

# THE HRHA NEWSLETTER

News, announcements, and more from the  
Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority



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## Supporting Community Wellness Through Mental Health Education

On April 9th, HRHA collaborated with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Service Board (HRCBSB) to bring residents an engaging and interactive workshop titled Simple Ways to Reduce Stress and Improve Mental Health. This one-hour session offered residents and FSS participants valuable insights into the different types of stress and how lifestyle, environment, and support systems impact our ability to manage stressors.

Attendees explored short and long-term techniques for stress reduction, including breathing exercises, movement, journaling, and healthy self-talk. Participants walked away with practical tools to immediately improve their well-being and a deeper understanding of how stress affects both body and mind.

Events like this reflect HRHA's commitment to supporting the whole person—physically, emotionally, and mentally—on the journey to stability and self-sufficiency.

# Equipping Residents for Emergency Readiness

On May 15th, HRHA partnered with the Harrisonburg Fire Department to host a virtual Fire Safety Webinar for residents and FSS participants. This interactive event covered essential topics such as the importance of working smoke alarms, creating and practicing fire escape plans, proper use of fire extinguishers, and preparing an emergency kit. Participants also had the opportunity to learn about potential career paths within the fire department, offering valuable insights into public service opportunities.

The webinar provided life-saving information and empowered attendees to take proactive steps in keeping their families and homes safe. FSS participants gained practical knowledge that they can apply in real-life emergencies. Events like this reinforce HRHA's dedication to resident safety and preparedness, helping build stronger, more informed communities.

## Housing Misconceptions



We hope to foster a more informed and supportive community by providing accurate information. It is important to challenge these myths to ensure that all individuals have equal access to the resources they need. Together, we can build a more inclusive and compassionate environment.

### **Misconception:**

*“Receiving housing assistance eliminates the need for additional supportive services.”*

Many individuals and families benefit from additional services such as job training, childcare, access to health care and mental health resources, and more. Supportive services such as these help contribute to the household's stability and self-sufficiency for long-term success and economic mobility.

# Community Resource

## Spotlight: Skyline Literacy

In our newsletters, we will be highlighting non-profits and service organizations that help to provide resources in our community and surrounding areas. In this issue, we speak with Executive Director, Nelly Shenk, and a Skyline Literacy Student!

### **What programs and services does Skyline Literacy offer?**

Nelly Shenk notes that Skyline Literacy's mission is to provide needs-based instruction for Harrisonburg and Rockingham County residents. We offer ESOL, basic literacy, citizenship preparation, and digital literacy programs. Our services are provided by volunteers and qualified, certified teachers, ensuring high-quality support and instruction. Volunteers are the backbone of Skyline Literacy. We couldn't do this work without them and are incredibly grateful for their dedication. Skyline Literacy thanks its partners, board of directors, and donors for their contributions to Skyline Literacy in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County.

### **What are some misconceptions people have about Skyline Literacy or the services you provide?**

Nelly Shenk shares that there aren't many misconceptions—our services and goals are clear. However, from the learners' perspectives, some may hesitate to enroll in our citizenship program because they believe the test is too difficult or they wouldn't be able to pass. Others with reading challenges may feel intimidated. We emphasize the importance of learning English.

### **What is one thing you would like to share about Skyline Literacy?**

One of Skyline Literacy students notes that most of the teachers are volunteers. They give their time to help others learn, day and night, sometimes even late at night. It's difficult for learners to attend classes, but it's even more difficult for the teachers who dedicate their time to helping us succeed.

The classes have helped me communicate in everyday situations. Some classes focus more on grammar, but the lessons are always based on real-life situations to prepare us for conversations we might have.

### **Before joining Skyline Literacy, was anything intimidating?**

Their student also shared that, in the beginning, it was hard. Some learners speak different native languages, and conversation can sometimes be difficult between us. Also, the teacher must be a good person who can help us overcome communication barriers. At first, I was scared to speak English. Now, I feel more confident in my knowledge of the language when having conversations. Now, I enjoy the learning experience, participating in class, and communicating with other learners. It's fun!



# Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority

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## Website



[www.harrisonburgrha.com](http://www.harrisonburgrha.com)

## Facebook



[@harrisonburgrha](https://www.facebook.com/harrisonburgrha)

## HRHA Board of Commissioners

HRHA is governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners appointed by the Harrisonburg City Council. The Board establishes the Authority's policies and procedures and appoints the Executive Director.

Board of Commissioner meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 4:00PM. Meeting location/access will be posted prior to meetings and in line with local health guidelines.

+ Michael Wong, (Not a commissioner)  
Executive Director/Secretary-Treasurer

+ Kevin Coffman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2027

+ Luciano Benjamin - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2028

+ Gil Colman - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2025

+ Shonda Green - Commissioner

Term Expires: November 29, 2025

+ Kenneth Kettler - Commissioner

Term Expires: February 1, 2028

+ Amanda Leech - Commissioner

Term Expires: October 13, 2028

+ Janet Awkard-Rogers - Commissioner

Term Expires: April 25, 2027