

NAHP Update

Setting a High Bar

BY JENNIFER JONES

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Activities Bring Neighbors Together
- 5 The Benefits of Outsourcing Building Services
- 6 NAHP Profile
Peggy Chavez: Self-Described Nerd Loves Solving the Compliance Puzzle

NAHMA has recognized more than 1,500 properties as Communities of Quality (COQ). Is your property on the list?

The COQ National Recognition Program uses a series of third-party inspections and reporting to certify the communities are meeting stringent standards in physical maintenance, financial management, programs and services, employee credentials and other criteria. Even then, only the best of the best quality get to call themselves a COQ property. To see if your property qualifies to be called one of the best, visit the COQ webpage under the Awards & Contests tab at nahma.org.

The program, originally funded through a Fannie Mae Foundation grant, sets national standards that take an objective look at what makes an excellent multi-family affordable housing community using such independent, verifiable measuring sticks as Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) scores,



2016 COQ Award winner, Bridgeway Apartments in Picayune, Miss.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reports, third-party inspections, employee development and resident enrichment services.

Earning the COQ recognition has many benefits, not just to the management company responsible for the

property, but for the staff and residents as well, including a subscription to *NAHMA News*, use of the COQ logo for promotional purposes and inclusion on the NAHMA COQ online directory. Properties that score more than 325 points become eligible for the COQ Awards. The



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



ABOVE: 2016 COQ Award winner, EME Apartments, Conway, S.C.

RIGHT: 2015 COQ Award winner, Village Lakeview Apartments, Edgewood, Md.

program also helps dispel the myths surrounding affordable housing for elected officials and the general public.

And while not the primary purpose of the program, the COQ designation can be a great marketing tool. It allows the management company to show how much they care about maintaining high standards, and by extension, how they will care for a client's property. It highlights the hard work put in by the on-site personnel and volunteer boards while projecting professionalism. The COQ certification also helps attract top-notch staff and creates bragging rights.

Another benefit of the recognition program, and one of the impetuses for its creation, is to establish credibility, especially when lobbying elected officials on the importance of fund-

ing affordable housing programs. By assigning verifiable quantitative value to what makes up a quality community, NAHMA can provide affordable housing data by state, county, congressional district and ZIP code through the NAHMA Maps feature on its website. Additionally, NAHMA maintains a database of COQ properties on its website.

Property managers or owners of affordable multifamily rental housing in the U.S. can apply for COQ national recognition at any time during the year. Applicants' properties receive scores for physical inspections, employee credentials, financial management, programs and services, endorsements and photographs and reports. Applicants must score a minimum of 225 points to receive COQ certification or 200 points for

properties with 49 units or less. Properties that score more than 325 points are automatically eligible to compete in NAHMA's Communities of Quality Awards competition. Properties interested in entering the COQ Awards competition must qualify for the national recognition program by Sept. 8. Application for the awards are due Nov. 3.

Additionally, through the COQ Corporate Partners designation, NAHMA recognizes the management companies that are committed to upholding the COQ standards by having at least 50 percent of their property portfolios accepted into the national recognition program.

To date, there are 21 companies that qualify as COQ Corporate Partners including three—Housing Management Resources Inc., PRD Management and Wesley Housing Corporation



A directory for COQ properties is available on NAHMA's website at www.nahma.org. Click on Awards and Contests and then scroll the Communities of Quality dropdown tab.

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of Memphis Inc.—that have achieved COQ recognition status for 100 percent of their portfolios.

As a new benefit for the Corporate Partners, NAHMA is implementing digital smart badges for its COQ Corporate Partners and their corresponding COQ nationally recognized properties.

The badges are images created by HTML code to be incorporated into a company's or community's website. If a visitor clicks on the

badge, a verification webpage pops up ensuring NAHMA has certified the property or company as a COQ Corporate Partner. If for any reason, the COQ designation is rescinded by NAHMA or allowed to lapse by the company or property, the association can invalidate the smart badge. The association is working with Yoshki Ltd., an online brand protection and image management company, to implement and maintain the smart badge program.

“The smart badges are a way to promote COQ success stories and promote the achievement of our COQ Corporate Partners,” Kris Cook, CAE, NAHMA executive director, said. “The badges can't be copied and have to be verified by us, so people can be sure the company is adhering to the strict standards set by the COQ program.”

To implement the smart badge, each corporate partner receives the unique code to paste onto its website. As an added bonus, a separate code for each of the company's COQ properties' websites is also included. When a visitor to the site clicks on the smart badge, a verification certificate will display on the screen.

The smart badges are a way to increase the trust factor of certified COQ participants' websites since the badges prevent unauthorized use of the COQ logo. Additionally, the badges are technology responsive, so they can be viewed regardless of what digital device is used to access the website. **NU**

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Activities Bring Neighbors Together

As the weather gets warmer and schools dismiss for the summer, grills get fired up, glue and construction paper take over tables, and children and adults break out their swimsuits. Resident-focused activities help create a sense of community and provide an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other.

Events such as cookouts, arts and crafts, pool parties, bingo or movie nights are just a few examples of ways to bring residents of all ages together.

“We have hot dogs and hamburgers, and games for the kids to play,” said Reba Brantley, manager of Oak Creek Apartments in Poca-hontas, Ark. “We get the families involved by having them bring a side dish.”

Brandi Hawkins, man-

Hawkins said.

“A few months ago, we held a ’50s day. We asked residents to bring something to the party that they may have had in the ’50s and the residents were also encouraged to dress up. We served ice cream sundaes and Coke floats,” Hawkins said. “We played a ’50s music-themed bingo game and gave away prizes from the items the residents brought. My property is small, with only 50 units. We had a total of 35 residents who were able to attend, bring items and dress up.”

Brantley said events do not have to be elaborate affairs to be effective. Oak Creek residents sometimes initiate the get-togethers themselves by asking staff if they can have cookouts or by teaming up with a local church to hold an activity on-site.



by using donations and by partnering with civic and church groups. Events are typically planned by herself and the service coordinator, and can take anywhere from

outside event. And if you are providing food, always have a little extra in case more residents show up than you expected.”

Having resident events helps bring everyone together as a community. “You get to see who your neighbors are. The residents get out and meet someone they may not have gotten to know otherwise,” Brantley said. “The residents are also more likely to get involved in the overall community when they get to know their neighbors.”

Hawkins said offering events allows residents to enjoy something different with others that live on the property. When deciding what kind of activity, she recommends, “be creative and listen to your residents.” **NU**

“YOU ALWAYS PLAN THOROUGHLY, but always have a Plan B and C. You have to worry about the weather if it is an outside event. And if you are providing food, always have a little extra in case more residents show up than you expected.”

ager at Wesley Apartments Lake County in Tiptonville, Tenn., said her property offers arts and crafts, bingo, cookouts, Wii games, monthly outings including shopping trips, “decade” days, themed events and Senior Olympics.

“The Senior Olympics, cookouts, monthly outings and decade days are the biggest events at our property,”

“We just put up flyers on everyone’s door,” Brantley said. “Residents come out and have fun.”

If your property plans to hold a movie night, make sure you follow all copyright laws and obtain the proper licenses or permits to avoid fines for infringement.

Hawkins said her property helps keep costs down

a few days to a few weeks of planning. “For the Senior Olympics, we start planning for that a month or so in advance,” she said.

Despite all the careful planning, not everything goes smoothly. “You always plan thoroughly, but always have a Plan B and C,” said Hawkins. “You have to worry about the weather if it is an

Welcome New Certificants!

NAHP

- » Katherine Boyer
DHSC
Camden, N.J.
- » Monique Dell
WinnResidential
Fresno, Calif.
- » Kelle Heathcott
Wesley Housing Corp.
of Memphis
Dyersburg, Tenn.
- » Cindy Morris
WinnResidential
Clovis, Calif.
- » Vicky Muchesko
Oak Park Senior Villas
Fresno, Calif.
- » Amber Nelson
WinnResidential
Clovis, Calif.

NAHP-e

- » Peggy Chavez
ComCap Management Inc.
Centennial, Colo.
- » James Norvell Gooden Sr.
United Management &
Development Association
Inc.
Clarksdale, Miss.

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™)
- Advanced Issues in HUD Occupancy™ (ACPO™)
- 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.

The Benefits of Outsourcing Building Services

One of the biggest responsibilities a property or facility manager has is maintaining their property's cleanliness, safety and keeping residents and guests happy. Outsourcing janitorial, maintenance, concierge and security staffing can enable a property manager to excel in this area while also gaining a competitive advantage over other buildings. Read on for a few examples of how you can save time and resources by outsourcing.

REDUCED COST

Retaining employees to provide cleaning, maintenance, concierge and security services means not only paying those employees, but also additional costs like their insurance, 401(k), payroll tax and paid leave time. There's also the secondary expenses of equipment, supplies and training to consider. When a vendor is contracted to provide these services instead, the vendor takes on all those costs, freeing up money in your budget to be applied elsewhere.

SAFETY

Cleaning, maintaining and protecting commercial or residential common areas can



be more dangerous than one might think. When someone is on a ladder cleaning hard to reach places, or working with high-powered equipment to buff a floor, a property manager needs to be confident that person can be trusted to complete a job safely without supervision. Staffing companies train their employees on effectively and safely cleaning and maintaining the areas they are hired to take care of.

SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE

Employees of organizations like Planned Companies don't just get hired and instantly delegated to their job placements. They're trained experts at managing the appearance of buildings of all sizes. Successful, modern janitorial, maintenance, concierge and security staffing companies make sure to stay at the forefront of all the latest technologies and methods

in the industry, and ensure that staff is confident in using those innovations to give clients the best outcome possible.

Outsourcing to a specialized janitorial, maintenance, concierge and security staffing company helps relieve some of the stress that comes with managing a property. From typical HR management to reliable staff, an outsourced company like Planned Companies can provide the right solution to any janitorial, maintenance, concierge or security need. Give us a call today to see how we can help you maintain your property better and easier. Contact us at 866-745-7023 or info@plannedcompanies.com. **NU**

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Self-Described Nerd Loves Solving the Compliance Puzzle

NAME: Peggy Chavez, SHCM, NAHP-e, ACPO, AHM, HCM-HF

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: ComCap Management Inc.

POSITION: Compliance Director

Peggy Chavez's stepson was in his 30s with three children when he was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. Watching him navigate the world while struggling with a disease that causes the wasting and weakening of the muscles, helped affirm her choice of career in the affordable housing industry. It also provides a perspective that cannot be taught.

"I understand the need for housing for the disabled," she said. "You don't think about

stairs, doorways and curbs until you have someone who needs to navigate those obstacles."

Since joining ComCap Management Inc., located in Centennial, Colo., two years ago as the compliance director, Chavez has been responsible for meeting regulatory compliance requirements for all of the company's 20 properties, totaling 3,000 units.

Even though Chavez has only been with ComCap since 2015, she has more than 20 years' experience in the affordable housing field.

"I love our mission, we all have the same heart," she said.

Chavez did not start out in affordable housing. While briefly living in Arizona, she was a real estate broker. She moved back to Colorado

where she became the manager of an affordable housing property owned by the local housing authority in 1991.

She left the affordable housing industry for five years and instead worked with conventional and commercial properties. "I didn't like it. It wasn't for me," Chavez said. "Affordable is something I believe in and have a passion for it. The best decision I ever made was accepting this job."

Chavez, a self-described nerd, likes working in compliance. She said managing the compliance regulations for properties that have multiple funding sources is like solving a puzzle. "It's stimulating to me," she said. "Keeping the entire team fully trained, I really enjoy it. I don't find it

challenging so much as interesting."

She is just as passionate about her participation with Rocky AHMA where she has served as treasurer for the past year.

"I love this mission for education. The trainings are so good," she said. "You know how you can go to a training and feel like you haven't learned anything? That is not the case here. Even after all these years, I still come away learning something new."

In her spare time, Chavez spends time with her four children and eight grandchildren and dreaming of warmer weather.

"My goal is to be able to spend winter somewhere warm. I love summer in Colorado. It's gorgeous in the summer, but I hate the snow," she said. **NU**

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGERS AND OWNERS

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