annual Halloween Haunted House for the residents of the Carmelitos public housing development.

The Healthy Afterschool Snack program operates after each school day, and was initiated after a survey of public housing residents showed that food security was their greatest daily concern. This program ensures that each participating student receives at least one nutritious snack daily. After all, to fuel each student’s mind, their stomachs must be filled with healthy snacks that give them the energy and motivation to excel!