

NAHP Update

Industry Can Lead the Way in DEI

BY JENNIFER JONES

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The COVID-19 virus isn't the only pandemic of 2020. The high-profile deaths of three Black people between February and May—Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd—shined a spotlight on the epidemic of institutional racism that exists in this country. Taylor and Floyd allegedly died at the hands of the police, while Arbery was allegedly shot by armed white men while he was jogging through a residential neighborhood. To date, no one has been found guilty of any crimes in relation to the three deaths. The protests, along with the calls for social justice and changes to policing, that followed have not only sparked national discussions, but have challenged several businesses and organizations to look inward and review their own policies, resulting in creating or updating existing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies.

At NAHMA's October virtual meeting, three members, Noel Gill, executive vice president of Northwest Real Estate Capital Corp.;



Sonya Brown, vice president of property management of National Church Residences; and Gianna Richards, president of Solari Enterprises Inc., discussed Best Practices in Launching Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs in Property Management.

Brown said that within days of Floyd's death, the CEO at National Church Residences (NCR) issued a call to action that included five questions: Are we meeting the moral code we aspire to? Does everyone believe they live and work in a fair and compassionate space?

Are we guilty of implicit bias or discrimination? Are there family members who feel disrespected or diminished? Do any of our family members feel left out, suffering alone without someone to share their burden?

The company also sent out an employee survey that included DEI questions, and held an anti-racism event for the entire staff. Brown said NCR then created 10 focus groups concentrating on Advocacy and Social Justice, Becoming an Ally, Education, Health and Well-Being, Management

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NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners

Training, Organization Policies and Procedures, Partnerships with Minority-Owned Business, Resident Education and Accountability, Self-Awareness and Implicit Bias, and Talent Management Goals. The focus group approach resulted in 30 goals spanning four themes: self-awareness and empowerment, education with curriculum development and training, review of procedures and policies, and advocacy along with promoting and buying from minority businesses.

One of the direct results of NCR's efforts resulted in the creation of an Office of

results with the employees.

"Our industry is uniquely positioned to be a leader in DEI because we provide housing for everybody regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability," Gill said.

He said it was important to make sure your DEI policy links directly to your company's mission values and mission statement.

Northwest Real Estate Capital Corp. (NRECC) was already ahead of the game, in that it had a DEI policy. The problem was it had been sitting on a shelf collecting dust. As a result,

they were the minorities. It was their responsibility to earn the trust of their clients, residents and team members.

After the events of the summer, Solari decided to reach out to third parties that were representative of the communities they serve to make sure they were including everyone.

"We have always had an inclusion statement, but it wasn't until recently we added the diversity and equality aspect," Richards said.

She said training, explaining why DEI is important and how each team member is part of the DEI efforts were import-

"OUR INDUSTRY IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED to be a leader in DEI because we provide housing for everybody regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability," Gill said.

Employment Engagement and two new positions within the office, senior vice president of employee engagement and chief diversity officer, and vice president of employee engagement and leadership development.

The next steps for NCR this year, said Brown, are to evaluate the company's current resources, partnerships, policies, education and communications options; create baselines and measure success; and line up their resources and communications plan. By next year, NCR intends to communicate its new vision, create an action plan and once the new plan is rolled out and executed, share the



NAHMA released its DEI policy statement in October, which can be found on its website by visiting <https://www.nahma.org/about/overview/>.

Gill said, NRECC's first step was to task the human resources manager to review and revise the policy. Then the company published the revised policy internally by incorporating into the employee handbook, training programs, policies/procedures, and externally by adding it to websites, marketing social media, and sharing it with business partners. It is also important that the board of directors lead by example.

Gill said, "It's our responsibility as leaders to set the expectation for all employees. DEI should be a core part of your core values.

He also said it is important to have an annual review of the policy.

Richards said Solari Enterprises, a family business, was founded on doing what is right and going into markets where

ant parts of empowering the employees. Equally important is listening to diverse voices and not being afraid to have uncomfortable conversations.

Like her colleagues, Richards said Solari also added DEI questions to employee and resident surveys, and have created business partnerships with minority-owned businesses. She said, for example, purchasing supplies from a smaller minority-owned business might cost more money and require prior planning compared to ordering from larger businesses that can ship overnight, but it is important to support the local, minority-owned businesses in the community.

Richards also said, "There is always room for improvement." **NU**

Jones is manager of communications and public relations for NAHMA.

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msimmons@communityrealtymanagement.com

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kris Cook, CAE
kris.cook@nahma.org

MANAGER, EDUCATION & TRAINING

Natasha Patterson, ACA
npatterson@nahma.org

DIRECTOR, MEMBERSHIP

Brenda Moser
brenda.moser@nahma.org

EDITOR

Jennifer Jones
jjones@nahma.org

DESIGN

Mary Butler

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Technology Makes Work Easier in a Pandemic World

A worldwide pandemic that just doesn't seem to be going away has forced all of us to change the way we live and work. It introduced social distancing and Zoom meetings into an affordable housing workforce that has always dealt with residents and staff face-to-face while on-site at the properties they managed.

Many have had to find new ways of providing the best services possible while adapting to the changes brought on by a pandemic world. At NAHMA's October meeting, a virtual panel of Affiliate members discussed the newest trends in technology that can help make work easier.

"We can't have in-person meetings anymore. We've all gone to a virtual environment," Scott Nelson, RealPage senior vice president, said.

Nelson said finding a good headset can make the transition to virtual meetings easier. Although he cautioned, "You don't pick up the nuances in people's voices through technology."

He recommended looking for a headset and microphone that is discreet and noise-canceling so it can block the unwanted secondary sounds when working from home or on the go. He said there isn't a need to get a fancy gaming headset. Nelson also recommended simply dialing into the meeting if you are having internet issues.

Many companies, and even government agencies, are more

willing to utilize technology than in the past, including e-signatures. "We've seen previously immovable agencies shift and accept technology," Caroline Caselli, Haven Connect founder, said.

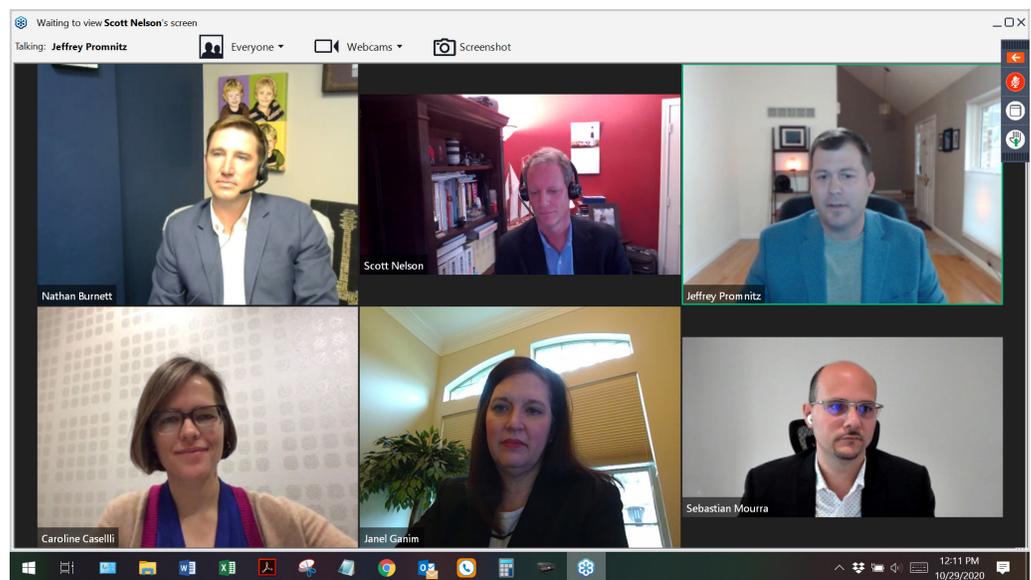
Doing business online makes it easier to maintain social

20 minutes of being received, she said. "Using text messages can help fill vacancies faster," Caselli said. "If you are calling, people don't pick up unknown numbers."

She also recommended making digital document collection easier since many people don't

"Virtual tours allow people to see your community 24/7 and virtual tours generate 49% more qualified leads," he said. "The floor plan page is the No. 1 most visited webpage beyond the home page."

Technology can also help property managers keep an eye



distancing while streamlining income and asset document collection. As there has been a major shift in mobile adoption among the low-income and senior populations, it's never been a better time to go digital. 71% of households who make under \$30,000 have a smartphone; 79% of seniors ages 50-64 have a smartphone; and 91% of seniors 65-plus have a cell phone. Caselli said, "If you can get 71% of applicants to update information for you, that's a major win."

90% of people open text messages within the first three minutes and 99% of text messages are opened within

have printers anymore.

Even leasing offices are embracing technology since on-site tours are restricted or put on hold. Sebastian Mourra, co-founder of Razz Interactive, A ResMan Company, said today's leasing offices are going virtual.

"People are already used to self-serve, on-demand access. You need a website that has an impact," Mourra said. "It makes a difference to have an attractive website."

Mourra said 62% of buyers search online before they make a purchase even at a local business and 57% of people say they won't recommend a business with a poor website.

on their properties when they can't be on-site, said Nathan Burnett, a principal at Watchtower Security.

He said technology has allowed managers to utilize license plate readers to ensure vendors are coming on the property to complete their tasks such as garbage collection or landscaping. Technology can also send out alerts when motion lights are triggered and technical advances can even include restricted area alerts, crowd detection and automatic sign-in notifications.

"Through all this chaos has come game-changing technology," Burnett said. —JJ NU



DATA AND RESEARCH

THAT SUPPORT

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

HUD User is the source for affordable housing research, reports, and data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R). Visit **HUDUser.gov** to explore the various resources available on HUD User, including Income Limits and Fair Market Rents for assisted housing units.

To find out about the latest affordable housing data and research releases from PD&R, subscribe to receive email updates and check out *The Edge*, PD&R's online magazine.



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Be Prepared for Holiday Season

Holiday gift-giving season is just around the corner and who would not want a 2021 National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) Drug-Free Kids Calendar? They make great giveaways for residents and staff. Download the order form and send

sage for the annual calendar contest is always a drug-free theme but the association wanted to open the door for more avenues of expression, so a subtheme is incorporated into the poster contest. The subtheme this year is *My Voice Will Be Heard: Speaking the Language of Love*.

Jamaica Johnson, a

tional Foundation.

Nearly 5,000 eligible children, seniors and residents with special needs participated in the nationwide contest. Each winner of the NAHMA contest receives a \$1,000 educational scholarship from the NAHMA Educational Foundation. All winners are also featured in the 2021 calendar.

Additionally, participants in the annual art contests held by the local Affordable Housing Management Associations (AHMAs) are eligible to be selected as Regional AHMA Art Contest Honorable Mentions. Those selected for this distinction are featured in a special section of the 2021 NAHMA Drug-Free Kids Calendar and receive a \$100 educational scholarship.

For the contest, the artwork is divided into categories with winners selected from each of the following: kindergarten-first grade, second-third grades, fourth-sixth grades, seventh-ninth grades, 10th-12th grades, seniors and residents with special needs. Only students are eligible for the grand prize.

The complete list of winners and a sneak preview of their artwork can be found on the Current Winners webpage under the Awards & Contests tab. **NU**



Grand prize winner Jamaica Johnson's art work.

it in today to have yours in time for the holidays. The calendar cost is \$5.50 each, which is a Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Agriculture allowable project expense. There is a small shipping and handling fee for each calendar.

The calendars feature outstanding original artwork by children, seniors, and adults with special needs living in affordable multifamily housing. The underlying mes-

12th-grader from Pittsburgh, Penn., has been named the grand prizewinner in NAHMA's annual AHMA Drug-Free Kids poster and art contest. The talented artist's creation will appear on the cover of NAHMA's 2021 calendar. Jamaica, 17, also receives an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., for a future NAHMA Biannual Top Issues in Affordable Housing conference, as well as a scholarship of \$2,500 from the NAHMA Educa-

Welcome New Certificants!

NAHP

- » Maria Cruz
The Michaels Organization
Camden, NJ
- » Roger Mendoza
Homespring Residential
San Antonio, TX

NAHP-e

- » Eric Fulmer
Beacon Residential
Management
Pittsburgh, PA
- » Shelley Winter
Beacon Residential
Management
Pittsburgh, PA

NAHMT

- » Chalmus Edwards
Wesley Living
Murray, KY
- » Jeff Seymour
Park Properties
Management Company
Charlottesville, VA

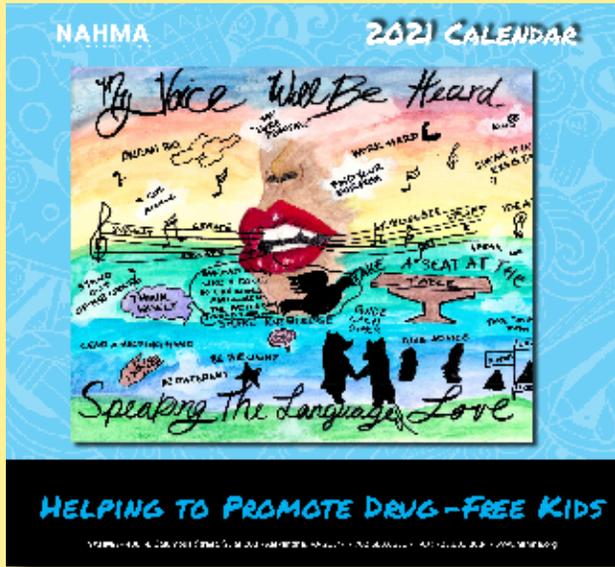
*Awarded in August and September 2020

Earn one of NAHMA's prestigious professional credentials, which are dedicated solely to recognizing and promoting achievement of the highest possible professional standards in affordable housing management. Programs include:

- National Affordable Housing Professional (NAHP™)
- National Affordable Housing Professional-Executive (NAHP-e™)
- Specialist in Housing Credit Management™ (SHCM™)
- Certified Professional of Occupancy™ (CPO™)
- Blended Compliance Designation (BCD)
- Fair Housing Compliance™ (FHC™)
- National Affordable Housing Maintenance Technician (NAHMT™)
- National Affordable Housing Maintenance Supervisor (NAHMS™)
- Credential for Green Property Management

For more information, go to www.nahma.org and click on Education.

2021 NAHMA DRUG-FREE KIDS CALENDAR



ORDER YOURS TODAY!

The winners have been chosen!
The cover art selected!

It's time to order your 2021 NAHMA Drug-Free Kids Calendars—at the same affordable price as last year!
Just \$5.50 each! The \$5.50 calendar cost is a Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Agriculture allowable project expense.

Also, place your order by Nov. 13, 2020, and enter the NAHMA Lucky Draw for free prizes!

NAHMA Lucky Draw Prizes!

- 3 Free NAHMA Meeting Registrations (Value: \$430-\$655 each)
- 5 copies of A Practical Guide to Tax Credit Management (Value: \$30 each)
- 5 copies of the Understanding Insurance and Risk Management book (Value: \$35 each)
- 5 American Express Gift Cards (Value: \$100 each)

Drawing will be held on Dec. 11, 2020

Calendars make great holiday gifts for your properties, community event giveaways and colleagues. This year's theme, "My Voice Will Be Heard: Speaking the Language of Love" is illustrated through the unique poster art created by children, seniors and adults with special needs living in affordable housing. Support the drug-free message today. Send in the order form at right without delay. Or, download order form through the Online Store at www.nahma.org.

2021 NAHMA DRUG-FREE KIDS CALENDAR ORDER FORM

Order by Nov. 13, 2020, and enter the NAHMA Lucky Draw!

YES, I would like to order 2021 Drug-Free Kids Calendars and show my ongoing support of drug-free and safe community housing. If I order by Nov. 13, 2020, I will be entered into the NAHMA Lucky Draw for the prizes listed.

***Please print clearly. All fields required. Incomplete forms will not be processed.**

Name: _____

Apt. Complex: _____

Shipping Address (no P.O. Boxes): _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Management Company: _____

Name of AHMA: _____

Number of Calendars: _____ X \$5.50 (in Virginia add 6% sales tax)**

* Shipping & Handling Extra: 1-10 calendars ordered, shipping & handling is \$2 per calendar; 11 to 49 calendars, \$1 per calendar; 50 to 99 calendars, flat rate of \$30; 100 or more calendars, flat rate of \$50.

** The \$5.50 calendar cost is a Dept. of Housing & Urban Development and Dept. of Agriculture allowable project expense.

TOTAL: \$ _____ . _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION (Orders For Less Than 100 Must Be Prepaid)

Please check one:

Check or Money Order Enclosed (Made payable to NAHMA)

VISA Master Card American Express

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Name on Card: _____

Authorization Signature: _____

Mail To:

NAHMA Calendar Order
400 North Columbus St.
Suite 203
Alexandria, VA 22314

Or

Download Order Form:

www.nahma.org
in the NAHMA Online Store
Or Fax: 703-683-8634
Allow 3-4 weeks for delivery
of calendar