East Orange Orange
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WWII vet honored at OHA's Thanksgiving dinner

By Chris Sykes
Staff Writer

Residents of the Washington Manor senior citizens building enjoyed the holiday a little early this year, when the Orange Housing Authority hosted its annual Thanksgiving dinner on Tuesday, Nov. 24.

"We had a great time for the holiday Thanksgiving feast for our residents," said Orange Housing Authority Executive Director Walter McNeil on Tuesday, Nov. 24. "We had close to 100 people out today and they all ate very well — turkey and ham and potatoes, macaroni, string beans — it was a great meal. We had Assemblyman Tom Giblin here, as well as all of our council people from the City Council. The mayor's representative was here. We raffled off about eight Thanksgiving Day baskets. We had a wonderful time."

McNeil said, "Every year, it gets better and better because of the people who participate, the people who give with love and the people who feel that they are part of a bigger Orange Housing Authority family."

He said this was never more evident than this year, when Mayor Dwayne Warren's representative presented a "thank you" service award plaque to World War II veteran and Orange Housing Authority resident Thomas B. Williams Sr., who is 100 years old.

Williams' wife, Georgette, agreed with McNeil. She said she was so proud and honored to know that her husband was recognized at this year's Thanksgiving dinner event.

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Photo by Chris Sykes

Thomas B. Williams Sr., left, stands next to his wife, Georgette, as he holds the award honoring his service to the country as a veteran of World War II that was presented to him on behalf of Mayor Dwayne Warren on Tuesday, Nov. 24, at the Orange Housing Authority's annual Thanksgiving dinner at the Washington Manor apartments in Orange.

Assemblyman Giblin; Executive Director, Walter McNeil; Chairman Coram Rimes; Councilman Johnson

Chairman Rimes and Councilman Johnson serving plates to seniors.

OHA employee, Joann Graham serves Washington Manor residents.

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"I mean, to have him honored by Orange tonight, I'm just proud," Georgette Williams said Tuesday, Nov. 24. "I was always proud, but I'm so proud tonight to see that people would notice a good man living here. And he is 100 years old. We've been together 18 years and I'm just so honored."

Williams said he is an Air Force veteran who has resided in Orange Housing Authority housing for the last nine years. He said he was grateful to Warren for honoring him with an official award from the city and he said he appreciates McNeil and everything the executive director has done for him and other seniors since he began running the federally subsidized agency.

Williams said he retired from the Air Force as a sergeant major. He also had some advice for anyone that wants to live to be 100.

"If you don't keep active, you won't be here," said Williams on Tuesday, Nov. 24. "You've got to keep that breath up. When you keep busy, you have a clear head. You can think better."

"What a blessing it was to acknowledge the work and legacy of one of our finest citizens," said Warren on Tuesday, Dec. 1. "He is an example of a life dedicated to service. He is another Orange citizen who I point out to young people to see goodness in action."