

November 25, 2008

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Contact:
Office of Communications – Chicago Housing Authority
Adaku Onyeka: (312) 913-7482; aonyeka@thecha.org

Chicago Housing Authority Opens Food Pantry for Seniors *Churches give nearly 3,000 goods for Maudelle's Food Pantry*

CHICAGO – In time for Thanksgiving and the holiday season, the Chicago Housing Authority's Department of Senior Supportive Services opened its first ever food pantry at Maudelle Brown Bousfield Senior Apartments.

Maudelle's Food Pantry is an on-site facility which opens its doors monthly to building residents to distribute canned goods and non-perishable items throughout the year. To mark its opening, the CHA held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Monday, Nov. 24.

Lewis Jordan, Chief Executive Officer at the CHA, welcomed residents, pantry founder Dr. Mildred Harris and CHA staff to the ceremony at the senior building at 4949 S. Cottage Grove Avenue.

"Thanksgiving marks the official start of the holiday season – a time for families, friends and neighbors to get together and count their blessings," said Jordan. "In addition to having a warm, affordable place to call home, this pantry gives Maudelle residents just one more reason to be thankful this year."

Harris, who serves on CHA's Board of Commissioners, partnered with the CHA Department of Senior Supportive Services to open the pantry. Staff installed shelves and converted an old laundry room into a pantry, while Harris solicited churches for food donations.

Goods at the food pantry will be given to residents for free – a welcome service for seniors who must cope with the steady cost of inflation.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average cost of common groceries such as eggs, milk, bread and flour, have increased steadily from an average of \$6.67 in 2006 to \$7.71 in 2007; available figures show the cost for the same items have increased to an average of \$8.58 in 2008.

"For seniors living on a fixed income, keeping up with the rising costs of food can be difficult," said Commissioner Harris. "We hope local churches and charities will continue to support this project, so the pantry can stay stocked and open for Maudelle residents not only during the winter, but also throughout the year."

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Churches God First Ministries, Higher Love Missionary, New Life Non-Denominational Christian Church and Vessels of His Love Church have already answered Harris's call by donating nearly 3,000 non-perishables before opening day.

Primerica Financial Services and the Evangelical Christian School have also provided goods for Maudelle's 90-plus residents. The pantry will be open at least one day a month to residents, and the hours of operation may change depending on resident need and the volume of donations.

Nearly three dozen residents attended the opening ceremony, with almost 50 more stopping by throughout the rest of the day to sample the pantry's offerings.

Earlean Fleming, a 14-year resident of the building, says she looks forward to the next time she's able to pick up a few items from Maudelle's. "This is wonderful. It's nice to know that somebody is thinking about us and our needs," she said.

For more information about Maudelle's Food Pantry or other senior services, contact Donna Dixon, CHA Director of Senior Programs, at (312) 913-7400.

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About the Chicago Housing Authority

The CHA was created by state legislation in 1937 to create and expand affordable housing opportunities for low income families and seniors. Today, through federal and other resources, the CHA assists approximately 35,000 families who participate in the Housing Choice Voucher program in private units owned by private landlords. In addition, the CHA owns 15,500 units for families in scattered site, traditional public housing or mixed income developments and 9,500 units of housing for senior citizens in 56 senior developments across the city.

About the Plan for Transformation

In 1999, the City of Chicago began a multi-billion dollar, 15-year initiative to renovate or replace the CHA's entire portfolio of 25,000 public housing units throughout the city. Currently, 67percent of the units have been completed, including the comprehensive renovation of the entire senior developments and scattered-site stock. Eighty percent of the portfolio is scheduled to be complete by 2009. The Plan is a collaboration between the CHA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Chicago and its many agencies, area businesses and non-profit organization.