

Reading is My Superpower! Receives Award of Merit

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) named Greensboro Housing Authority's (GHA's) "*Reading is My Superpower*" a Merit Award Winner and nominated the program for a National Award of Excellence. This simple, low-cost program provided a great service to GHA youth and helped create a connection between GHA staff and the young residents they serve.

Thanks to 27 heroes, the "*Reading is My Superpower!*" program did more than feed the body of those attending the Summer Lunch Program in our communities, it nourished young minds as well. These heroes, all GHA staff members, volunteered their *Reading Superpower* and a portion of their lunch hour to visit and read to children receiving lunch in our communities. By becoming *Super Readers*, GHA staff was able to show themselves as adults who cared about the people living in GHA communities and whose love of reading could have a far reaching impact on the youth.

"*Reading is My Superpower!*" far exceeded our objectives and expectations. Our objective was to share the love of books with GHA youth and present books as sources of pleasant, valuable and exciting experiences. During the nine-week program, twenty-seven heroes read nearly 100 books to the 457 children having lunch in GHA communities with a total of 50 volunteer hours spent introducing the youth to some great stories.



Due to the success of "*Reading is My Superpower!*" and the eagerness of our youth for books, GHA purchased and installed Little Free Libraries in four of our communities. These communities were carefully selected in locations where, due to distance, walking to a local branch library was not an option. The need for the libraries was illustrated by a family that attended each summer reading session in their community. The four children would bring books with them and said their mom would ride on the bus with them each week to the library so they could each check out books during the summer. At one session the children came without their books. When asked about their lack of books, they explained that their mom didn't have enough money that week for the bus so they couldn't get new books to read. Hampton Homes, the community they live in, was one of the first to receive a library.

"*Reading is My Superpower!*" combined existing resources to offer this low-cost literacy program for our youth and challenged us to do more to place books in the hands of youth living

in our communities. Recruitment is now underway to find this summer's superheroes who will help GHA youth continue their love of books and provide stories to those having lunch at a GHA Summer Lunch site.



The NAHRO Agency Awards Program was created to give national recognition to the achievement and innovation of NAHRO agency/organizational members throughout the country; to provide additional opportunities to inform the public of the best in housing and community development; and to create a resource bank of information on significant, innovative activities performed by housing and redevelopment

agencies and community development departments. Since 1989, NAHRO has honored more than 5,500 programs.

The Agency Awards Program is a two-tiered program consisting of the Awards of Merit and the Awards of Excellence. The first tier of the program, the Awards of Merit, are submitted to National NAHRO and sent to Regional Juries for review. The second tier of the program, the Awards of Excellence, are selected from the Award of Merit winners nominated for an Award of Excellence by the Regional Juries. They are sent to National Juries who may select up to 24 Awards of Excellence in a given year.