



U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
San Juan Hub Office Of Public Housing
Region IV

2013

Make a Difference Award



*Don't spend precious time asking
"Why isn't the world a better place?
It will be a time wasted.*

*The question to ask is: How can I make it better?
To that there is an answer."*

Leo Buscaglia

Make a Difference Award (MADA) Winner for Fiscal Year 2013

Lydia Hughes,

Virgin Islands Housing Authority (VIHA)



Lydia Hughes recognized as one of the major contributors in the development of Louis E. Brown, Phase 1 in St. Croix



Louis E. Brown Phase I Low Rent Housing
Development in St. Croix, VI



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Lydia Hughes, Director of Modernization and Development of VIHA, has been a true leader in the development of two novel affordable housing construction projects in the Virgin Islands utilizing USVI compliance-code for hurricanes and energy conservation elements, while still reflecting a Caribbean flair in its design. Lydia demonstrated her creativity by ensuring the project original design established a standard of excellence that would set the project apart from others in the Caribbean. The design sets a high standard for Public Housing developments in the region, providing its residents with a sense of pride, furnishing a foundation to raise their families with dignity.

Under Lydia's leadership VIHA will maximize the use of 135 project-based vouchers in three developments with a total of 202 units. Lydia, through her leadership and tenacity, embodies the finest example of customer service from a public housing authority.

The Caribbean Field Office of Public and Indian Housing is honored to acknowledge Lydia Hughes with the first "Make a Difference Award" (MADA).

Make a Difference Award (MADA) First Annual Presentation

The HUD Caribbean PIH Office's "Make a Difference Award" (MADA) is given to a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program and/or for Public Housing (Low Rent) program, activity, project, management tool, or technique that **fulfills one or more** of the following basic requirements:

- generates a significant positive impact on those it is intended to benefit or serve in their communities;
- can be replicated locally, regionally or nationally;
- demonstrates the effective use of partnerships with external partners, units of government, and/or the private sector;
- demonstrates creativity or resourcefulness in assisting the Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) customers;
- develops innovative or more efficient ways to address community problems in a timely manner;
- demonstrates effective examples of assisting customers to leverage resources;
- demonstrates substantial cost savings and efficiency for the department; or
- demonstrate networking capacities with other PHAs

The HUD Caribbean PIH Office recognizes its clients. The Public Housing Agencies (PHAs), and their internal programs/ activities/ personnel that are making a difference in the lives of HUD customers within Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands through the provision of outstanding customer service and innovative practices. These are PHAs staff or sub-recipients that work closely with assigned communities, perform needs assessments, find opportunities for improvement, and/or implement actions to improve the quality of life for individuals and families. The Caribbean PIH's "Make a Difference Award" is intended to provide recognition for those that have demonstrated exceptional practices leading to measurable and replicable outcomes in customer service and outstanding community initiatives in self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Nomination Categories

This Awards Program is designed to recognize PHAs/individuals that demonstrate an outstanding commitment to the goals delineated in HUD's Region IV 2013 Work Plan. Therefore, nominations should focus on outstanding practices or activities which further one or more of the following five (5) categories:

- 1- Maximize Voucher Utilization and Public Housing Occupancy;
- 2- Recover and Sustain Public Housing Agencies;
- 3- Families / Communities;
- 4- Customer Service; or
- 5- Self-Sufficiency and Empowerment of Communities



2013 Nominees

1. J.A. Machuca and Associates, Inc.
(Low Rent)
2. The University of the Virgin Islands
(ROSS Low Rent)
3. Evelyn Ramírez, Municipality of Cabo Rojo (Section 8)
4. Gilberto Rivera, Municipality of Humacao (Section 8)
5. Carmen Ortíz, Municipality of Sabana Grande (Section 8)
6. Sylvette Fontanet, Puerto Rico Department of Housing (PRPHA) (Section 8)
7. Lydia Hughes, Virgin Island Housing Authority (VIHA)

"ONE REGION ONE HUD"

Atlanta Regional Office

Brief of the Nominees

J.A. Machuca and Associates, Inc.

This public housing management agency created a program called "Programa AME" which uses training, maintenance and employment as tools to deal with public housing unemployment, school dropouts, sex-offenders, users or abusers of drugs or alcohol and those at risk of becoming involved in criminal activities. In order to reinforce self-esteem the program provides training, part-time employment and job search techniques. Absences are not excused except for the attendance of a court hearing or health appointment and the participant must make-up the time of absence.

The University of the Virgin Islands

Through a partnership with VIHA, the UVI has established three ancillary service delivery arms that address the needs of the local population including public housing residents. These entities include: UVI Community Engagement and Life Long Learning providing workforce development training opportunities, UVI Cooperative Extension Service providing life skills development and youth enrichment activities, and Small Business Development providing entrepreneurial training and business counseling services. This partnership leveraged resources and training opportunities for youth and adults residing in public housing. These opportunities have been provided at such a time when community resources have decreased and VIHA's operating budget has been unable to sustain costs associated with implementing resident programs.



Evelyn Ramirez, Municipality of Cabo Rojo (Section 8)

Evelyn Ramirez has always been proactive in the management of her PHA. She is always creating new initiatives for Section 8 participants such as a budget and home expenses management and promoting self-sufficiency for program participants. She has led efforts through a network of housing and health organizations to help address community needs. Ms. Ramirez has been a champion for Section 8.

Gilberto Rivera, Municipality of Humacao (Section 8)

Gilberto Rivera has maintained a highly effective system of data management of section 8 participants and applicants. He has achieved maximum voucher utilization. The system provides flexibility and the capacity of quick reaction to changes in occupancy. He has developed, organized, and implemented activities to encourage participants to obtain better living opportunities such as: skill development seminars, financial planning and budget preparation workshops and health clinics. He has also established interagency collaboration agreements to refer participants.

Brief of the Nominees

Carmen Ortiz, Municipality of Sabana Grande (Section 8)

Carmen Ortiz has 19 years of experience as a PHA Coordinator. She has generated a positive impact on her PHA while becoming a technical point of reference assisting other PHAs throughout the island by providing them an overall orientation of the section 8 program. She has become a focal center for information for other PHAs by establishing a close network with them; sharing affirmative measures implemented to better assist housing authorities to fully comply with all federal, state and local laws. She has been a leader not only in her PHA but has been a lightning resource for change within her PHA as well as for others.

Sylvette Fontanet, PRDH (Section 8)

Sylvette Fontanet is the coordinator for the HUD VASH program (Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers). During the past five years she has been the link between the Veteran Affairs Medical Center management and the staff of Puerto Rico Public Housing Administration ensuring HUD VASH voucher issuance. She has been a key player in housing chronically homeless veterans in PR. The main beneficiaries of the activities conducted by Ms. Fontanet are the 118 veterans and their families that have been served through the HUD VASH program.



OFFICE OF PUBLIC HOUSING

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