

NEWSLETTER

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SERCULATOR

Southeastern Regional Council of Housing and CD Professionals
National Association of Housing Redevelopment Officials

FAHRO
Clearing a Course for Our Future



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SARASOTA—

Sponsors nation-wide reading program

Sarasota Housing Authority has joined other agencies around the country in embracing the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading (gradelevelreading.net). The campaign's three main areas of focus are: 1) ensure our kids are ready-for-school entering kindergarten, 2) that our kids are in school every day (attendance matters), and 3) that our kids continue to learn in the summer and not slide backwards, as many low-income kids do each summer. I want to personally salute NAHRO's Past President Preston Prince for incorporating campaign sessions in recent NAHRO conferences and at the regional and state conference levels, as well as for establishing a NAHRO task force on this issue.

Consider these stats: 61% of low-income children have no books at home; children living in poverty hear as many as 30 million fewer words than their more affluent peers; more than 80% of low-income children are not reading proficiently at the end of third-grade; after 3rd grade we read to learn rather than learn to read, so most kids who can't read proficiently by 4th grade struggle in later grades and often drop out. In light of these sobering, tragic facts and with so many

kids in our care, we believe that we must do everything we can to give them a solid foundation for success in school and in life.

Sarasota Housing Authority (SHA) has sponsored two voluntary pre-kindergarten classrooms which are run by a local provider and has opened a learning center where kids go after school to do homework, use learning software in a computer lab, and receive individual reading coaching by local school teachers. We have stocked a children's library, and we sponsor periodic book giveaways with the city police officers. We have an early head start center for 0-3 year-olds. We also have a unique agreement with the school board to provide us with attendance data and grades for each of our kids. With that data, we celebrate good grades and meet regularly with the schools and families to focus on kids who are chronically absent. These efforts may have been late in coming, but we are now 'campaign disciples' focused on our kids' academic success and increased life opportunities.