

PhillySEEDS awards college scholarships to 70 PHA residents



PhillySEEDS, Inc., a Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) subsidiary, has honored 70 PHA residents seeking higher education with \$258,000 in scholarships. Students received scholarships valued at \$1,000, \$3,000 and \$5,000.

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PHA resident Amani Ball is going into her fourth year at the University of the Arts as a Dance major. She has won a \$5,000 scholarship for the fourth straight year.

"I just stayed focused and determined on my goals, making sure to keep my GPA high," she said. "The scholarships have helped tremendously. I don't have to take out as many loans as other students and I can look forward to starting my career as a performer without having that debt burden."

Another scholarship winner, Rasheeda Little-Herring, is entering her second and final year at Community College of Philadelphia with plans to work in behavioral health and human services.

"These funds are coming right on time to help me finish my education. I want to work with troubled youth and help them the same way someone helped me," she said.

The scholarships, given to both graduating high school seniors and students already in college, were handed out during the PHA Board of Commissioners meeting at PHA Headquarters in on Ridge Avenue.

Of the 70 college students receiving scholarships:

- 35 with GPAs between 3.30 and 4.00 received \$5,000.
- 24 with GPAs between 3.00 and 3.29 received \$3,000.
- 11 with GPAs between 2.50 and 2.99 received \$1,000.

"This event is so significant for us because we get to recognize the incredible work being done by PHA residents to uplift themselves and put themselves on a path to social and economic mobility. PHA is standing by them on their journeys," said PHA President & CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah.

A total of almost \$1.6 million has now been awarded to 413 residents since this program began in 2013. Money for the scholarships comes from PHA's operating budget and funds donated by program supporters and vendors.

A scholarship committee composed of PHA employees, student residents, and a resident leader reviewed the applications. The applicants' essays, community service, ex-

tracurricular activities, internships, recommendation letters, and academic transcripts were considered by the committee.

The scholarship recipients represent PHA developments around the City, as well as the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Scholarship applications for next year will be made available in spring 2020.

PhillySEEDS, Inc. is an award-winning, 501(c)(3), charitable, non-profit corporation founded by PHA to promote the social and economic advancement of PHA-assisted residents through philanthropic activities, community-based partnerships, and special initiatives.

The Philadelphia Housing Authority is the nation's 4th largest housing authority, serving nearly 80,000 residents. PHA is also a major real estate developer. Learn more about PHA at www.pha.phila.gov

Cover Story

Council President Clarke, Councilmembers, State Legislators announce Joint Effort to prohibit Firearms and Other Deadly Weapons from City Parks and Recreation Facilities

City Council President Darrell Clarke (5th District), flanked by members of City Council and the Pennsylvania General Assembly, announced a joint legislative effort to prohibit firearms and other deadly weapons from being possessed at Philadelphia parks and recreation centers.

Following several incidents of gun violence at city playgrounds in recent weeks, Council President Clarke announced a renewed effort to prohibit guns and other deadly weapons at city recreational facilities. This time, state legislators are part of the city's efforts and promised similar efforts in Harrisburg.

"We cannot sit idly by as gunfire erupts and disrupts the safe havens that our city rec centers and playgrounds are," Council President Clarke said. "We're taking legislative action in Philadelphia to prohibit guns and other deadly weapons at any recreation facility in our city, and our legislative delegation in Harrisburg is focused on similar action to enable our public safety efforts. We own and operate these rec centers and parks, and we have every right to set reasonable rules and regulations to protect our kids and adults from harm."

Council President Clarke was joined at the Mander Recreation Center in Strawberry Mansion by City Councilmember Cindy Bass (8th District), chair of Council's Parks and Recreation Committee and by state legislators – Rep. Donna Bullock (195th District), Rep. Movita Johnson-Harrell (190th District) and Sen. Vincent Hughes (7th District).

Rep. Bullock said her staff was planning to introduce state legislation in Harrisburg this fall that will enable Philadelphia to take this legislation action locally to prohibit firearms at city recreation centers.

"If the Commonwealth allows us to prohibit firearms in courtrooms, then it should permit Philadelphia to prohibit guns and other deadly weapons at city recreation facilities," Rep. Bullock said. "Members of the Philadelphia delegation are working closely with Council President Clarke

and all of City Council on a number of public safety initiatives to curb gun violence in our city."

City Council and the Mayor's Office approved legislation in 2013 that prohibited firearms at city recreation facilities, but there was no similar legislative step in Harrisburg, and the city law was not enforced. Harrisburg support in the form of enabling legislation is essential as Philadelphia takes action to protect its citizens from gun violence.

Two incidents of gun violence erupted at city playgrounds in the last month. In June, six people were shot, one fatally, at the Finnegan Playground in Southwest Philadelphia following a graduation party and cookout. Earlier this month, seven people were wounded by gunfire at the Baker Playground in Overbrook during a basketball tournament.

A total of 526 crimes were committed – including 18 gun crimes – at city recreation centers in 2018, according to data supplied to City Council in May by the Parks and Recreation Department. Two murders were committed at city recreation facilities last year.

Citywide, there have been 639 shootings so far in 2019, and 820 individuals have been arrested for illegal possession of firearms.

"We're going to do whatever it takes to stem this tide of gun violence in our city, and we're going to make city recreation centers safe havens for every child in our city," Council President Clarke said.

Darrell L. Clarke represents the 5th Council District and serves as President of Philadelphia City Council, the 17-member legislative body of Philadelphia City government. A lifelong resident of North Philadelphia and an equitable housing and public education advocate, Council President Clarke works to ensure that every neighborhood in Philadelphia is a community of choice.

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