

Thursday, February 19, 2015

OHA hosts a variety of events in Black History Month

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

February is Black History Month and Orange Housing Authority Executive Director Walter McNeil has been very busy. He kicked off the month with "Senior Day at the Movies" on Wednesday, Feb. 4, with city seniors having the opportunity to watch a reenactment of the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala.

McNeil and the Orange Housing Authority followed that event with a celebration of Black History Month through dance on Tuesday, Feb. 10, featuring Lincoln Avenue Ele-

mentary School Dance Ensemble. The event featured choreography by five seventh-graders who performed short versions of "He Lives in You," a song by Lebo M. and his South African Choir from the opening of the movie "The Lion King II," and "Immortal Megamix" that included the songs "Can You Feel It," "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough," "Billie Jean" and "Black or White" by the late Michael Jackson, for dozens of seniors at Washington Manor.

"We are honored to have the Lincoln Elementary School Dance Ensemble help us celebrate Black History Month," said McNeil on Tuesday, Feb. 10. "Dance goes as far back as

to Africa and slavery. It was the use of language and influential in the development of today's dance."

McNeil said the Orange Housing Authority has more events on tap for its series of Black History Month programs. Next up, he said, is the "The Courage to Make a Difference" event at Washington Manor on Friday, Feb. 20.

McNeil said the Orange Housing Authority is committed to improving the community by buying properties, improving their worth and stabilizing streets and neighborhoods. And he said that means investing in the people

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in the community, too, by having and promoting events such as the ones for Black History Month that focus on the history and historical contributions of African Americans in the United States.

"The Orange Housing Authority provides quality and affordable housing for low-and-moderate income families," said McNeil. "The kids were incredible dancing. That was part of our Black History Month celebration and they did a tremendous job. We're going to try to get them to come to a

couple of other events for us, too."

McNeil said the Lincoln Avenue School students come after 4 p.m. to dance for the seniors. He said that afterward, the seniors thank the students.

"It's a nice bringing together of the different generations," said McNeil. "So it's a good deal."

For more information about the Orange Housing Authority's Black History Month events and ongoing development and redevelopment plans, call Phyllis Greer at 908-494-4243.

The Orange Housing Authority Presents...



"THE COURAGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE"
PART 1

Come listen to participants share their experiences through story-telling, poetry, and more!

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2015

2:00 PM

WASHINGTON MANOR, COMMUNITY ROOM

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

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City officials, OHA seek input to improve neighborhoods

Orange officials, in concert with the Orange Housing Authority, hosted a public workshop Tuesday, Feb. 10, at the Walter Alexander Village to discuss proposed changes to the Central Orange Redevelopment Plan.

The project would include 22 tax blocks surrounding the Tony Galento Plaza, Orange Memorial Hospital, Orange Train Station, Walter Alexander Village and Lincoln Avenue Elementary School.

"This is a tremendous joint effort by the city of Orange, the Orange Housing Authority and the community at-large to improve our town," said Dr. Walter D. McNeil Jr., executive director for the Orange Housing Authority. "Our collective efforts will help ensure that future generations have quality, affordable places to live in the city of Orange."

Urban planners from the Nishuane Group, members of the City Council and commissioners of the Orange Housing Authority were present to answer inquiries and gather important feedback. Urban planners presented scenarios in which residents were asked to identify redevelopment priorities. The majority of participants identified housing, parking and open space as main necessities.

A resident at the Walter Alexander Village explained her experience at the interactive workshop.

"I was glad that I was able to participate in the workshop," said Theresa John. "There's no better group of individuals to seek recommendations for this city than the residents themselves."

The Walter Alexander Village is one of the many redevelopment projects that has transformed the landscape of the east ward. The new public housing facility replaced an old, decrepit complex built in the 1950s.

Today, the 3.8-acre site bounded by Central Place, Parrow Street, Wilson Place and Oakwood Avenue is now an attractive, modern, safe home for seniors, families and individuals from the community.

The city of Orange is planning more interactive workshops with hope of obtaining as much input community insight as possible, as the proposed redevelopment amendment takes shape.

For more information on future meetings, visit the event page at www.haconj.org.



Photos by Chris Sykes

Above, from left, Beverly Harrison, Brenda Carter-Sims, Denise Gwaltney-McLaurin and Dorothy Hammond sit together during a break in the action on Tuesday, Feb. 10, at the Nishuane Group's public survey inside the Orange Housing Authority building. Harrison is originally from Perth Amboy. They and many others participated in the redevelopment survey. At right, Janice Morrell, second from left, Nicole Williams-James and Karen Wells discuss the future of redevelopment projects in Orange.



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Orange Mayor Dwayne Warren, center, and Orange Housing Authority Executive Director Walter McNeil, right, stand with members of the Lincoln Avenue School Dance Ensemble on Tuesday, Feb. 10, following their performance for the senior citizens residing at Washington Manor.



Photo by Chris Sykes

OHA celebrates Black History Month through dance

After kicking off Black History Month with "Senior Day at the Movies" to watch the Oscar-nominated film "Selma," the Orange Housing Authority continued its celebration with a performance featuring the Lincoln Avenue Elementary School Dance Ensemble.

The dance group featured five seventh-grade students, who performed in front of

dozens of seniors at the Washington Manor housing complex. The enthusiastic group of young girls danced to a shorter version of "He Lives in You," a song performed by Lebo M. and his South African Choir.

"We are honored to have the Lincoln Avenue Elementary School Dance Ensemble help us celebrate Black History Month," said Dr. Walter McNeil, executive director of the

Orange Housing Authority. "The art of dance runs deep in African tradition. It was used as a form of expression to galvanize and inspire the community."

The Orange Housing Authority will continue the celebrations with "The Courage to Make a Difference - Part I." The event will take place on Friday, Feb. 20, at 2 p.m. Details are forthcoming.

The Orange Housing Authority provides quality and affordable housing for low- and moderate income families. The public agency is committed to improving the community by incorporating cultural and educational activities for their residents.

For more information on upcoming events, visit the Orange Housing Authority's website at www.haconj.org.