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Race for Life

RHA staff, family members and friends again participated in this year’s Race for Life held in Cardiff to raise funds for Breast Cancer. Valiant efforts were made by all participants with Natalie Roberts, Housing Officer being the first RHA staff member to cross the 5 kilometre finish line and Susie Roger’s (HR Admin) young daughter Shelby also staying the course. Total donations were in the sum of £1,097.50 including donations made by the following contractors: A.J.Banks, Gee Construction, JLF Haymer, Grounds Maintenance Wales, Flair Electrical, Davies Brothers Fencing, DeLaceys, BBI and Solar Windows.

June Rent Account Winner

The winner of the June rent account prize draw was Mr A R Davies of Llys Catwg Talbot Green. Mr Davies had a clear rent account at the end of June which made him eligible for the draw. Mr Davies was very pleased with the prize and quoted “I opened the mail expecting yet another bill, and was consequently stunned and delighted to be notified I had actually won £100 in the quarterly Rhondda Housing Association rent draw”. Well done to Rhondda Housing Association for a great initiative. The money will go into my “Flat re-decoration fund”. The next prize draw will take place at the end of September £100. The Christmas prize draw will take place in December and will be £500. Please check your account and make sure it is clear to be in with a chance of winning.

Hi, my name is Lisa Greening and I’m the new Time Exchange Co-ordinator. I live in Llwynypia and began working with RHA just a few weeks ago. I am eager to now start working with tenants in the local communities. I have worked as a volunteer on different projects in the South Wales valleys for the past several years and I am now delighted that I can reverse this role and help others get involved in improving the communities in which they live in.

In my spare time I enjoy socialising with friends and going to the theatre.

Hi, my name is Viki Owen and I live in Penygraig. I have been working for Rhondda Housing Association for seven weeks as a Housing Support Officer within the ‘Include’ team. Although I haven’t been at the Association long I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience so far. I previously worked for Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC in the Public Health and Protection Division.

I enjoy watching films, socialising and have a keen interest in photography. I also coach gymnastics some evenings.
Rhondda Housing Association wins National Award for Excellence

The award was presented to Rhondda Housing Association’s Chair, John Andrews, by HRH The Prince of Wales, President of BITC, at a garden party at his home, Clarence House. The Association won the Active Communities category, fighting off strong competition from PFIZER, EDF Energy, BT, Anglian Water and Network Rail to become the UK’s leading example.

Lesley Davies, Chief Executive, Rhondda Housing Association said: “The Together We Can programme makes a real difference and we are thrilled to have won this accolade”.

Director of Community Regeneration, Lottie Miller, commented: “This award recognises not only the achievement of the Association but also the dedicated contribution of many tenant volunteers including our Youth Forum who support the programme. It is their support and guidance that ultimately underpins everything we do.”

Ty Gwyn Newydd

Following the move to the new offices a ‘Name the office building’ competition was held. Numerous names were submitted by staff with Leighton Hughes, Community Development Apprentice submitting the winning name – Ty Gwyn Newydd. Leighton’s prize was a plaque presented by First Minister Rhodi Morgan together with a cheque for £50.00. Leighton very kindly donated the cheque to Tenovus Cancer.
Health/Mobility problems?
Experiencing difficulties in your present home?

If you are experiencing difficulties in your present home due to health/mobility problems and it is not possible for suitable adaptations to be made at the property you could apply to be placed on the Association’s transfer list for tenancy at a more suitable property. Your Housing Officer will assist you in completing a transfer form and also send a referral for you to Pathways to Adapted Housing for inclusion on the Adapted Housing Register. An appointment

therapies that are used by Bobath. The RHADAG members that attended the meeting purchased some of the fund raising items that Gail had brought along with her and £85.50 was raised for Bobath.

RHADAG holds similar meetings to this throughout the year and if you would like to be placed on the mailing list informing tenants of the meetings please contact Steven Jones on 01443 424226.

(*Rhondda Housing Association Disability Advisory Group)
Annual Tenant Fayre
Everyone had a great time!

Again this year the Tenant Fayre proved to be a very successful and enjoyable event for all age groups. This year the theme of the Tenant Fayre was health and recreation and activities included - jewellery and card making workshops, flower pot painting, a garden basket workshop, face painting, a children’s entertainer and for the more active football/fitness training, swimming, a bouncy pirate ship and buckin bronco.

Trealaw Food Cooperative provided an excellent Fresh Fruit Taster stall with Maerdy Communities First undertaking a cookery demonstration – the fruit cups and food were delicious.

Everyone enjoyed the buffet with staff providing teas, coffees, etc. throughout the day. The day ended with the main raffle taking place with prizes including a small flat screen TV donated by RHA and digital camera by the Tenants Forum. There were numerous other prizes including beautiful hanging baskets and those donated by local organisations.

The Association would like to thank Boots Chemist, The Country Kitchen, Welcome Inn, Tesco Stores, Spars, Margery’s Butcher for their donations.

The main aim of the Tenant Fayre is to provide a fun day for tenants and children to enjoy. It also provides an opportunity for partner organisations to reach a wider audience with their information stalls and for tenants to meet other tenants and staff in a relaxed atmosphere. Free transport was provided to the event with all tenants having equal opportunity to attend irrespective of age, mobility or financial circumstances.

Tenant Forum trip to Worcester Christmas Markets on 27th November and Christmas Party in December – full details and booking form will be sent to all tenants in October.

Schedule of Meetings 2009 (*times & venues available upon request)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forum Management Committee</td>
<td>30th September 8th December</td>
<td>2.00pm 6.30pm</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>2nd December</td>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</td>
<td>23rd September 7th December</td>
<td>2.00pm 11.30am</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>22nd September 1st December</td>
<td>2.00pm 2.00pm</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>9th December</td>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development</td>
<td>29th September</td>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHADAG</td>
<td>1st October (Open meeting) 26th November</td>
<td>2.30pm</td>
<td>Capel Farm Resource Centre, Tonyrefail RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHATE</td>
<td>7th December</td>
<td>2.00pm</td>
<td>RHA Offices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note all future meetings of the Forum’s subgroups will be held at RHA offices. If you are interested in joining one of the sub-groups or wish to attend as an observer please contact Theresa Rosser on 01443 424210. Transport to all meetings can be arranged.
Tenant Fayre 2009

“I enjoyed the day so much.”

“Lunch brilliant – excellent day.”

“Excellent day out enjoyed by adults and children alike.”
“The children had a great time.”

“Lunch brilliant – excellent day.”

“I enjoyed the day so much.”
Forum’s Summer Trip

The Tenants’ Forum’s social sub-group organised another successful summer outing in July to Stratford Upon Avon. Two coaches of tenants from the Rhondda Fach, Fawr and Taff Ely enjoyed the fine weather although judging by the amount of shopping bags coming home I think many enjoyed the lovely shopping Stratford has to offer! As usual the fun activities of bingo, raffle and a singalong took place on the coach journey – although a request was made for Theresa Rosser to give Housing Officer Natalie some singing lessons for the next trip! The Tenants’ Forum welcomes old and new faces on our next outing, a Christmas Shopping Trip at the end of November.

Bethlehem View Residents Panel

The Residents Panel of Bethlehem View held a barbeque on Saturday 29th August with 25 tenants in attendance. The evening was a great success thanks to the catering which was done by Rose Williams, Judith Jones and our master chef Alistair Taylor. The highlight of the evening was the entertainment provided by Mike Thomas and Alistair Taylor who entertained us well into the night.

Dave Duncan

Balaclava Court Penygraig

Balaclava Court Tenants Association went on their summer trip in August to Carmarthen and Llanelli. A good time was enjoyed by all with everyone hitting the shops, cafes and market in Carmarthen in the morning. The coach then took a scenic route to Llanelli where the majority of travellers enjoyed a fish and chip lunch. It was a lovely day – one of the last sunny days of our summer. Details of future events and meetings will be notified to residents.

Claire Ricketts (pictured with resident) Housing Support Officer provides housing related support to the residents at Balaclava Court and Tŷ Bethania. Claire provides a ‘drop in’ service for residents on a weekly basis. Please note Claire is in the communal room at Balaclava Court Thursdays 10am-1pm and Tŷ Bethania on Tuesdays 10am-1pm.
On Wednesday 15th June the Association held its 29th AGM at the Heritage Hotel, Trehafod. As well as the usual business of the evening there were some very interesting and informative speeches and presentations that kept the audience captivated for the duration.

Lesley Davies, Chief Executive of RHA spoke about the changes that had occurred within the Association over the last year, moving to our new office etc. She then went on to give some insight into future work of the Association making particular reference to Development, Support and Community Regeneration initiatives but also emphasising that we would be concentrating on maintaining excellence in core business, increasing tenant involvement and focusing on excellent customer service and increased development.

John Andrews, Chair of RHA spoke about the difficulty the Association faces, working in an area, parts of which have quite high levels of social deprivation. He went on, stating that working in partnership the Association has made significant progress in achieving sustainable communities.

Cynthia Roberts, Chair of the Tenant Forum gave her usual ‘Year in the life of the Tenant Forum’ presentation. A year in which, as well as the many successful social events held, the Forum have agreed a new Tenant Participation Strategy and were significantly involved in re-drafting a new Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.

There then followed a presentation by a group of young people from the Association’s Youth Forum. They spoke about their many achievements during the year which included visits to the Senedd and the Houses of Parliament. Their presentation was well received by all who attended.

Rhondda Housing Association AGM
Rhondda Include update

Following over five years at a satellite office the team have recently joined the rest of RHA at the new offices in Compton Road, this is a welcome move for the Include Team and now offers the opportunity to broaden ways of providing support by utilising our brand new offices.

The team are also discussing possible tenant participation/coffee mornings with the view of inviting guest speakers to provide information on benefits, budgeting, etc. We now benefit from the facilities to be able to host life skills classes for clients and also a general meeting place for clients who feel socially excluded to utilise as part of their support. Further information and updates will be provided at a future date.

The Include team would like to welcome two new Housing Support Officers, Tracey Tuckwood and Viki Owen. Both started work within the department during July 2009 and having undertaken their induction that are now working with their own caseload, delivering direct housing support within the community.

Preparation and planning are underway from the Include team in respect of Christmas/Winter activities for clients. Fundraising events are being organised to provide hampers and gifts for those clients most in need. If you would like to make a donation or if you feel you may benefit from housing related support please contact Catherine King on 01443 424251.

Free workshops open to all – Energy tips & money saving advice

Want to save money? Worried about costs this winter?

- We are holding energy saving workshops in our new Tonypandy offices from October. Each workshop will last 2 to 3 hours and is guaranteed to save you money.
- You will get great money and energy saving tips and also advice covering household appliances, heating, your appliance efficiency and supplier switching.
- If you are interested in attending or have any questions on energy saving please contact Leighton on 01443 424203.

Golden Goodbye – first £250 winner

Congratulations to former tenant Mr. T. Davies – thank you for being an excellent tenant and we wish you every happiness in your new home.

In the Summer edition we printed an article on the Association’s Golden Goodbye scheme. If you are leaving the Association and going to live somewhere else you could qualify for a Golden Goodbye payment – now increased from £100 to £250. Full details of how you qualify for payments are forwarded to all tenants upon notice being received. So if you are thinking of ending your tenancy with the Association ask our Customer Services Team or your Housing Officer about the scheme.

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Golden Goodbye – first £250 winner
Singing out against homophobic hate crime

Wales’ only gay Male Voice choir raised their voices to support the launch of the Rhondda Valleys’ first Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Support Network on the steps of the Senedd in Cardiff in June.

The LGBT Support Network has been established by Rhondda Housing Association resident Antony Dodd (pictured) and South Wales Police with the support of other partnership agencies including Rhondda Housing Association, Cwm Taf NHS Trust, RCT Homes and RCT Community Safety Partnership.

The group meets once a month offering gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people the opportunity to raise issues that affect them, report harassment or discrimination or just meet and chat.

South Wales Police’s Hate Crime Officer PC Neil Jeffrey’s, who is part of the Rhondda initiative said “Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the valleys can often feel isolated.

We would like to say that intolerance is no longer an issue but sadly there can still perceived to be a stigma about ‘coming out’ in some of our communities.

The LGBT network wants to provide an opportunity for people to meet and chat, talk about problems or share positive experiences.”

On Saturday 29th August members of the Network attended the Mardi Gras at Coopers Field, Cardiff. The day, as well as being a lot of fun, was an opportunity for members to hand out 100’s of leaflets and talk to people about the work of the group. There were many other organisations there showing their support to the LGBT community. The Group would like to thank RHA for sponsoring the polo shirts and the leaflets on the day and we are very grateful to them for their continued support.

To find out more about how you can become involved in or attend the support network meetings please contact Antony Dodd on the dedicated Support Network Number 07596 380593 or call PC Neil Jeffrey’s on 07773 378559.

Information day

In July RHA staff – Senior Housing Officer Theresa Rosser and Housing Officer Beverley John-Davies – held an information stall at Teify House, Maerdy as part of Maerdy’s Communities 1st three day Open Day event. Despite few residents attending whilst staff were there the event provided the opportunity for them to exchange information in relation to the services and benefits provided by different organisations attending.

Please note: if you have a query or concern about your tenancy that you would like to discuss with your Housing Officer, an appointment can be arranged for them to call to see you at your home. Similarly, if you would like to attend social events or meetings transport arrangements will be made to enable you to do so.
In May we began an eight week pop-art painting project as part of RHA’s Craft in the Community programme for our older tenants. The project was based in Llanaharan Drop in Centre and was the first in this year long programme for our tenants. Eight tenants got involved and created wonderful pieces of modern art with the help of our experienced tutor, Steve Ennis.

This fun and interactive painting project helped our older tenants get to know one another, learn new skills and take up a new hobby. Four of the group are going back to continue learning to paint in September. One participant said “I have always wanted to learn to paint and I am so proud of my canvas it’s wonderful! I really liked the social aspect and looked forward to each week.”

All the artwork created in these projects will be displayed in an exhibition in May 2010 where everyone can invite family and friends and celebrate their achievements with the Arts Council of Wales.

If you would be interested in getting involved with arts and crafts and attending the next project then please contact Lian or Leighton in the Community Development team on 01443 424 212 or 01443 424 203.

The Advocacy Project has some exciting opportunities for RHA tenants this Autumn. The following courses are available from September to December:

1. Personal Development for Women
2. Only Men Allowed – Goal Setting and Personal Development for Men
3. Sign Language, Level I, OCN Accredited
4. Job Skills, Level 1, OCN Accredited
5. Food Hygiene
6. Appointed First Aid
7. Volunteer Opportunities

To enrol or find out more, please call Kelly on 01443 424 217 or Jon on 01443 424 218. You must be a RHA tenant, over 16 years of age and unemployed. We look forward to hearing from you.

If you have any ideas for articles for the newsletter or you would like to comment on any articles in the newsletter or would like more information on how you can become involved in Tenant Participation, please contact Theresa Rosser at RHA Offices at 9 Compton Road, Tonypandy CF40 1BE or telephone 01443 424 210.

If you are a tenant of the Association and would like to apply for share membership please contact our Corporate Services Department at the above address or telephone 01443 424 202.