

ihcda

SPRING ISSUE 2023

the magazine



Women in Housing and Community Development





From left to right: Robin Curry-Shumaker completes a management fellowship at UCLA Anderson; Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch, Elva James and Area IV team at the 2021 Indiana Housing Conference; Mary Grounds, Dr. Bertha Proctor, and PACE team

Spring has arrived, and with it comes a flurry of activity in every corner of IHCDA. Though we're proud of the work we can do from the office, there is satisfaction to being out in the field, interacting directly with partners and constituents and bringing many success stories to all 92 counties in our state. Our partners are an essential part of the work we do, and we've chosen to highlight their work in the following pages.

Much of what IHCDA does happens in concert with local community action programs, or CAP agencies. They are the first stop for many of the people served by our programs and represent cities, towns and rural areas across Indiana. Of the 22 CAP agencies throughout the state, 11 are led by women as executive directors. We hope you enjoy getting to know these individuals, their organizations, how their careers led them to community action, and their advice to future leaders.

Readers will notice this issue focuses primarily on women serving in our partner programs and leading

housing efforts around the state. IHCDA is committed to empowering those who have historically been excluded from the housing industry, and this commitment is reflected in both personnel and programs. ULI Indiana's Real Estate Diversity Initiative (REDI) is a program open only to women and people of color, that offers a 15-week course designed to teach development concepts and hands-on modeling with experts in real estate. We feel our industry should reflect all the communities it serves and are proud of efforts like REDI to increase diversity in the industry and decrease barriers for developing leaders in the field.

Earlier this year, we partnered with Ivy Tech Community College of Muncie-Henry County to select two emerging developers to participate in the 2023 Rental Housing Tax Credit General Set-Aside. Through our Emerging Developer initiative, IHCDA seeks to widen the pool of Hoosier developers by selecting women-, minority-, or veteran- owned businesses. Fittingly, the selection committee included four single mothers from the Muncie area, all of whom are Ivy Tech students. Their perspective

on what potential developers were proposing was invaluable to the process, and all four brought incisive reasoning and the benefit of experience to the table. The two selected developers, in addition to creating affordable housing, were also tasked with addressing a challenge in their community. Read on to learn more about these innovative housing developments and the impact they will have on their communities.

We've dedicated this issue of the magazine to the many women who administer our community programs and partner agencies. Through their efforts and tenacity, we continue to pursue our goal of giving all Hoosiers the opportunity to live in safe, affordable, quality homes.

Jake
Executive Director
jsipe@ihcda.in.gov



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As a quasi-state agency, the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority is committed to serving the entire spectrum of housing, from homelessness to homeownership.

Our charge is to provide housing opportunities, promote self-sufficiency and strengthen communities, in order to build an Indiana with a sustainable quality of life for all Hoosiers in the community of their choice.

As part of the Lt. Governor’s Family of Business, we work with other state agencies, private and not-for-profit entities and local units of government to help develop innovative solutions for housing and comprehensive community development.

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WOMEN IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Shikha Bhattacharyya

Executive Director, reTHink, Inc.

What was your first job in the community development industry?

It wasn't my job. I just started a non-profit organization with the idea of community gardening. Sustainability was big on my mind. Environmental sustainability in gardening is one way to do it.

When we moved here, I chose to stay home because I had kids and there were no jobs available. I kept hearing [in Terre Haute], 'there is so much poverty, there's so much hunger.' Here, I see that there's so much land available. So, I was like, 'why don't we put gardens on these lots then?'

Right now, reTHink has three community gardens in one neighborhood, and one community garden outside our building, zero waste store, and our plastic upcycling space.

reTHink gardens and all our projects are about education and empowerment. That you can do this and don't have to depend on others to donate food. If you have a little piece of land, you can put some seeds, water them, and see your own tomatoes and zucchinis grow.

I work on the idea that if you give a man a fish, you feed them for a day. You teach them to fish, you feed them for a lifetime. It's about the idea and the empowerment that comes from doing.

My vision for any community I live in is for it to be cleaner, greener, and healthier.

Cleaner: by reducing waste and by recycling more, by composting.

Greener: we want to have more green spaces because trees give us air.

Healthier: if we eat healthy food, take care of the environment and each other, and use plastic-free products, we will be healthier.

What advice do you have for someone looking to lead their community?

I don't know if you can lead the community by being a leader. You have to be a servant and serve the community. You become a leader by serving and by putting yourself out.

Advice that pertains to my work is that you have to always fundraise. You're giving an opportunity to be a part of something and make a difference. That has really shifted my perspective on when I fundraise and how I ask people.

A lot of people come here, and we do have a lot of community support. I wish that more people who can make a difference would take the time to come visit, if everybody came and not see reTHink as just an organization. It can't be just me and not just for the environment. It's for us.

What is a little-known fact about you?

I don't think people would know that I used to be an anxious, stressed out, and depressed person, especially after I came to this country. I came with an idea that, 'oh, I'm going to be a world-famous scientist.' My picture didn't work out the way I had hoped for. I was really suffering from depression and anxiety. Until one day I said, 'you know, I did not achieve my dreams in the way that I wanted to. So, what is it that I can do for others?'



reTHink is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 2015 in Terre Haute "with the goal of creating a cleaner, greener Wabash Valley."

They have programs in upcycling plastic, zero waste education, composting, and also have several community garden spaces.

Their 2021 CreatINg Places project, **Community Rocks Vegetable Garden**, raised \$5,000. They recently launched a second crowdfunding campaign, the **Peace Garden**, through the program.



WOMEN IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Jody Heazlitt

President/CEO, New Hope Services, Inc.

Years in housing and community development: 13

What was your first job in the housing and community development industry?

VP/Director of Social Services at New Hope Services (NHS) initially working on HOME applications and compliance and then adding RHTC developments.

I started in the human/social services side of NHS and after 10 years added Housing and Community Development to my responsibilities. I lead the organization through our three divisions: Ability Services, Family Services, Affordable Housing.

Why are you passionate about housing and community development?

Social impact. For me affordable housing is an additional human/social service we provide. Many of the families we serve come to us with no or unstable

housing. Once stable housing is in place a family is able to work on their other needs i.e., parenting skills, budgeting, mental health, employment, transportation. Housing is the foundation of success for a family unit.

What is your vision for the community?

Equity. If people meet their goals and are successful then the community as a whole is better off, improving quality of life for everyone.

What advice do you have for someone starting their career?

Be willing to commit to the hard work. Results often take time when serving people in any capacity. Don't expect recognition. Find work that meets your passions and strengths and be willing to make mistakes and own them.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

Take care of yourself first.

What do you wish people in your community knew about the work your organization is doing?

For many of our residents the apartment communities we build are the nicest places they have ever lived, it is amazing to see the sparkle in someone's eyes when they receive the keys to a brand new modern beautiful living space. It adds confidence and security in their life.



LEADERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Building Future Leaders in Housing and Community Development

By Dani Miller, Developer, Flaherty and Collins

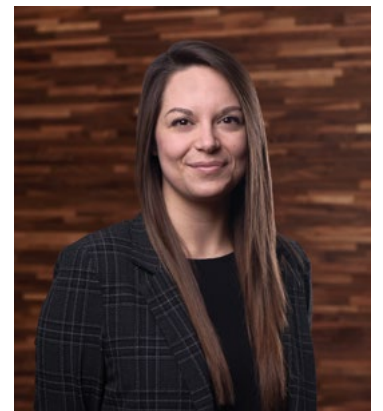
Co-Chair, Urban Land Institute of Indiana, Real Estate Diversity Initiative

Thursday afternoons may feel like an ordinary Friday eve to many, but for Urban Land Institute (ULI) of Indiana’s thirty-five Real Estate Diversity Initiative (REDI) scholars, Thursdays are for sharpening skills, building networks, and chasing curiosities.

Each three-hour class starts similarly, with program co-chair Keith Veal, Vice President of Development at Buckingham Foundation, taking an intentional moment to tell the class, “In case you haven’t heard it today, I’m happy you’re here.”

And while that sentence has me playing Lizzo’s song “Special” on repeat, I think it embodies the program’s message—there is space for people of color and women in the real estate industry, that we belong, and that our perspectives, talents, and grit have the power to drive the equitable and sustainable future we want for our families and communities.

A key tenet of ULI Indiana and REDI’s mission is to elevate a new generation of land use and real estate leaders who reflect the communities in which we live, work, and play. The REDI program, which is only open to women and people of color, is a 15-week course designed to teach core real estate development concepts and hands-on development modeling through a group case-study project, all while integrating mentorship and networking opportunities with industry experts.



“REDI is more than a course, it’s an ecosystem that provides mentorship and advocacy, and supports the skill and career development of people of color and women whose individual and collective talents have been absent from the industry,” says Keith.

In an industry where the learning curve is steep and imposter syndrome is all too familiar—especially for those who have been historically excluded from a seat at the table—programs like REDI, through exercises like demystifying industry jargon, mock development presentations, and intimate networking sessions, build confidence for those of us who are just starting our journeys into the field.

“REDI has been incredibly valuable for my professional development. I’ve learned new concepts and skills that are directly applicable to my career goals. It’s been great to learn from people who look like me!” says REDI scholar Sarah Schwomeyer, who currently works for the Indianapolis City-County Council.

ULI Indiana is not the only organization making moves to further DEIO (diversity, equity, inclusion, and opportunity) in the Indiana real estate landscape; Prosperity Indiana, Martindale Brightwood CDC and IHEDA have all recently launched initiatives for emerging developers of color and women. The synergy between these programs begins to build a robust pipeline of diverse talent that feeds an inclusive real estate network where we can all thrive no matter our race, gender, or zip code.

Diverse voices and talents are being amplified, and people are taking notice. Several industry colleagues have recently reached out with job opportunities that they’d like me to share with the REDI cohorts. This is part



of the ecosystem we strive to build. If access—to training, to people and networks, to social and economic capital, to career pathways and opportunities—is the destination, programs like REDI are the vehicles that get us there.

“REDI is paving the way for a brighter future in real estate by promoting diversity and inclusion. Being accepted into the program has not only provided me with valuable knowledge and resources, but also a sense of belonging in a community that celebrates differences. REDI proves that diversity is not just about checking boxes, but about creating a truly inclusive environment where everyone can thrive and succeed,” says Delon Pettiford, an Associate Manager at Stryker and current REDI scholar.

The REDI program is in its fourth year and runs annually from February to May. REDI utilizes a competitive application process and is intended for women and BIPOC individuals who want to accelerate their careers in the real estate industry. You can learn more about the program and eligibility at <https://indiana.uli.org/programs/diversity-initiative>.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the trailblazers, risk-takers, and disrupters who have paved the way for our current and continued successes; we are standing on the shoulders of giants. And while we are proud to contribute to this supportive and inclusive network, there is still much work to be done to ensure meaningful access to capital and opportunity for emerging developers. If you are interested in getting involved or sponsoring this impactful program, please reach out to ULI Indiana Executive Director, Jen Mitchen at Jennifer.mitchen@uli.org.



LEADERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



IHCDA Partners with Ivy Tech to Select Emerging Developers for Rental Housing Tax Credit General Set-Aside

The selection committee included four single mothers who are students of Ivy Tech Community College and members of the Ivy Parents Achieve Success with Support (I.PASS) program.

Earlier this year IHCDA partnered with Ivy Tech Community College of Muncie-Henry County to select two emerging, first-time low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) developers to participate in the 2023 Rental Housing Tax Credit (RHTC) General Set-Aside. On January 12, 2023, eight developers presented to a selection committee comprised of Jake Sipe, executive director IHCDA, and four single mothers who are students of Ivy Tech Community College. The committee then selected two developers to receive LIHTC funding from IHCDA.

IHCDA SELECTION COMMITTEE

The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) Selection Committee is made up of four single mothers who are attending Ivy Tech Community College. All four committee members are members of the Ivy Parents Achieve Success with Support (I.PASS) program. The committee has been chosen to select the winning bid for the development project spearheaded by the IHCDA.



Alexandria "Ali" Kline
Program: Elementary Education

Ali plans to begin working in elementary education through substitute teaching while continuing to work on the business she recently opened. For Ali advocacy is a moral requirement that allows her to assist in bringing awareness and change to the cracks in society. She recently joined Growing Remarkable Opportunities with Women (GROW) a group in which members help one another to be accountable, share their knowledge and grow their businesses. The group has created a safe place for women and plans to expand in the future.

"To be an advocate means to use my abilities to speak up and make a difference."



Brittini Miles
Program: Healthcare Specialist

Brittini plans to continue her education after Ivy Tech. She wants to get out more and advocate for education and healthy lifestyles. Brittini is instilling this knowledge in her son. Being involved in the community is important to her. Brittini feels that without community involvement people will not know how to get help and that help won't be common knowledge for the community as a whole.

"If people don't know what's out there, how can they get help?"



Lenore Mason
Program: Healthcare Specialist

Lenore is currently working as a dialysis technician. She plans to remain working in the Muncie community helping people. Her goal is to continue her love for helping others by becoming a nurse. Being an advocate for others is important as well. She speaks up for those around her who cannot.

Lenore serves her community by pastoring at a new church, volunteering at the YMCA and leading members and employees in prayer meetings.

"Working together as a community helps build a community into what a community needs to be."



Thaija Wilson
Program: Human Services

Thaija works at a daycare center with children under five. She believes strongly in advocacy and advocates not only for the children she works with but also for those she volunteers in helping at a domestic abuse shelter. She wants to continue this work until she can start her own organization. Seeing others' progress and accomplishments is one of her greatest joys.

"As a community we must work together. The world is a dark and hard place. We all have to work together to keep our community going."

LEADERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Pictured left to right: Jacob Sipe, Thaija Wilson, Alexandria "Ali" Kline, Brittini Miles, Lenore Mason, and representatives from Ivy Tech Community College. Thanks to these students for their participation and collaboration on the Emerging Developer Selection Committee.

"Affordable housing is critical to Indiana's success, and is a huge piece in fulfilling IHCD's mission," said Jacob Sipe, executive director of IHCD. "We were thrilled to partner with Ivy Tech Community College and the bright students on the selection committee. These women know first hand what opportunities and challenges their communities face and how decent, safe, and affordable housing can help families to thrive in their neighborhoods, schools, and jobs."

The Ivy Tech students on the selection committee are participants of the Ivy Parents Achieve Success with Support (I.PASS) Program. In 2019 the Education Design Lab, with support from Educational Credit Management Corporation Foundation, led a cohort of community colleges through a human-centered design process to dramatically improve completion rates for single mothers by intentionally addressing the unique needs of this population. The lab selected four institutions across the country to participate in the Single Moms Success Design Challenge, including Ivy Tech Community College. The program piloted in fall 2021 on four campuses (Indianapolis, Muncie, Lafayette, and Sellersburg) and includes dedicated wraparound support services, workforce-aligned programming, and career development services for single mothers.

The IHCD **Emerging Developer** initiative set out to select two first-time tax credit developers who are Women Business Enterprises, Minority Business Enterprise, Veteran-Owned Small Businesses, or Service-Disabled Small Businesses.



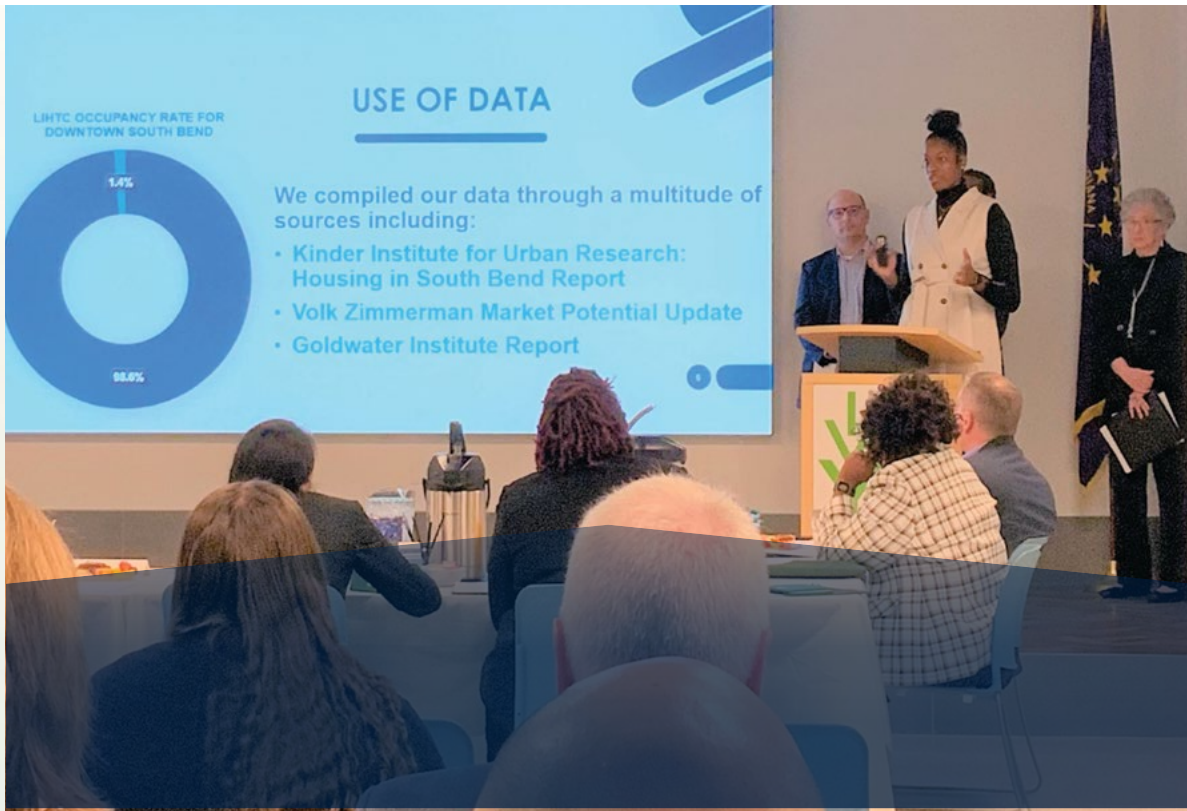
Developers were required to propose a detailed housing concept that identifies and addresses challenges present in their community. The committee selected two developers to receive financing from IHCD. The six semi-finalists will receive training and technical assistance to eliminate barriers and increase their competitive edge for future funding and development opportunities.

In September 2022 IHCD issued a Request for Proposals seeking developers who are Minority Business Enterprise, Women Business Enterprise, Veteran-Owned Small Business, or Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business for the program. An emerging, first-time LIHTC developer is defined as a developer that has never received an allocation of 4% or 9% tax credits in any state or territory. The following developers presented proposals: 2 Thirty-Eight, Capacity Enhancement, Chateaux, CMD Proposals, Henderson, International Property Group, Lorraine Kids, and Martin Commons Affordable.



LEADERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Congratulations to the Two Selected Developers:



Devereaux Peters

Chateaux 14 Development, LLC.

With a stellar background in sports and having led the Notre Dame squad that finished second in the 2012 NCAA women's basketball tournament, Devereaux brings the same energy and drive to Development with a mission of "relentlessly seeking financial solutions for underserved communities through development." She cut her teeth in Real Estate as a Real Estate Broker for Berkshire Hathaway Home Services. She later jumped into affordable housing, obtaining her Tax Credit Specialist Certification, assisting St. Edmund's Redevelopment Corporation with their Chicago and Indiana developments and providing consulting services for RAD conversions. She is currently developing a 30,000 sq foot dance studio for Deeply Rooted dance company in Chicago, Illinois.

The Monreaux Apartments will be a mixed-use, mixed-income development located on a vacant parcel on the southern edge of downtown South Bend in St. Joseph County. The Monreaux will address the need to create and support more budding small businesses and entrepreneurs while creating affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families.



Fred Yeakey

2 Thirty-Eight Properties, LLC

Fred is currently serving as Vice President of Providence Cristo Rey High School and leads the school's unique Corporate Work Study program that connects high school students with meaningful corporate internships throughout Indianapolis. He started his development company because he has always had a passion for community, education, and quality of life. As an educator, he knows firsthand how important housing is to mental and long-term success in life. He realized that he could make a bigger difference in many areas by working to develop and build high-quality, safe housing.

Anthony Grimes Apartments & Family Center will provide housing for women graduating from Seeds of Hope Inc.'s recovery center for addicted women. The development will allow these women to continue their recovery in a supportive environment so they can develop a more solid financial footing and avoid moving back to the environment where their challenges originated. The proposed location is 1435 E. Mickley Avenue in Indianapolis and will create up to 34 units for single parents and their children.

LIHTC funding is used to incentivize private developers to fund the acquisition, rehabilitation and construction of affordable housing communities throughout Indiana. Per IHCD's 2023-2024 Qualified Allocation Plan, 10% of available annual RHTC will be set aside for Developments that further IHCD's mission and housing goals irrespective of scoring. IHCD will exercise its sole discretion in the allocation of the General Set-Aside.

IHCD receives applications for Housing Tax Credits and Multifamily Bonds under the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). The QAP, which is unique to each authoring state, details selection criteria and application requirements for the LIHTC program, Multifamily Bonds, HOME funds, Development Fund and the National Housing Trust Fund in conjunction with tax credits. It also contains all deadlines, application fees, restrictions, standards, and requirements. IHCD has administered the LIHTC program to facilitate the creation and preservation of more than 150,000 units in the state since 1987.

WOMEN IN COMMUNITY SERVICES



Mary Bales

Oaklawn Psychiatric Center

Years in housing and community development: 2

I have worked in housing, specifically with people experiencing homelessness, for about two years.

My first job was with Oaklawn's Motels for Now, which allows people experiencing homelessness to stay in a motel and focus on regaining sobriety. I was a Peer Recovery Coach. I fell in love with the job! That job really fit with who I am and what I believe. I got to walk alongside the people who were struggling with addiction and support them. The other jobs I'd done in the past were what I thought I was supposed to do. That position was funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (in response to COVID-19), and I got to work there for about a year during the height of the pandemic.

Before I started at Oaklawn, I was a professor at Notre Dame. I got my Bachelor's in Psychology from IU, and I got a Master's and PhD from Purdue in Human Development and Family Studies. From 2016 to 2019, I was experiencing domestic violence and, as a result, I began to struggle with addiction. I was in and out of treatment with periods of sobriety. I became a patient at Oaklawn, and then they offered me a job. It's my calling. The people we serve need a voice and so much more from us and our community.

My current role includes a variety of responsibilities. I'm the Coordinated Entry Lead for our region. I also supervise the Motels for Now team of Recovery Coaches and the PATH team. I oversee the transitional housing and independent housing projects and liaise with our Public Housing Authority. A big part of my job is also educating the community, so we can build partnerships.

The Coordinated Entry System is designed to assess the needs of those experiencing homelessness and match them with appropriate housing resources. Mary's region includes Elkhart, Marshall, Fulton, and Kosciusko Counties. Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) teams conduct street outreach to connect those experiencing homelessness with information about services.

I am passionate about this work because we know housing is a basic human right. If you're alive, you deserve housing. Attitudes about homelessness are shifting now. Most no longer have the mentality that you should have to prove you are worthy of having a home. Some of our clients have been without housing for years or even decades. When we help them finally get their head on a pillow in a safe home, it gives me chills to think about how wonderful that is. Recently, we helped a gentleman get into a motel after he had been living on the streets for years. Just a month later,

he died due to some chronic health problems. But I am so grateful to know he and his cat had a home.

The pandemic changed everything. We are always evolving. And people in our region are coming together to learn about Coordinated Entry and affordable housing. We're starting to see everyone have the same goal. I'm proud of our community. We've even got two teams going through the Housing Institute right now.

The Institute is an initiative that helps communities form partnerships to build affordable housing that offers supportive services.

We're all working really hard to support our most vulnerable on the streets. More program and shelter professionals are working together to fill the gaps and even asking how we can prevent homelessness. Just think if we could pivot to prevent homelessness from happening.

My advice is to remind people it's okay not to be okay. That's kind of cliché, but everyone has rough days. We all have permission to ask for help, and we have to give each other grace. I hope my community remembers no one is really that far removed from substance abuse, a mental health crisis, or homelessness. We all need to know there are agencies and people ready to help us if or when we need it. If it doesn't happen to you personally, it may happen to someone you love. How we take care of the most vulnerable residents in our community shows who we are as a community.

What is something you want people to know about you, outside of your career?

Most people probably don't know I just ran a 50-mile race in October. Running sustains my mental health. Also, I love my kids. They're so adorable, and I love being their mom.

WOMEN IN COMMUNITY SERVICES



Beth White

President/CEO

Indiana Coalition to End Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking (ICESAHT)

[ICESAHT] is a team of nine who work to support and advocate for the direct service providers around the state. My job is different every day, which I really like, but a typical day involves making sure my team is meeting our goals, working to build relationships with our partners, and advocating on behalf of survivors and the people who serve them.

There is intersectionality with [housing and community development] and sexual violence work because many of our survivors, especially those who are breaking away from a life of Trafficking, need housing support.

I have worked in and around housing for a while, including as a special judicial officer working on

foreclosure prevention, policy work relating to eviction prevention, and now housing issues relating to survivors of sexual violence. The first job I worked on was as Clerk—we alerted homeowners facing foreclosure about their options and lobbied for an increase in filing fees to support homeowners. I am proud of that work.

I've been very lucky to have a wonderful career as a lawyer, primarily in public service. I think the single most important thing has been the relationships I have built along the way. I sometimes joke "I don't know anything, I just know everybody"—I do know some things, but just as important, I know who to call who will help, collaborate, and assist in my work. I've learned from wonderful elected and appointed leaders, and I've also come along side some truly special people who have been kind and generous with their expertise and assistance. Relationships are everything.

I've gotten lots of good advice, but one important idea is back to relationships. Be kind to everyone, because it's the right thing to do, but also, you just never know...

I think the pandemic showed us the safe and stable housing is ESSENTIAL to life—I truly believe it is a human right. We have to make sure people can achieve this as a starting point for health, security, education and economic self-sufficiency. It all starts with housing.

I don't think many people realize how hard it is to find safe and affordable housing in Indiana. It's getting harder all the time and people are struggling. We need to make sure it's a priority for everyone.



What is your proudest accomplishment?

I've been lucky in my career, but I'm very proud of being elected Marion County Clerk and running 14 elections, more than any other Clerk in Marion County history."

What is a little-known fact about you?

I was a varsity swimmer in high school. You would not think I was an athlete, but I loved it, mostly because I had lots of friends on the team and we had FUN! Everyone should know how to swim.



COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM



Carole Barr

Western Indiana Community Action Agency, Inc. (WICCA)

Years in housing and community development: 14

My first job in community development was as WICAA's Deputy Director in 2008. I became Executive Director in October 2011. Prior to that I was the executive director of a workforce development agency, where I had previously been their finance director. Also, I was on WICAA's Board of Directors for nine years and board president for five years prior to becoming Deputy Director, which gave me an opportunity to learn how WICAA helps our community.

Every day is different with new challenges and opportunities, which makes my work interesting. It includes a wide variety of activities such as managing our organization, meeting with community partners, determining best ways to meet the needs of our program participants, regulatory/compliance issues, working with board members, reviewing financial reports, looking for new ways to serve our community, and planning for the future.

I have always enjoyed helping people and community development is a great way to help people in our community become more self-sufficient and have better lives. It is very rewarding to see the results of our efforts to make a lasting impact on our community.

My vision for the community is for all individuals and families in our community to have the resources to live in

a safe and stable environment, to be treated with dignity, and have hope for the future.

My advice is to be ready for opportunities that may come your way, have the courage to make changes in your career, and always take advantage of chances to learn new skills.

I wish community members knew how hard our employees work to serve the community. Our frontline staff work very hard to assure that services are provided in a manner that is effective, efficient, and respectful. Our management team and support staff work just as hard to make sure we are in compliance with the many regulations we must follow, and manage our financial resources accurately and ethically so that we can continue to grow and provide value to our community.

What is a fun fact about you?

I love chocolate—a day never passes without enjoying some form of chocolate.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Tammy Cunningham

Southeastern Indiana Economic Opportunity Corporation (SIEOC)

This is my 44th year with SIEOC's Community Action Agency. I began my work career with SIEOC in 1979 immediately out of high school. My career path I chose in high school was always to be a secretary or office work. Who knew that my decision would lead me along a path of working with so many outstanding individuals that took me under their wing and helped me grow my love for Community Action.

I manage administration staff while also keeping our Board of Directors informed and involved in the direction of the agency. Each day can definitely bring a different challenge while overseeing and streamlining daily operations.

I have to say that my passion for Community Action was home grown. When I first stepped foot in SIEOC I had no idea what the agency was all about. But with the guidance and mentors that I had early on, it showed me what our agency can do if we work together for the good of the communities we serve.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

If I would have to pick one, it would be our first fundraiser dinner event in 2019. We took a shot at putting together something for the first time, and it ended up being a huge success especially for our first one. The outpouring of our communities and partners showed me that when we come together for the betterment of those we serve, anything is possible.

My mentor and previous Executive Director left me with big shoes to fill, but also left me with a jar of buttons on my desk and told me 'Tammy, if you ever get to a point where the frustration is getting to you, always step back and remember that it takes so many different people, personalities, etc. to make this world go around.' I hope to continue that theme and share that story with many of our staff and partners that visit.



I hope that [the community] knows how hard all our staff members within our agency work to improve the conditions under which people live, learn and work. While all of our work is very rewarding, it can definitely be a challenge at times to meet federal and state guidelines, ensure that we can obtain and maintain that funding, which is something that the community may not be able to see.

What is a fun fact about you?

Something that my husband and I enjoy are attending classic car shows when the weather is good. We own three classic automobiles—a 1955 Chevy Belair, 1954 Ford F-100 Pickup and a 1940 Ford Sedan. And if I could just be a beach bum, I definitely would.

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM



Robin Curry-Shumaker

Community Action Program, Inc. of Western Indiana (CAPWI)

Years in housing and community development: 7 months; 30 years with CAP

I began my journey with Head Start as an Education Coordinator. For housing, I have listened and learned from the sidelines during my time with the agency. I am the new Executive Director for the agency. Day to day, I am working on learning more about programs and funders, reaching out to local community partners, and working with the management staff on our vision for the agency over the next 5-10 years.

Small rural communities need to provide for those who are struggling. Everyone deserves safe and affordable housing while living in comfortable surroundings. The housing and community development services allow our agency to do this type of work while serving as a model to others in what can and needs to be done to make this happen.

My vision is for the agency to continue to work on providing housing services that best meet our demographics. For most areas, this is through senior housing. I want to see us placing senior residents in affordable housing alternatives which could also allow their local homes to be made available to young families, which would support community growth.

I would like for our communities to realize all of the types of services that our agency can offer. I hope that they see us as an initial contact when they are struggling or in need.

The rewards for this work cannot be measured in monetary ways. This is work that gets into your system and remains.

What is a little-known fun fact about you?

I am a reader for the International Christian Braille Mission converting written journal articles and lessons into real voice format.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS



Cyndi Davis

North Central Community Action Agencies, Inc. (NCCAA)

Years in housing and community development: 41

I have worked with NCCAA for 41 years. It originally became incorporated as a single purpose agency named the Michigan City Fair Housing Committee, Inc. It was formed due to the discriminatory housing practices that were taking place in the city at that point in time.

I started out as the front desk administrative specialist, then to Chief Financial Officer, then to Assistant Director. I left the agency in 1986 and came back to serve on the NCCAA Board of Directors from 1990-2000. In 2008, was hired as the Executive Director and remain in that position.

One thing about being a Community Action Director is that every day is not the same. I have had days where I was at a board meeting and then called to check on a roof on a transitional home. In general, I oversee the administrative staff in the various programs the agency offers to review production, accuracy and compliance.

Why are you passionate about housing and community development?

The versatility that comes with working at NCCAA and the satisfaction that you have made a difference in some people's lives. Since becoming the Executive Director, I am most proud of increasing the weatherization program from three counties to covering seven.

The best advice I ever received was from my mentor and founder of NCCAA, Emmet Wise. It was to treat everyone who walks through the door as you would want to be treated because you do not know what a person has gone through before they came to seek help through NCCAA. I have sent this message to all my past and current staff when they start with the agency or are looking to start.

I wish the people in the community/constituents knew that there are over 1,000 Community Action Agencies nationwide and 22 in the state of Indiana that cover all 92 counties. They are all different because they were created to meet the needs of their designated areas.

What is a little-known, fun fact about you?

I am a sports nut, especially NFL football. Favorite team —Kansas City Chiefs. Been playing in football pools for over 40 years and for the past 8 years play in an all-male Football Fantasy League.



COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

Karla Fales

REAL Services, Inc.

Years in housing and community development: 20+

What was your first job in the housing and community development industry?

Secretary to the Early Head Start Director at a Community Action in Michigan. I found I had a talent for program planning and grant development. So I learned, took some classes, and moved into a Grants Management position. I then transitioned into aging services and VERY long story...ended up moving from secretary to CEO in 5 years.

My role is internal and external: make my internal customers (staff) well positioned to be amazing and able to do their work well, while reaching out to the community to bring awareness to our programs and services. In between, it's all the boring stuff like meetings, learning and following the rules, paperwork and reports.

Why are you passionate about housing and community development?

Aging in Place and partnerships.

What is your proudest accomplishment? OR What is your vision for the community?

Development and launching of a new senior center in Marshall, MI.

What advice do you have for someone looking to lead their community?

NEVER say, "it's not my job"—take every opportunity to learn and contribute. Get out of your box (throw that thing away!) and welcome others into your circle. My first funder became my boss, and I later took her position.

What do you wish people in your community knew about the work your organization is doing?

Financial literacy and family development—our programs are about more than giving assistance.

What is a fun fact about you?

I'm a bit crazy about community theatre, hiking and line dancing. I recently moved to Indiana after never having lived any more than 30 minutes from where I grew up. I'm always looking for new adventure!



EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Joyce Fleck, CCAP

TRI-CAP

Years in housing and community development: 26

I've worked for 26 years total with TRI-CAP. However, our agency has only been working in the housing development space for the last 14 years or so.

I started out as Finance Director at TRI-CAP straight out of college. Left for a few years to work in a for-profit, but followed my passion and returned again to work in finance. I've been the Executive Director officially since January 2011, but served as Interim Executive Director for six months prior to that.

Every day is unique. Overall, I manage all agency board of director and top leadership/administration teams which involves a lot of governmental compliance matters. I find myself always looking for ways to say "yes" to opportunities while trying to connect needs and resources in our community. I find myself meeting often with community leaders, legislators, media, donors and my peers, always trying to make our agency the best it can be.

I've always loved everything TRI-CAP does for our community among our many varied services. Overall, we are trying to help others in need whether that is an immediate health or housing crisis, an ongoing journey of education and development towards self-sufficiency, and of course creating affordable housing options for seniors and low- to moderate-income families.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

Sustainability. That doesn't sound very exciting but it is the root of all things that I am most proud of accomplishing in our agency. Just as our team works to leave every client better than we found them, I work hard to leave this agency one day in much better shape than when I came here. Specifically, creating nearly 300 new units of affordable housing; securing ownership of nearly all of our worksites which reduced costs by well over \$100,000 annually; establishing agency endowments in each of our primary counties of service; earning my Certified Community Action Professional designation

and assisting others on their journey to do the same; and uniting/educating our community more about our clients' success stories.

What is your vision for the community?

Solidarity. That everyone not only understands what our agency does, but joins us however they can to help us serve others.

My advice for others wanting to start a career in this field is to know that it is very challenging, but rewarding. One must be willing to stand up for others at all times, including those awful "not in my backyard" situations when a community may not be willing to embrace the development of affordable housing. I actually had a total stranger come to my office and brandish his gun in opposition of a potential housing project. One must be creative, brave, willing to work hard, be flexible, willing to take calculated risks, always learning new things, put others needs' before your own, but also know when and how to provide self-care because burnout is a high risk in this type of work. My faith keeps me strong.

I wish our community understood how hard our team works to help others; how hard we work to obtain the funding that we receive, knowing that the funding is never enough to meet all the needs. Community Action Agencies are very complex and it takes a team of very dedicated people who are always learning new skills to keep up with the rapid pace of changes needed to manage all that we do here.

What is a fun fact about you?

Besides enjoying time with family and friends, traveling, I love to play Scrabble!



COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM



Elaina Freeman

Ohio Valley Opportunities (OVO)

Years in housing and community development: 9

In 2014, I started working for OVO as the Executive Director. I believe that all of my previous work experience had brought me to OVO. I had spent many years working with vulnerable populations, facilitating economic development, and managing state and federal programs.

As Executive Director of a Community Action Agency I can honestly say that no two days are ever the same. OVO is a dynamic organization that strives for innovation and is agile in meeting community needs. As far as daily operations, some of my most enjoyable moments are collaborating with my highly skilled staff for continuous improvement of our programs, working with our Board of Directors and incorporating their public, private, and community perspectives into policies, and hearing from those we serve about how we have positively impacted their lives.

My passion for community development is rooted in the words of the great Dr. Martin Luther King, "The best way to solve any problem is to remove its cause." I truly believe that through community development poverty can be ameliorated and thereby human suffering can be mitigated.

My proudest accomplishment has been helping OVO to be a well-respected leader in the communities that we serve and to have facilitated our many partnerships with other community-based organizations.

My advice for someone looking to lead their community is to be open to new ideas and ways of reaching others. Being a leader is really all about making meaningful connections with others. We are all stronger together. And as you're looking to lead, be sure to have the full and direct participation from the members of the group that your actions will impact.



I wish that more people in the community knew about our programs and services especially those that may qualify to receive them. We do a significant amount of outreach but we can always encourage others to apply for services that may be available to them.

A little know fun fact about me is that when I was a young girl, I won the "Best Attitude Award" at summer camp. Decades later, I still have the ribbon. That recognition by my peers helped to imprint the importance of a positive attitude and I carry that knowledge with me to this day!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS



Elva James

**Area IV Agency on Aging and Community Action Program, Inc.
Area IV Development**

Years in housing and community development: 10

I worked as a Care Manager and then Deputy Director of Aging Services for about 12 years in my late 20s and early 30s. Left Area IV and worked in Developmental Disability Services, then Child Protective Services for 11 years. I came back to Area IV in March 2013.

Housing is the first step to self-sufficiency and opportunity. Community development offers opportunities to individuals and families to become more productive and to have better lives. Even making the difference in one person's life affects families well beyond that individual.

What is your vision for the community?

Making a difference to individuals, changing the community and society for the better, developing new programs and opportunities, providing funding outside of Area IV to other organizations that assist with gaining education, careers and a chance at a better life.

This work is for individuals who have a passion for changing our society, one person, one family, one community at a time. When you have a passion for the work, the work is not really work. Lead for the good of all.



What do you wish people in your community knew about the work your organization is doing?

What a difference it makes to not only the individual, but the family, the community, the state, and the world.

Any little-known fun facts about you to share?

I am a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, a certified master gardener, painter, and I'm from Appalachia.

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM



Dr. Bertha A. Proctor

Pace Community Action Agency, Inc.

Years in housing and community development: 26

I started in community action in 1997 as the LIHEAP Supervisor, next role was Health & Community Services Director—from there Executive Director then dual role as ED and Head Start Director, to CEO.

Tell us about your day-to-day work?

Ensuring compliance with state, federal and funding source guidelines, approving any/all purchases, overseeing Executive Leadership staff, training, and brainstorming ideas for innovative programming.

Why are you passionate about community development?

If we can develop those around us, we can impact entire communities.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

Building an exemplary, committed work team. When those that work in community development are committed and content in their roles—it shows. I work from the inside, out. When they grow and learn, the community follows in learning and growth.

What advice do you have for someone starting their career?

Learn guidelines, and then be innovative with ways to make an impact.

What do you wish people in your community knew about the work your organization is doing?

They should know that we are major collaborators in the work of improving our community. We work with all factions throughout the community to make positive impacts on the lives of others.

What is a little-known fact about you?

I don't eat pork or beef.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Donna Taylor

Human Services, Inc. (HSI)

Years in housing and community development: 28

My first job in the industry was as a fiscal clerk at Human Services, Inc. At the time, I had just moved to Indiana, saw the job posting in the newspaper, thought it sounded interesting and as a worst-case scenario, it would be simply a temporary job that would keep a roof over my head while I looked for something I could call a career. Little did I know at the time, that I would find my calling. I quickly caught the Community Action bug and knew that this line of work was for me.

Over time I grew in my position, earned opportunities being promoted to several positions within the agency, each position allowing me to take on new tasks and learn new skills. All the while, I was growing in knowledge, maturing, and figuring out how I wanted to use my voice and skill set to assist those that need a little support on their journey to independence.

I have now been in my current role as Executive Director for about 5 years now. I enjoy that the day-to-day work is ever changing, and no two days look the same. One day, I might be mapping out a five-year agency plan with our leadership team, the next following up with contractors regarding roof repairs for one of our supportive housing units, working with a program director to enhance community programming or working with community partners to collaborate on an issue. Simply put, at the core of every day, is doing my best to impact someone in a positive way.

This line of work has the ability to be impactful. For the senior individual on a fixed income, who is not quite making ends meet. For the working parents who are struggling to ensure their family has a roof over their head, and for someone who may have hit a rough patch



in life and is working to better themselves. The work being done is easy to be passionate about when you are impacting people with lasting change.

I take pride in everyday tasks done well but if pressed to name one work accomplishment that I am proudest of, it would be improving our agency's financial health by approximately 50% in my tenure as Executive Director, allowing us to do more and be more in our communities.



What advice do you have for someone starting their career?

There is a quote that I find useful: 'The more open your mind, the more open your heart...and vice versa. The greatest leaders are very clear about one thing—that they know very little for sure.' – Cy Wakeman.

Our life experiences and the people we meet along our path help to shape us, but it is through hard work, dedication, and one's integrity that we truly become who we are meant to be.

People in our communities should know that Human Services, Inc. is available to support those who may need a hand in our communities as we work to bridge gaps to stability through coaching, education and partnerships. We have committed staff working throughout all our communities to engage, enhance and empower those in need to help ensure everyone has what they need to thrive.

What is a little-known fact about you?

I served in the United States Army as a Military Policewoman where I met and married my husband of 38 mostly blissful years. I adore my forever puppies, German Shepherd Henry and Labrador Retriever Harvey who both love helping me in the garden when they have the energy.

COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM



Jennifer Trowbridge

Northwest Indiana Community Action (NWICA)

Years in housing and community development: 15

My first job with people who have barriers towards a self-sufficient life started 15 years ago. The focus was residential services for those with developmental disabilities. From there, I administered pediatric home care in which many families, with medically fragile children, need support services due to their income-constrained lifestyle. I then became a multi-state operational leader for family caregivers of those who are on Medicaid and need help to avoid institutional care. NWICA does more than housing development, they manage the funding for programs that allow low-

income and people with disabilities to remain in their homes and among their neighbors. Thus, when I joined NWICA, the housing development piece was new, and I was immersed in housing needs and housing services. We manage the Housing Choice Voucher Program and completed our first Low-Income Tax Credit Property.

My day to day varies between direct project completion, ensuring funding compliance, representing the agency at community events, and discovering ways to enhance service delivery. I am ultimately responsible for the

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

experience people have with NWICA and the overall performance of the organization. Above all else, my biggest initiative every day is to build upon the relationships that are critical for our mission and start new ones!

I am passionate about mitigating poverty and the systemic causes that complicate self-sufficiency. Workforce housing and physically accessible housing is a top need and people will leave our communities if they cannot afford it or it is unsafe to live in their homes. When you talk to people in these situations you want to give them solutions and right now the options are harder to come by because of rent increases and occupancy rates. Additionally, I appreciate my communities and want my four children to grow up near us. I think NWI has incredible potential for economic growth and blossom into a national destination. Economic development is important for my family to live and flourish in this area of the state.

I am excited for what we plan to accomplish within the next 1-5 years. I have a shared vision that families find housing stability and they can feel peace and confidence in their living situation. I recently visited a family of three that just moved into a new affordable housing unit. They let 20 strangers tour their apartment and smiled the whole time. They were so appreciative of the tall cabinets and two bedrooms that they said their young teen had her own bedroom for the first time. There are so many more moments like these we can create.



In a role like mine, I interact with incredible diversities. From rural counties, to urban; from funding source leaders to legislators; from wealthy donors to those who are experiencing homelessness. When I enter conversations with anyone, I know that their responses are shaped by their experiences, and it makes me a better listener to understand those experiences. That is a starting point for influencing change and being an advocate for the people I am representing.

What do you wish people in your community knew the work your organization is doing?

I wish people knew how complicated and compounding solutions can be to mitigate poverty rates. I also wish our lawmakers at the federal level knew how one requirement can prohibit agencies like ours from using funding and making positive outcomes. For instance, the restrictions around a weatherization program make it difficult to be successful.

What is a little-known fact about you?

I helped build Millennium Park in Chicago. My cousin is an engineer for Walsh Construction and when her internship was over, they still needed help. I just moved to Chicago to start college and Walsh Construction hired me for a year to help with organizing blueprints and ensuring the changes were noted for the park.



WOMEN IN COMMUNITY PROGRAMS



Mary Grounds

Pace Community Action Agency

Years in housing and community development: 13

I started at Pace as an administrative assistant in 2012, primarily spending my time in the weatherization Program. I became an energy specialist six years later which incorporated energy assistance and weatherization. In 2019 I was offered the position as weatherization coordinator and finally in 2020 I became the weatherization manager.

Every day is different as the program manager of weatherization at Pace. With ever changing jobs and fast paced production, my daily checklist always includes checking to see where contractors are at with their current jobs, as well as any concerns or issues that may arise with clients. An important part of my position is tracking the budget and making sure we are under our average cost per unit as well as spending the funds within the grant cycle given and meeting the required

benchmarks. Over the years various funding sources other than Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and The Department of Energy (DOE) have given us the opportunity to help more clients such as Share the Warmth, Duke Deferral, Duke Readiness, American Electric Power (AEP), so it is crucial to stay on top of all production to make this program successful.



Prior to working at Pace I was unaware of the weatherization program and the amazing benefits we offer our customers. My passion comes from being able to help so many in need that otherwise would struggle and some would do without. We have many customers that did not have heat prior to weatherization, had no hot water due to a broken water heater, others have saved tremendously long term on their electric bill. Receiving that positive feedback and knowing we are making a difference in some many lives feeds my soul every day coming in to work.

I have had so many weatherization customers reach out to me with such gratitude in the work we do. Over the years I have become passionate about my job and the work we accomplish. This is a constantly changing program that has its days of struggle, but having the passion to keep going and provide services to people in need is the biggest reward there is. My vision and hope for our community and surrounding counties is to better reach those homes that don't know about what we do and the programs we have here at Pace Community Action Agency to help them. I plan to focus specifically on the weatherization program, speaking about what we do and reaching as many households as we can to share our services. Knowing I have done all I can do in order to stay true to our mission statement, by providing support services that improve the community and encourage self-reliance.

What advice do you have for someone starting their career?

My advice would be very simple, have compassion and listen. We get so caught up in knowing our role or expectations that it is easy to forget we are here to serve the people. Listening is key. Most clients that call are overwhelmed and frustrated because of the situation they may be in and you must listen and provide expertise on helping and serving each particular circumstance.

I wish everyone in the community knew that if Pace doesn't have the exact resources they need, we will find those resources for them. Our staff works hard to create referral lists to get people to the contact they need. You will never call Pace and not have some direction given to you no matter the situation.

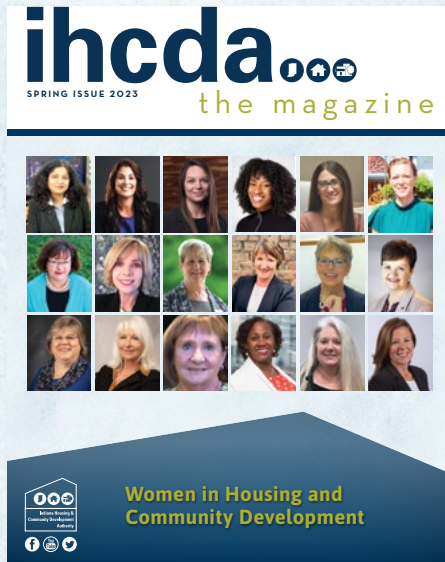
What is a little-known fact about you?

At the beginning of my career way back when, I was a teacher. My degree is in Elementary Education.

It is our pleasure to highlight these inspirational women and emerging leaders in housing and community development. You can find even previous interviews and articles with individuals, teams, and organizations who are propelling the industry forward by visiting our online newsroom to view previous issues of *IHCDA...the Magazine*.



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Willie Dearing
 Outstanding Resident Volunteer
 Award Winner

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 Helping Hoosiers Help Each Other

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Lottie Shaffer
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Holly Lee
 Helping Hoosiers Ramp Up
 Their Independence

Holly Lee (left) stands with Mary Bryant on the ramp that she helped to install at her home in Kennard, Indiana.

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