

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT

SUCCESS STORIES

PITTSBURGH FIELD OFFICE

FEBRUARY 15, 2010

ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA

1. **Norberto Rodriguez**, a Housing Authority of the City of Erie (HACE) resident, was unemployed for six months before American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds created an employment opportunity with A.A. Samuels Sheet Metal Co. Norberto's new employer is one of several contracting firms that have hired HACE residents to improve the energy efficiency of Housing Authority properties.

When asked about his new employment opportunity, Mr. Rodriguez said, "I am so happy to be working again. I have been treated with a lot of respect by the company I work for and by the Housing Authority. I am very grateful to both." For Rodriguez, the opportunity to re-enter the workforce and make a difference in his own community displays the true success of **ARRA** in the city of Erie.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

2. Pregnant and with three children, **N. Turner** entered the Allegheny County/City of Pittsburgh Homeless Prevention Program (**HPRP**) at the offices of Community Human Services on October 30, 2009.

In August 2009, Mrs. Turner lost her job with a mortgage company in Newport News, VA because of a company lay-off. She fell behind in her rental payments and the landlord filed for eviction. When Ms. Turner applied for assistance and low-income housing, she was denied because of her credit history and recent eviction. In September 2009, Ms. Turner turned to family members in Pittsburgh for help, while also searching for openings at one of the family emergency shelters.

In October 2009, Ms. Turner found a vacancy at the Allegheny Valley Association of Churches family shelter in Natrona Heights where she and her family stayed until

December 2009. During her shelter stay, Ms. Turner registered the children in school and daycare where she daily dropped them off and picked them up. She attended the Department of Public Assistance Earn Program which assisted her with job readiness, job searching, as well as follow-up medical care.

Today, as a result of **ARRA** program funding and Community Human Services, Ms. Turner successfully found housing and moved into her new home on January 2, 2010, after a short motel stay. Her son was born on January 15, 2010 and she now has several employment opportunities with Citizens Bank in downtown Pittsburgh. Ms. Turner continues to work towards her goals in both employment and money management.

Ms. Turner provides us with a perfect portrait of how ARRA HPRP funds help individuals and families recover from personal housing and financial crisis.

3. **Tina Miller** never thought of herself as poor. Ms. Miller, 41, who has had one job or another since the age of 15, now lives among the ranks of the working poor who increasingly find themselves pulled to the edge of homelessness. Ms. Miller had managed to get by for years, but a combination of health problems and the poor economy had caused her to seek help with normal household expenses to avoid homelessness. Tina is grateful that Allegheny County and the city of Pittsburgh collaborated to use the money they received from **ARRA** to create the **Homeless Prevention and Rapid Recovery Program**. It certainly proved to be a lifeline for Tina Miller.
4. **Cleave Randolph**, 40, a lifelong resident of Duquesne, PA who had “grown up in public housing” had been unemployed for 12 months when the Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) announced its plans to revitalize its property in his community utilizing **ARRA** funds. Cleave knew that ACHA’s revitalization project would mean good paying construction jobs might now be possible and available to him through the government *stimulus* money. Cleave eagerly applied for and secured a laborer’s position. Cleave’s work experience with ACHA has afforded him the opportunity to get his finances back on track and enhance his resume. He is also registered with the ACHA Section 3 Coordinator which may lead to further employment opportunities in the future.

LAWRENCE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

5. **Mark Stoner** and **Joe Mercer** are now gainfully employed thanks to the Lawrence County Community Action Partnership Program and their applied use of **ARRA** funds in green technology and green building. Both co-workers were hired as Section 3

employees. Mark is currently working under the AmeriCorps's Recovery Corp Weatherization Program and Joe continues to work on "The Green Team" both made possible through the localization of **ARRA** funds.

JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

6. *Jordan P. Hendon*, 18, is learning carpentry skills through his employment with SR&G Construction which has the General Contract under the **Johnstown Housing Authority** 2009 **ARRA** grant at their Solomon Community. The foreman and owner of SR&G states that Jordan is quite the conscientious worker. Jordan hopes to continue working and intends to save enough money to pursue further education in the automotive field.

Currently, Jordan lives with his family and is part of the Johnstown Housing Authority's Home Ownership Program. His family is in the lease phase of the program and is expected to purchase their home later this year.

7. *Jimmy Guardarrama*, 51, is a resident of the Johnstown **Housing Authority's** Cooperdale Community. The proud father of a three-year-old son and a three-month old baby girl, he is currently employed by SR&G Construction and has been working at the Solomon Community doing kitchen upgrade and door replacement work which is funded through the Johnstown Housing Authority 2009 **ARRA** grant.

In Jimmy's words, "I like working a lot." He is most appreciative of all employment opportunities that come his way and hopes for on-going full-time employment.

BEAVER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

8. The *Andersons*, a family of 12 were living in a home condemned by a local municipality before ARRA and the HRRP funds that rescued them. Through a joint effort of hard working Children and Youth Services workers acting on an emergency contact and the HPRP team, a suitable home was found within the county at an affordable rent.

Using the assistance provided through HPRP, the landlord was given the required security deposit and the first month's rent, thus keeping the family from living in squalor or becoming homeless. The Andersons have been referred to the local credit counseling agency, the Alliance for Consumer Protection, for follow up to resolve lingering credit issues. They have **ARRA** funds to thank for their emergency housing rescue.

9. *Mrs. Alvita Willis* was referred to the Beaver County **HPRP** by her caseworker from Beaver County Behavioral Health. Ms. Willis was transitioning out of a Long Term Structured Residence program in the county and she, her husband, and daughter were all soon to be homeless. With help from her caseworker, Mrs. Willis found appropriate housing and was able to secure tenant-t based rental assistance through the Beaver County Behavioral Health agency.

HPRP was able to provide assistance in clearing an old debt owed to the Housing Authority of Beaver County so the Willis family could move into the apartment. This plan of action was made possible because **ARRA** funds were available in Beaver County.

10. *Mrs. EGS* is a Beaver County, PA military widow. She was referred to Beaver County **HPRP** by her landlord. Mrs. EGS lived in her apartment for over 11 years and never had a problem paying her rent and utilities. Recently, however, she recently become ill, was hospitalized, and was being assisted by multiple physicians. She has Medicare, but this did not cover many of her costs.

For two months, Mrs. EGS struggled to pay her rent and utilities. With assistance provided through Beaver County HPRP, the portion of the last two month's rent that remained unpaid was paid as well as the current month's rent which would allow her to catch up paying the remaining outstanding utility bills.

Mrs. EGS was very embarrassed to be "asking for help" and stated numerous times that "this was the first time in my life I needed help". She remains very appreciative of the assistance she received through HPRP and **ARRA** funds.

11. *Mrs. Gonzalez* is a single parent raising six children, many with special needs. She has older children who live out of state. The Gonzalez family currently lives in public housing in Beaver County.

In the late summer, one of the children became seriously ill and had to be hospitalized at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh. Mrs. Gonzalez had to fly in one of her older children in to watch the younger ones while she remained at the hospital.

During this trying time, Mrs. Gonzalez fell behind in her rent. She paid partial payments and late payments and for one month, no payment. Beaver County **HPRP** was able to pay her past due account along with giving her information about ways to have her rent automatically paid from her bank account.

Mrs. Gonzalez was referred to credit counseling and she will be working with them to fix and rebuild her credit standing. None of this would have been possible without **ARRA** funds.

12. **Keith Fisher** is married and is the father of two children. He was laid off from his job for nine months. During that time, he worked odd jobs, trying to keep his bills current. His rent arrearages, however, finally equaled nearly three months' rent.

Keith's landlord told him he was going to be evicted if the back rent wasn't paid. By this time, Mr. Fisher was back to work full time, but unable to get caught up. He went to Beaver County **HPRP** to get help to avoid that eviction and subsequent homelessness.

HPRP, with **ARRA** funds, was able to "catch him up on his rent" and refer this family to credit counseling. Mr. Fisher reports that he is "very blessed" and is grateful for the help provided by HPRP.

13. **JR** is a widow with three children. Her husband was shot and killed several years ago. She contacted Beaver County **HPRP** because she was being evicted from her home; the landlord told her he wanted possession of the house.

Subsequently, the landlord did not pay the water bill, so the water was shut off in the residence. JR began paying people to take her to the store just to purchase water to have in the home. Beaver County HPRP put her in touch with the Neighborhood Legal Services attorney on the HPRP team as well as the HPRP Housing Locator.

JR and the HPRP team were able to resolve her housing dilemma by helping her find affordable, safe, and suitable housing for her family. She needed help to pay the security deposit, which HPRP paid to the new landlord. JR's family is now in a home that is clean, secure, and has running water! All of this was made possible via the utilization of **ARRA** funds in Beaver County, PA.

