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From the Desk of the Editor

WHITE HOUSE BRIEFINGS ON COMMUNITY ISSUES

The White House Community Leaders Briefing Series will convene every Friday this summer, from June 17- August 26.

The briefing series (open to only 150 individuals) is a unique opportunity for grassroots leaders to come to Washington to hear directly from White House officials on issues affecting communities across the country and to learn more about the President's priorities and initiatives from people who work on them every day. In return, Administration staff will get to hear what's going on in cities and towns across the country directly from the experts – the grassroots leaders.

Participants are local leaders who are currently involved in their cities and towns at the grassroots level – in their neighborhoods, schools, churches, non-profit organizations, environmental groups, activist and advocacy groups, etc. and who are continuously invested in improving their own communities. Participants must be (1) active community leaders (i.e., grassroots, constituency, and advocacy leaders) and (2) willing and able to make their own transportation arrangements to and from Washington DC.

Anyone interested in attending should visit the following website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/webform/white-house-community-leaders-briefing-series>

This edition of the ALPI Newsletter is also an opportunity for the Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. Community Action Partnership Network to share success stories and positive outcomes that truly demonstrate the importance of an ongoing federal support partnership via ARRA, CSBG and LIHEAP funding resources. Together we continue to promote positive changes and family self-sufficiency.

Deloris Johnson

Chief Executive Officer & Editor

ALPI... Community Action at its Best!

What does *Community Action* mean to the community? An excellent example of community action "in action" is the Sunset Cove and Lime Tree Mobile Home Parks, located between Auburndale and Winter Haven, and what ALPI did for the residents.

In early March, a Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSSP) participant mentioned to her case manager that there was a problem at the park where she lived. The next day, several ALPI employees noticed a live news broadcast at the park. Without prompting or phone calls from anyone, ALPI began to look into the situation and found a low income community in desperate need of assistance. The rent paid by the residents included utilities such as electric and water. Unfortunately, in these hard economic times, the park was in trouble. It had been unable to pay an electric bill in excess of \$30,000 causing the electric provider to "pull the plug" leaving the residents without electricity, which also ran the water pumps.

CSBG/Economic Development Director, Pahoua Lee-Yang, went to the park to investigate what was happening. At the park she met with the Pastor of New



Life Deliverance Church who gave her a rundown. The residents could not store or cook food and sanitation was at risk because of no running water. The church was assisting by preparing lunch for the residents, but the park, with over 190 units, was so large that it was placing a burden on the church's budget to buy the required foods. Further investigation showed that the parks, on some prime water front properties, were in foreclosure raising further concerns about the residents' future.



Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) staff were dispatched to the site to begin the process of helping the residents. Other actions taken by ALPI included: (1) \$1,400 in financial assistance to the church group to help purchase food to provide lunch for the residents; (2) Ten porta-potties were placed on site to assist with sanitation; and, (3) Hand sanitizers were provided to alleviate the immediate health concerns from no running water.

Through wireless internet connec-

CAP continued on pg. 2

Reaching Out to Our Communities

The mission of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is to assist low income households, particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their *immediate home energy needs*. ALPI is strongly committed to helping those communities it serves via its LIHEAP Program. Recent increases in energy costs, unemployment, and a poor economy in general have all contributed to an increasing need for home energy assistance. As a result of this increasing need, ALPI's LIHEAP Program has been conducting "energy fairs" on a regular basis in the surrounding communities. Wherever there is a need and a request to fill that need, ALPI's LIHEAP staff will be there ... ready to help and ready to make a difference in people's lives. In addition to those pictured below, energy fairs were also held in Lakeland, Bartow, Winter Haven, Ft. Pierce, and Immokalee.



Naples
(Collier County)
Energy Fair



Port Salerno
(Martin County)
Energy Fair



Indian Town (Martin County) Energy Fair



Lake Wales (Polk County) Energy Fair



Pictured Left to Right:
Christine Samuel (ALPI Board Treasurer), Josephine Howard (ALPI Board Secretary), Deloris Johnson (ALPI CEO), Arabell Wiggins (ALPI Board Member Emeritus), Neysha Green, Pat Gamble (ALPI Board Member).

ALPI's Arabell Wiggins Scholarship Fund

Ms. Arabell Wiggins has been affiliated with the Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. (ALPI) since 1968! She is one of the pioneers of ALPI and actually walked the original orange groves for which ALPI was founded, talking to migrant workers encouraging them to come to meetings. Ms. Wiggins served as the Chairperson of the Central Region Advisory Council and on the Board of Directors for many years and currently serves as Board Member Emeritus. She is highly respected and admired in the community and in her honor ALPI has created the annual Arabell Wiggins Scholarship Fund.

The first recipient of the Arabell Wiggins Scholarship Fund is Ms. Neysha Green. She is a graduate of Winter Haven High School and currently attends Florida A&M University. *Congratulations to Ms. Green on her selection.*

CAP continued from pg. 1

tions, ALPI staff were able to immediately determine the residents' eligibility for services and assess their individual situations. Most of the residents were interested in moving out of the park into a more stable living environment. ALPI staff started contacting local mobile home parks and apartment complexes around the area.

The cooperation and kindness of the local rental community only enhanced ALPI's response to the crisis. Examples of this included a complex that reduced the first month's rent to \$1.00 to help the resident move-in. Other parks and complexes gave the residents breaks on deposits or first month's rent, even allowing them to pay deposits in installments. One resident had no personal transportation. He walked over 5 miles to see an apartment complex. When the complex discovered this, they gave him a bicycle.

In the end, more than 40 families were provided assistance with moving into new homes. This included help with utilities, rent, rental deposits, and even transportation. More than \$17,000 was spent on behalf of the residents to help alleviate their immediate crisis. Several of the residents expressed their appreciation and thanks for the assistance, even offering to volunteer. ALPI and Community Action received positive news coverage by the Lakeland Ledger and the Winter Haven News Chief as well as Bay News 9 and other local stations. Overall, the Sunset Cove incident showed how Community Action can positively impact a local community in need.

ALPI's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Partners with



Progress Energy



About 1,100 low-income customers in Avon Park weathering today's economy received a much-needed boost from Progress Energy Florida through the company's innovative Neighborhood Energy Saver program. Through the free program, the company gave needy customers' homes and apartments an energy makeover by installing up to 16 energy-saving improvements. The company also educated customers about the behaviors and other factors that contribute to their energy bills.

"Through the Neighborhood Energy Saver program, we're pleased to put our energy experts to work for those who need assistance most" said Michael Lewis, senior vice president of Energy Delivery for Progress Energy Florida. The Neighborhood Energy Saver program benefits low-income customers living in select, census-defined communities, such as Avon Park.

ALPI's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was represented by Cheryl Burnham (Director) and ALPI's LIHEAP Avon Park Staff, Kesha Nelson and Adrian Benson. ALPI staff presented information on the LIHEAP Program and specifically, its services in Highlands County. Director Cheryl Burnham was presented with an award (pictured above – second from left) in recognition of ALPI's partnership and dedication to helping the community reduce energy usage and costs through participation in the Neighborhood Energy Saver Program.



ALPI proudly announces...



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Administration for Children & Families

The Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Region IV Program Manager recently approved the assignment of the following "Key" Management Head Start/Early Head Start staff:

Elizabeth Young – Grantee
Head Start / Early Head Start Director for both St. Lucie and Polk Counties

Myrna Rodriguez – Program Operations
Director for St. Lucie County
Head Start / Early Head Start

Bertram Smith – Program Operations Director
for Polk County (delegate)
Head Start / Early Head Start

ALPI 2011

Staff Appreciation Luncheon



This year we celebrated the employee. It was a time to say "Thank You" for all they do and give to the agency. It was a time to rally around the employee who may be a manager, a kitchen helper, a bus monitor, or a caregiver. The main goal of the event was to show each employee they are individually and collectively important to this process called "ALPI at work."

The event took a different twist from past years where there was a chairperson and employees from each department directly involved in the event's organization. The CEO, Ms. Deloris Johnson, said up front that she wanted employees to "sit back and enjoy their day." Employees were recognized for Years of Service, Outstanding Achievement, and Educational Achievement.

ALPI was also able to get the support of several sponsors who came forth and donated large gifts that meant much to our employees. We look forward to next year on May 4th, when we do it all over again.





The Florida Association for Community Action, Inc. CONFERENCE

This year's FACA Conference was again a great success! ALPI submitted two nominees for the Self-Sufficiency Award and one nominee for the Agency of the Year Award. Also submitted by ALPI were a Story Board and a very large gift basket to be used for fundraising via a raffle. ALPI was publicly recognized for their two self-sufficiency nominees and for all of the agency's hard work during the past year.

ALPI's entire CSBG staff attended the conference, as well as most of the LIHEAP staff. Also in attendance were ALPI's Board Chairperson and FACA Board Chairperson, William Holt, and ALPI's Chief Executive Officer and FACA Treasurer, Deloris Johnson. This year's workshops were very informative and meaningful. The workshops provided great insight into what is happening now in the CAA world. The useful and practical information received is something that all agencies could take back with them and put to immediate use.

As always, The Florida Association for Community Action, Inc. (led by Executive Director Wilma McKay) did a wonderful job organizing this event. The FACA Conference is always an educative and relevant event that everyone looks forward to. Thank you FACA!



William Holt, Deloris Johnson
and Wilma McKay
(pictured sitting)

ALPI Computer Assisted Tutorial (CAT) Program Student is Awarded \$1,000 Scholarship

Each year, the Children's Services Council honors youth who are making a difference in their community. This year, ALPI's Computer Assisted Tutorial (CAT) Program (managed by Jennifer Wilson, Program Director) had one of its students, Chayla Golden, selected for its *CSC's Outstanding Youth Award*. Chayla demonstrated qualities that made her outstanding through various criteria: afterschool activities, extracurricular activities, overcoming personal challenges, volunteer experience, and future career plans.

Chayla is currently a 10th grader at Fort Pierce Central High in Fort Pierce, where she holds a 3.5 gpa. Upon completion of high school, Chayla plans to use the \$1,000 scholarship awarded to her by CSC towards future educational goals.



Deloris Johnson
(ALPI CEO),
Chayla Golden,
and Jennifer Wilson
(CAT Program
Director)

ALPI Technical Education Center March 2011 Graduation

On March 18, 2011, ATEC had its biggest graduation yet! This year, ATEC was approved for two new training classes - Phlebotomy and Home Health Aide. ATEC had 50 students who completed and graduated from Phlebotomy, Home Health Aide, and Spanish Home Health Aide. This year also marked the graduation of the first two Spanish Home Health Aide classes, a tremendous advantage for students with English as their second language.

Due to so many students graduating from the school, ATEC's building was unable to hold a graduation ceremony for the stu-

dents, but arrangements were made to use the local YMCA. Many friends and families attended the ceremony together with the students. This was one of the best turn-outs for the school. Everyone had a wonderful time and were extremely proud of the students.

Patty McCallister and Beth Corcoran have been excellent instructors and ATEC could not have achieved all it has without these two dedicated and hard-working individuals. 2011 is yet another great year for ATEC. ALPI proudly continues to make a difference in people's lives with programs like ATEC.



Congratulations Grads!

ALPI Client is Nominated for Florida Association of Community Action **Self-Sufficiency Award**

In 2007, Ms. Veltzi Hilaire-Cobb (a single parent of 3) lost her job with the Polk County Head Start Program, where she managed seven Centers. Unemployed and with no income coming into the home she was devastated and had a real sense of hopelessness. She knew she had to do something to keep her lights on and began seeking assistance. Ms. Hilaire-Cobb came to The Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. seeking electric assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and rental assistance through the Community Services Block Grant. She also enrolled into ALPI's CSBG Family Self-Sufficiency Program to continue her education.

Ms. Hilaire-Cobb completed her CDA course, with ALPI's CSBG FSSP assisting her with tuition and books. She received her Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education and knew things were changing. "ALPI was a life saver, I was so depressed because I couldn't find a job in my field that paid or even would accept me because they would say they were unable to pay me based on my knowledge and experience," commented Ms. Hilaire-Cobb.

Ms. Hilaire-Cobb decided that she wanted to open up her own business. She began to research and found a small

*"... I now have the first commercial 24 hours
7 days a week childcare in Polk County."*

— MS. VELTZI HILAIRE-COBB



building and with financial help from her family she purchased the building in March 2010. In December 2010, Ms. Hilaire-Cobb's business opened for service. "It was a struggle and a lot of hard work as well; but I know that it will pay off and I now have the first commercial 24 hours/7 days a week childcare in Polk County. I have been featured on the news twice and in the local newspaper three times!" She started out with only four babies when she opened up, but now has fifty-seven children enrolled in each session.

Ms. Hilaire-Cobb is forever grateful and appreciates all that ALPI has done for her and her family. "This is truly a Community Action Partnership that worked for me and in my favor," commented Ms. Hilaire-Cobb. "I went from jobless to being an owner! Not very many people can say that and THANKS so much to ALPI and their staff for all they've done to ensure that I completed my education, kept my home, and I am SUCCEEDING!"

A DAY AT THE CAPITOL



*LaSheila Nelson, PaHoua Lee-Yang,
Hilda Frazier (Florida Department
of Community Affairs),
Fred Stickney, Sheila Armstead,
Charles Baker*

This year, a day at the Capitol was not just a day at the Capitol. With President Obama's proposed budget cuts for 2012, all Community Action Agencies across the nation are going to face a 50% budget cut on the regular Community Services

Block Grant and LIHEAP's budget will be going back to the regular budget from 2008. Many of the Community Action Agencies in Florida were present to inform government on what "exactly" we do for our communities.

There were seven staff from ALPI (pictured above) and two board members who attended the Legislative Day event at the Capitol. Every year, staff is scheduled by The Florida Association for Community Action, Inc. to meet with State Senators and Representatives in their district to educate and inform them with regard to CAA's. This year, ALPI's staff was very fortunate to actually meet with one of the State Representatives from Highlands and Hardee counties. One of the Representatives, Seth McKeel, continues to send updates to ALPI on what is happening "Up On the Hill."

ALPI is proud to have played a part in making Legislative Day both informative and memorable for everyone involved.

ALPI Joins Highlands Community Center in Lake Alfred for *Unity Day*

Lake Alfred is a small town north of Winter Haven, Florida with a population of 4,519 in the 2010 census. It is also home to the Central Administration Office of The Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc.

Due to lack of resources and outreach events in Lake Alfred, the Highlands Community Center in Lake Alfred asked ALPI to participate in their "Unity Day" event. The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and Community Services Block Grant staff from ALPI (pictured below) then mobilized to set up a booth at the Center to share information regarding ALPI's great programs and resource referrals. Joining the ALPI staff was one of ALPI's Board Members and Lake Alfred City Commissioner, Nancy Daly (pictured center).

Unity Day was a great success. The ALPI staff and others working to reach out to the community were all pleased with the interest shown by the community and the turnout.



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Mission Statement

The mission of The Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc., is to propose, implement, and advocate developmental and human service delivery programs for the socially and economically disadvantaged; children and families; and farmworkers.

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