GOING FARThER TOGETHER

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

AFRICAN PROVERB
There’s an old African proverb we’ve been thinking about lately:

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

RCHA has always worked through partnerships, but in the past two years, this approach has grown especially sweet fruit. For example, in the case of the Healthy Home program, a group of local agencies fashioned a joint approach to providing home-based care coordination services for seniors to help them age-in-place. Now, we are ready to greatly expand the model.

To address homelessness, RCHA led a group of more than 15 local agencies and churches to implement a “Housing First” strategy in our county. We now have a coordinated intake and referral system and have conducted a volunteer-led count of our homeless residents in order to prioritize their needs. RCHA also partnered with the Buckhannon Housing Authority to take on their voucher program when a reduction in federal support made it no longer manageable. That saved more than 75 vouchers for use by local low-income households.

Working together is the key to addressing housing and community development problems in our region. But in order to solve the most complex problems, we must continue to create new, innovative collaborative solutions that bring our resources together more effectively.

We want to close on a note of gratitude for the many people and partners that work with RCHA, by sharing a Thank you card we received from the White family. It is a testament to the program’s value and success.

And, well, we’d also like to thank the White family. They took a leap of faith in a new program and paved the way for the hundreds of first-time homebuyers that came after them.

We hope you enjoy this review of 2015, and we look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Karen Jacobson
Executive Director

Clif Schoonover
Board Chair
RCHA LAUNCHED the Wellness Collaborative in 2013 to create a service-enriched housing model for our growing elderly population. Collaborative members now include Davis Health System, Randolph County Senior Center, Randolph-Elkins Health Department and Cortland Housing Association.

The Collaborative first launched the Healthy Home program—a free, care coordination initiative—at the First Ward School Apartments in Elkins. Its focus is to enable seniors to age safely in their homes, experience improved health, and avoid costly medical and institutional care. Today, it has expanded to serve seniors at the Elkins Housing Authority’s Gateway Apartments, and to Pineview and The Pines, both part of Cortland Housing in Thomas.

Early data indicate success, with a sharp decrease in emergency room visits by participants and positive results on a wide range of goals for health and wellbeing. To date, more than 30 participants have been served by the program, and expansion to 200+ residents is in the works.
IN 2015, RCHA celebrated 20 years of sponsoring YouthBuild North Central WV, which helps motivated young people earn their high school equivalency certificate, learn marketable job skills, and develop important leadership skills.

YouthBuild teaches participants how to build affordable housing. In 2014, the YouthBuild crew completely renovated a vacant four-unit building in Elkins. In 2015, the crew began construction on a new apartment building in Valley Bend for low-income residents.

Also in 2014, YouthBuild North Central started a healthcare training program in partnership with a local hospital, senior center, nursing home and several home care companies. Participants earn their MEDPrep Certificate and Home Health Care Aide Certificate, which help graduates get a job in the fast-growing healthcare field.

The YouthBuilders also serve as AmeriCorps members and provide significant contributions to community projects during the 10-month program. In 2015, the range of local groups and projects included the Belington Revitalization Committee, the Randolph County Humane Society, Catholic Charities and Davis Memorial Hospital.

Check out YouthBuild North Central’s new website at www.youthbuildncwv.org
RCHA CAN HELP local renters purchase a home through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Homeownership program. Since 2007, 17 HCV participants have become first-time homebuyers by putting a portion of their rental assistance toward a mortgage. For participants with jobs, the HCV assistance is a stepping stone toward financial sustainability. For elderly and/or disabled residents on a fixed income, the housing stability that comes with ownership is very valuable to them, their families and the community.

RHCA also operates a Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program for HCV participants. In 2014-15, 25 participants worked to increase their income, move off of assistance, and meet their employment goals. When they do, they can earn an incentive payment that equals what RCHA would have paid in rental assistance if their income hadn’t increased.

The HCV program has been operated by RCHA since 1985, and now helps renters across six counties from I-79 to the Virginia border. The program helps nearly 1,000 households each year (as well as the local housing market) through payment of $2.5 million in housing assistance to 275 landlords.

In 2015, the program helped:
- 166 residents over the age 62
- 545 disabled people
- 594 children under 18

Helped 828 households pay their rent—337 with children.

Provided affordable housing to 1,722 people.
RCHA and its nonprofit partner Highland Community Builders (HCB) manage more than 100 affordable and market-rate properties in Elkins, Mill Creek, Belington, Philippi, and Davis. RCHA & HCB properties are newly constructed or renovated buildings that offer clean, safe, energy-efficient apartments. The Occupancy Rate for RCHA & HCB-managed units is typically 95% or higher. Units under our management have more than doubled over the last five years and are projected to grow 7-10% each year through 2018.

Midland Apartments, completed by Woodlands Development Group in 2015, managed by HCB.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In 2014, the historic Delmonte Hotel came to life with the opening of Tammy’s Delmonte Market. By the end of 2015, the market was selling the goods of 24 different vendors, primarily local artists and WV-based entrepreneurs. In 2015, RCHA was awarded a $376,000 federal Rural Community Development Initiative grant to provide technical assistance to nonprofits that are working to revitalize our local economy. This grant will support the efforts of Woodlands Development Group, Woodlands Community Lenders, the HomeOwnership Center, Highland Community Builders, Historic Beverly Preservation, New Historic Thomas and Elkins Main Street.

Ribbon cutting for The Delmonte Market—a historic property renovated and repurposed by RCHA and its partners.
2014-2015 FUNDERS

- US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development
- US Dept. of Labor—YouthBuild North Central WV
- WV Housing Development Fund
- NeighborWorks America
- USDA-Rural Development (RBEG & RCDI)
- YouthBuild USA—AmeriCorps
- WV Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- WV Health Care Authority
- WV State Historic Preservation Office
- WV Partnership for Elder Living
- Randolph County Commission
- Community Affordable Housing Equity Corporation (CAHEC)

2015 PARTNERS

- Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation (in partnership with Highland Community Builders)
- Davis Memorial Hospital
- Federation of Appalachian Housing (FAHE)
- Randolph County Senior Center
- Randolph-Elkins Health Department
- Cortland Housing Association
- Elkins Housing Authority
- WV Coalition to End Homelessness
- Randolph County Coalition to End Homelessness
- Catholic Charities
- Randolph County Humane Society
- North Central WV Community Action Agency’s Homeless Shelter
- CommunityWorks in WV
- HomeOwnership Center
- Woodlands Development Group

RCHA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

- Clif Schoonover, Chair
- Raymond Godwin, Vice-Chair
- Ed Coberly, retired 2015
- Dottie Arbogast
- Lori Chenoweth
- Kristie Vandevander, joined 2016
- Karen Jacobson, Executive Director
- Mindi Broschart, Chief Financial Officer
- Jay Judy, Development Manager
- Lisa Shaffer, HCV Manager
- Michelle Phares, YouthBuild Manager
- Maggie Nelson, Property Manager