

NAHP Update

Taking Steps to Create More Inclusive Communities

BY JENNIFER JONES

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Northwest Real Estate Capital Corp. (NRECC), in 2009, explored whether the company was doing enough to be inclusive when it came to their communications.

"We were dealing with a lot of immigrant populations," Noel Gill, executive vice president of NRECC, said at the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Forum during NAHMA's October meeting. "It was put on a shelf until our HR [human resources] manager pulled it out in 2016. Then, we were really focused on women and minorities. In 2018, we hired a new HR manager, who expanded the DEI policy and wove it through our policies and practices."

Gill said one of the examples of inclusion NRECC adopted due to its new focus on DEI was looking for ways to hire previously incarcerated people. He also said the company recently filled a position at one of their communities with someone who speaks Korean because the residents at the property are primarily Korean.

"Because we aligned our



culture with DEI ... we began looking at our board of directors all the way down to our site teams," Gill said. "Now, we're looking at salary ranges within the market and within the company to make sure everyone is paid fairly. We have to lead by example from the top down."

DEI issues are not new in the affordable housing indus-

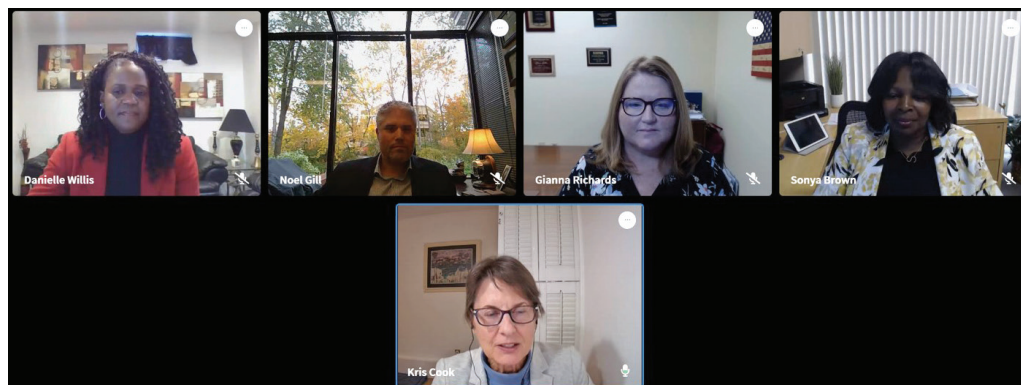
try, and companies have long strived to ensure they were welcoming to a diverse range of people that make up their communities and workforce.

The tragic events in 2020 that resulted in national protests seeking social reform and justice for Black Americans led everyone to take a harder look at what they are doing within

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



their own companies and communities to be inclusive. For many, they realized there was always more they could do.

“Our DEI statement had been in place for a long time, but like everyone else, it was put on a shelf. We knew it was there,” Gianna Richards, president of Solari Enterprises Inc., said. “After [recent events], we pulled it back out and made some real changes.”

Richards said that initially, there was some resistance within the company to making DEI changes. Not because people were necessarily against DEI, it was more about perception.

“I put out a statement saying that DEI was not political. It’s about humanity,” she said. “It has taken effort to get reluctant team members on board. The last few who haven’t embraced it are standing on a political platform. We started with inclusion efforts instead of diversity because diversity was politicized.”

Richards said they even broke ties with a vendor that did not share Solari’s commitment to DEI.

“We have asked vendors to have a statement on DEI, just like we do,” she said. “We need to be aligned with the

FROM TOP LEFT: Danielle Willis, senior vice president of employee engagement & chief diversity officer of National Church Residence, Noel Gill, executive vice president of Northwest Real Estate Capital Corp., Gianna Richards, president of Solari Enterprises Inc., Sonya Brown, vice president of property management of National Church Residence and Kris Cook, executive director of NAHMA, discuss DEI issues during the NAHMA October meeting.

employees their birthday off. We thought it was a great perk,” she said. “Then we realized, not everyone celebrates their birthday for religious reasons. So, they may not have been taking it off.”

The company has also been looking at its holiday calendar. Instead of a set of company-

partners that are aligned in DEI as we are.”

DEI changes can be big or small.

In the past, Solari’s Acts of Kindness program has benefited the Boys & Girls Club. Now, the company has extended it to include LGBTQ organizations.

“We’ve always given our

wide days off, it is reviewing the possibility of offering employees two to four nonspecific days off of their choice.

At National Church Residences (NCR), the company created its own task force and the effort was met with so much enthusiasm that it generated 30 recommendations.

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THE TRAGIC EVENTS IN 2020 that resulted in national protests seeking social reform and justice for Black Americans led everyone to take a harder look at what they are doing within their own companies and communities to be inclusive. For many, they realized there was always more they could do.

Richards said Solari originally created a task force appointed by company leadership instead of seeking volunteers. That’s when it became clear that not everyone was interested in DEI. Six months later, she put out a call for volunteers to serve on the task force. She said at that point, the task force flourished.

“We wanted to make sure their voices were heard, but we couldn’t implement 30 recommendations. We had to figure out how to balance that,” said Danielle Willis, NCR’s senior vice president of employee engagement & chief diversity officer. “We had leaders that helped focus the

be looking at engagement levels of staff and to broaden the diversity of its leadership staff. It also created Willis’ position to draft a strategy and develop the matrix to determine if it is meeting its DEI goals.

“DEI isn’t just the anti-racism task force, but to make everyone touched by NCR

year to review the organization’s current protocols and recommend a DEI Policy and any other changes to ensure it was recruiting a diverse membership and treating everyone fairly and with the respect they deserve equals.

The task force set to work, and by October 2020,

“PEOPLE TRULY HAD GREAT IDEAS, but none of us are DEI professionals. We had to pause and connect with organizations that have been doing this to see how to take the ideas and actually move it forward.”

recommendations and manage the expectations.”

Sonya Brown, vice president of property management at NCR, said, “People truly had great ideas, but none of us are DEI professionals. We had to pause and connect with organizations that have been doing this to see how to take the ideas and actually move it forward.”

NCR drafted a Preferred Employee Experience, and will

feel included,” said Willis.

One of the ways NCR convinced employees to embrace the DEI efforts was to include stories from staff of their experiences with racism or exclusion in a weekly newsletter.

“It was no longer a stranger. It’s now a co-worker,” Willis said. “It was someone you know.”

NAHMA also created a Board DEI Task Force last

NAHMA announced the adoption of the [NAHMA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Statement](#), which is located on the Overview webpage under the About Us tab at [nahma.org](#).

Additionally, a special session, Best Practices in Launching Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program in Property Management, was featured as part of the October 2020 meeting. The association is committed to having a DEI session at least once a year at one of its annual meetings.

Moreover, the annual NAHMA Drug-Free Kids Calendar will include a QR code that will take a user to a webpage that contains a more inclusive list of cultural and religious holidays beginning with the 2023 calendar.

“It begins with small steps,” Gill said. “It takes time to implement change.” **NU**

Jennifer Jones is director of communications and public relations for NAHMA.

Welcome New Certificants!

NAHP

- >> Jessica M. Barbieri
Diocesan Housing
Services—Diocese of
Camden
Camden, NJ
- >> Erin L. Blais
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Awarded July–September 2021

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.

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



REAC Making Plans For Return to Normal

Due to the pandemic, the Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) limited inspections to emergency cases only. As a result, REAC is experiencing a backlog of properties while trying to get back to normal operations. The recent surge of the Delta variant also slowed down REAC's plans. As a result, REAC is implementing a phased approach to expanding inspection operations.

The first phase features high-priority properties. Phase two, which is expected to be launched in January 2022, will include inspections across the remainder of the public housing and

inspectors. It includes instructions for inspectors to follow when the inspections resume covering the pre-, day of, and post-inspection protocols, travel logistics, use of personal protective equipment and developing a remote visual inspection capability for Uniform Physical Condition Standard (UPCS)-R inspections.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires contractors to wear face masks and gloves and use hand sanitizer while conducting an inspection. HUD will determine if an inspection should be canceled based on the local restrictions or an increase of COVID cases at the proper-



[HTTPS://ELECTROSAWHQ.COM](https://electrosawhq.com)

concerns, including up until the day of the inspection. HUD reports that TAC has consistently had a customer

COVID, and restarted inspections in October.

REAC hopes to complete inspections of all the 4,500 NSPIRE demonstration properties by early 2023 and use the information gathered to create formal standards, populate a proposed scoring model and refine business processes and information technology. The intent is to extend the NSPIRE demonstration through April 2023 to refine the program's elements, including standards, self-inspection processes, and resident engagement.

The plan calls for the NSPIRE Standards Notice to be published in the *Federal Register* in early 2022 to provide an opportunity for comments. After which, the NSPIRE Scoring Notice would be published in the *Federal Register*, followed by the final rule's publication. —JJ NU

PHASE TWO, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE LAUNCHED in January 2022, will include inspections across the remainder of the public housing and multifamily portfolios. Due to these delays, REAC expects to have every property inspected by calendar year 2023.

multifamily portfolios. Due to these delays, REAC expects to have every property inspected by calendar year 2023.

REAC is also facing a shortage of inspectors that has slowed the progress toward normal operations.

Because of the lingering pandemic, REAC has created a COVID inspection protocol, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for all federal and contract

ty. Also, due to the ongoing pandemic, the inspection notification process has been expanded to include a 28-day notice. There is an option to opt-out of unit inspections. HUD is handling every property on a case-by-case basis. It reports that there have been 51 cancellations out of 4,100 inspections as of the middle of October.

Property owners and agents are encouraged to contact the Technical Assistance Center (TAC) with any questions or

service satisfaction rating greater than 93% for the last five years, and annually resolves more than 150,000 service requests. TAC has seen an increase of calls from 32 to 524 between June-September, attributing this to the increasing number of inspections.

As for the National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) demonstration, REAC had conducted field activities at 81 sites before

Show Residents Some Appreciation With a 2022 NAHMA Calendar

Did you know 2022 National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) Drug-Free Kids Calendars make great giveaways for your residents and staff? Order forms have already started rolling in, and the calendars sell out every year. So, now is the perfect time to purchase one—or more—by downloading the [order form](#) and sending it in today.

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 message for the annual calendar



11th-grader from Miami, Fla., has been named the grand prizewinner in NAHMA's annual AHMA Drug-Free Kids poster and art contest. The talented artist's creation

Typically, the contest draws hundreds of participants nationwide. Each winner of the NAHMA contest receives a \$1,000 educational scholarship from the NAHMA

tions. Those chosen for this distinction are featured in a special section of the 2022 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 grade, fourth-sixth grade, seventh-ninth grade, and 10th-12th grade, and finally, 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**

NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME TO PURCHASE one—or more—by downloading the [order form](#) and sending it in today. 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.

contest is always a drug-free theme. Still, 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 *With Responsibility Comes Reward: Holding Ourselves Accountable*.

Angie Montero, an

will appear on the cover of NAHMA's 2022 calendar. Angie, 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 Educational Foundation.

Educational Foundation. All winners are also featured in the 2022 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 Men-

2022 NAHMA Drug-Free Kids Calendar



Order Yours Today!

The winners have been chosen!
The cover art selected!

It's time to order your 2022 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. 12, 2021, 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. 10, 2021

Calendars make great holiday gifts for your properties, community event giveaways and colleagues. This year's theme, "With Responsibility Comes Reward: Holding Ourselves Accountable" 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.

2022 NAHMA Drug-Free Kids

Calendar Order Form

Order by Nov. 12, 2021, and enter the NAHMA Lucky Draw!

☐ **YES**, I would like to order 2022 Drug-Free Kids Calendars and show my ongoing support of drug-free and safe community housing. If I order by Nov. 12, 2021, 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**** (+ 6% sales tax if in Virginia) = \$ _____

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

Shipping & Handling Fee:

1-10 calendars ordered, shipping and handling \$2 per calendar = \$ _____

11-49 calendars ordered, shipping and handling \$1 per calendar = \$ _____

50-99 calendars ordered, flat rate of \$30 = \$ _____

100 calendars or more, flat rate of \$50 = \$ _____

Total Order (Number of Calendars Total + S&H Fee 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