

Spring 2025
Volume 4, Issue 1

THE Key Wester

a seasonal newsletter for residents of the



HOUSING AUTHORITY

OF THE CITY OF KEY WEST, FLORIDA

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COMMUNITY MEETING TO DISCUSS NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

We are excited to invite you to an upcoming community meeting to discuss an important new development in the Poinciana Plaza neighborhood. Plans are in motion for the construction of 54 new affordable workforce housing residences, and we want to hear from you!

This meeting will be an opportunity to learn about the project, ask questions, and share your thoughts on how it will impact our community. Representatives from the development team and the Housing Authority will be present to provide details and address any concerns.

MEETING DETAILS:

Date: Friday, April 4, 2025

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Poinciana Gardens Senior Living Complex—1664 Dunlap Drive, Key West
(Enter through the front doors and enter the large dining room on your right.)

Workforce housing plays a vital role in ensuring that local employees—such as teachers, healthcare workers, and service industry professionals—can live close to where they work. This development aims to provide quality, affordable housing options while strengthening our community. We encourage all residents to attend and take part in shaping the future of our neighborhood. Your input is valuable!

No RSVP is required to attend this meeting. For more information, please contact **Lisette Carey** at **305-296-5621** or **CareyL@KWA.org**. We look forward to seeing you there!

IMPORTANT DATES

Palm Sunday/Passover Begins—April 13

Tax Day—April 15

Good Friday—April 18
(KWA Offices Closed)

Easter Sunday/Passover Ends—April 20

Earth Day—April 22

Cinco de Mayo—May 5

Mothers' Day—May 11

Memorial Day—May 26
(KWA Offices Closed)

Fathers' Day—June 15

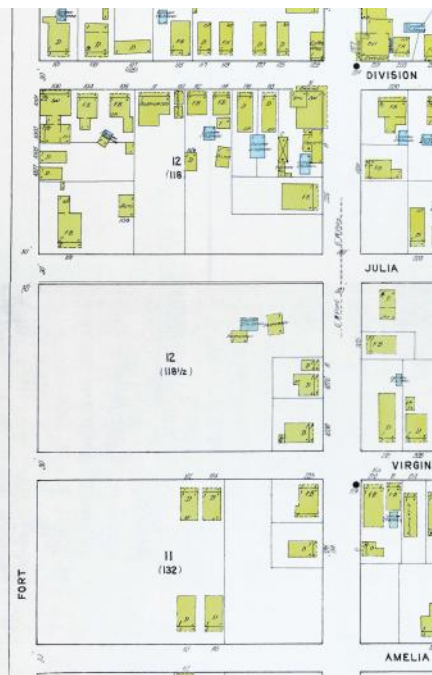
Juneteenth—June 19
(KWA Offices Closed)

HISTORICAL REMEMBRANCE

FUTURE FORT VILLAGE—1912

In 1912, thirty years prior to the construction of Fort Village in 1942, Julia St. & Virginia St. ran right through to Fort St. There was a grocery store on the corner of Emma Street and Division (soon to be renamed Truman Avenue), a saloon and restaurant next door, and several dwelling units throughout, including a chicken house!

According to the Sanborn Map Company insurance map from April 1912, the population of Key West at the time was approximately 22,000.



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Residents,

I hope this message finds you well. You may have seen in recent news reports that there could be potential changes at the federal level regarding staffing and funding at the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). I want to personally assure you that, regardless of any discussions or decisions in Washington, your local Housing Authority remains steadfast in its mission to provide safe, stable, and affordable housing for all our residents.

Our programs continue to operate as they always have, and we remain committed to serving you with the same

dedication and support. While we recognize that federal funding changes could occur under any administration, we are confident in our ability to adapt and navigate any challenges that may arise, as we have for over eighty years. Our team has structured the agency to ensure that any potential external impacts are minimized, and that the services and support you rely on remain in place.

We will continue to advocate for you and keep you informed of any relevant developments. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to our office.

Thank you for being a valued part of our community!

In service,

Randy Sterling

“The difference between a hero and a coward is one step sideways.”

- Gene Hackman (1930-2025)



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Vanessa Sellers

Director of Administration & Procurement

Interview by Peter Batty / Photo by Petra Sanchez



What position do you currently hold at the Housing Authority?
I am the Director of Administration & Procurement.

How long have you worked for the Housing Authority, and where did you work before? *I've been with the Housing Authority a little over five years. I previously worked in the Planning Department for the City of Key West.*

What was your position when you started with the Housing Authority? *I started as an Administration Coordinator while undergoing training to eventually take over procurement responsibilities.*

Where are you from originally? *I was born in Indiana, but we moved to Broward County, Florida when I was very young.*

Tell us how you came to live in Key West and tell us about your family. *I moved to the Florida Keys 11 years ago after becoming engaged to my husband Eric. I have a daughter who is away at university, a stepdaughter who has a successful career in the medical field on the mainland, and a stepson who just graduated from the fire academy.*

What are your hobbies? *I enjoy cooking all kinds of cuisines, gardening, reading, and on Saturday mornings, hunting for treasures at estate and rummage sales!*

What are your favorite restaurants? *Broil on Cudjoe, Tavern & Town at Beachside, and Latitudes on Sunset Key.*

Do you have pets? *We have several chickens, 3 cats, 2 ducks, and a dog, plus an additional cat we are temporarily watching while my daughter is overseas. Recently, we started caring for an outdoor bonus cat that has made itself very comfortable on our property and patio furniture. We are still trying to figure out the mystery of who she belongs to and where she came from!*

What changes have you seen since moving to Key West? *The traffic in the morning coming into Key West continues to worsen, but I appreciate the changes at the airport and all the additional flights that have been added in recent years. It makes getting away for short trips much easier and less expensive than it used to be.*

Do you want to join our awesome team?

Check out the job opportunities on page 3 of this newsletter or on our website at www.kwha.org!

MINIMUM WAGE IN FLORIDA

Effective September 30, 2024, the Florida minimum wage was increased to \$13.00 per hour, with a minimum wage of at least \$9.98 per hour for tipped employees, in addition to tips, through September 29, 2025.

APRIL is National Stress Awareness Month

Life can be stressful—you may feel stressed about performance at school, traumatic events (such as a pandemic, a natural disaster, or an act of violence), or a life change. Everyone feels stress from time to time.

Learning what causes or triggers your stress and what coping techniques work for you can help reduce your anxiety and improve your daily life. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. Here are some activities you can try when you start to feel overwhelmed:

- Keep a journal.
- Download an app that provides relaxation exercises (such as deep breathing or visualization) or tips for practicing mindfulness, which is a psychological process of actively paying attention to the present moment.
- Exercise, and make sure you are eating healthy, regular meals.
- Stick to a sleep routine, and make sure you are getting enough sleep.
- Avoid drinking excess caffeine such as soft drinks or coffee.
- Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- Reach out to your friends or family members who help you cope in a positive way.

RECOGNIZE WHEN YOU NEED MORE HELP

If you are struggling to cope, or the symptoms of your stress or anxiety won't go away, it may be time to talk to a professional. Psychotherapy (also called talk therapy) and medication are the two main treatments for anxiety, and many people benefit from a combination of the two.

If you or someone you know has a mental illness, is struggling emotionally, or has concerns about their mental health, there are ways to get help.

If you are in immediate distress or are thinking about hurting yourself, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988** or chat at **988lifeline.org**.

(Source: National Institute of Mental Health)

GOOD TO KNOW!

The Monroe County Public Library at 700 Fleming Street in Key West offers Computer Classes every Tuesday & Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.! Topics include Basic Microsoft Word & Resume Formatting. Stop by their front desk or call 305-292-3595 to sign up for an upcoming class.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE KEY WEST HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Housing Authority of the City of Key West, Florida is dedicated to providing excellent customer service and assistance to its tenants, applicants, & landlords by employing and retaining a highly qualified and well-trained staff that supports its mission.

Current Employment Openings (as of 03/24/2025):

- Carpenter (F/T)
- Housing Assistant (F/T)
- Housing Mgr. (F/T) (*Marathon*)
- Maintenance Mechanic (F/T)
- Resident Care Supervisor (F/T)

How To Apply:

To apply for a position with the Key West Housing Authority, please submit a completed Application for Employment, a completed Criminal & Traffic Background Authorization Form, & a signed job description for the position you are applying for.

Via Email:

Kathy Wright
WrightK@kwha.org

Via Postal or Hand Delivery:

The Housing Authority of the
City of Key West, Florida
Attn: Human Resources
1400 Kennedy Drive
Key West,
FL 33040



PEST CONTROL SCHEDULE



Fort Village—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Garden View Apartments—
1st Wednesday of each month

George Allen Apartments—
2nd Wednesday of each month

Jack T. Murray Senior Complex—
2nd Wednesday of each month

Lang Milian Apartments—
2nd Wednesday of each month

Poinciana Gardens—
2nd & 4th Wednesday of each month

Robert Gabriel Apartments—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Roosevelt C. Sands, Jr. Affordable Housing Complex—
3rd Wednesday of each month

Senior Citizen Plaza—
4th Wednesday of each month

Please promptly report any pest control issues, including bed bugs, to the Maintenance Department or your property manager.

LOOKING BACK

Winter was a productive season! Below are just a few of the exciting things that happened the past few months:

- ◆ Staff hosted a Christmas dinner party for the residents of Senior Citizen Plaza
- ◆ Started work to paint all of the stairs, decks, and railings at Roosevelt C. Sands Affordable Housing Complex
- ◆ Replaced the roof of the auditorium at Senior Citizen Plaza
- ◆ Replaced all of the shingle roofs for the 33 buildings at Poinciana Plaza with new metal roofs
- ◆ Replaced the roof of the pavilion at Robert Gabriel Site C
- ◆ Continued working with an architect on design of up to 54 new residential units at Poinciana Plaza and working with the City to obtain approvals to build
- ◆ Issued an Invitation for Bids for new metal roofs for all of the buildings at George Allen Apartments
- ◆ Welcomed a new member to the KWAH Board of Commissioners, Mr. Charles Major

RESIDENT ACTIVITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

WITH MR. GARY

“Great communication begins with connection.”

Oprah Winfrey, television producer and host, author, philanthropist

ATTENTION Housing Authority High School Seniors!

It is time to apply for vocational training or college scholarships for your education next year. The Housing Authority has scholarship opportunities for student tenants who live in our communities! Don't wait. Apply today. Call Mr. Gary.

“When I got my acceptance (and scholarship) to college, it felt like a dream come true.” Jaime Harrison




The KWAH's CallMax system is up & running. Get real time updates about scheduled maintenance, water shut-offs, pest control, office closures or community activities. Make sure your housing manager has your current phone number & email address, or complete the CallMax update form when you pay your rent.



SUMMER CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

Give your child the opportunity to attend a **FREE** week of summer camp with one of our incredible partners!

 **Reef Relief's CORAL CAMP** offers an exciting week of environmental education, where children learn about coral reefs and marine ecosystems while developing swimming and snorkeling skills as they explore the underwater world.

Key West Art & Historical Society's ART CAMP introduces children to art and local history in engaging and creative ways, with a new theme each week to keep the experience fresh and exciting. Scholarships are **limited**, so be sure to contact **Mr. Gary** as soon as possible to secure a spot for your child!



Thank you to Impromptu Classical Concerts for free admission to your 2025 concert series, & thank you to Monroe County Social Services for transporting our residents! We had a great time!



Visit the Monroe County Sheriff's Office Animal Farm free of charge the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month from 1 – 3 pm at the Sheriff's Office Headquarters on College Rd. For more info, call (305) 293-7300.

Gary Young
Contact Info
youngg@kwha.org
or
(305) 304-5568



Attention Residents of Senior Citizen Plaza & Jack T. Murray Senior Complex: Our community partner, Monroe County Social Services, provides transportation to the Publix and Winn Dixie shopping centers. Please speak to your Housing Manager for details, and sign up by calling Mr. Gary!
(305) 304-5568

Your Housing Authority offers a **FREE** after school program for families who reside at Lang Milian, George Allen, Robert Gabriel & Fort Village. Elementary and Middle School students have fun during play activities and receive assistance with homework, reading, & math. Check out our new Computer Lab!

Call Mr. Gary TODAY! at (305) 304-5568 and schedule an Open House visit to our classroom at Building 13-G, Lang Milian Apartments, 301 White Street near the new playground!

