In August 2018, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) honored the Community Development Commission/Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (CDC/HACoLA) with three Awards of Merit. The winning projects included: Promoting Healthy Communities for Seniors, South County Homeless Initiative Program, and the Rowland Heights Community Center.

Of the three entries, the Promoting Healthy Communities for Seniors Program was selected to compete for NAHRO’s Awards of Excellence, and ultimately brought home a win to Los Angeles County. The Program will be honored, along with other Award of Excellence winners, at NAHRO’s National Conference and Exhibition in Atlanta, GA on October 25-27, 2018.

“These agencies have put a lot of thought, creativity, and hard work into helping residents improve their lives and into revitalizing their local communities,” said NAHRO President Carl S. Richie, Jr. “I am proud to celebrate their achievements.”

The NAHRO Awards of Merit Program was created 19 years ago to recognize agencies who found innovative ways of making a difference in their communities and in the lives of the people they serve by creating affordable housing, revitalizing their neighborhoods, and developing initiatives such as job readiness programs, public-private partnerships, disaster prevention projects, and more.

Promoting Healthy Communities for Seniors
A Program offered in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health designed to help seniors lead healthy lifestyles to better age in place.

South County Homeless Initiative Program
This Program gives preference to homeless families when a public housing unit becomes available in the CDC/HACoLA’s South Scattered Sites development.

Rowland Heights Community Center
The 19,000 square-foot Center was designed to house multi-purpose rooms, exercise rooms, activity and meeting rooms, offices, new tennis courts, a new basketball court, onsite parking, and other related on and offsite facilities.
August 28, 2018, marked one year since the launch of the SMART Funding business loan program. In the past 12 months, the CDC/HACoLA has assisted a variety of Los Angeles County small businesses, such as Hong Kong Bakery and Deli, by providing almost $1 million in loans.

Hong Kong Bakery and Deli, located in Torrance, was started in 1982 and quickly became best known for its authentic Hawaiian-style baked cha siu bao, a teacake with bread on the outside and different types of meat inside. As Hong Kong Bakery became an established restaurant, a Chinese deli was added to expand their menu offerings.

With the help of a SMART Funding loan, the company expanded its wholesale operation, upgraded equipment, renovated its store fixtures, updated its flooring and menu boards, enclosed its patio to serve more customers, and hired four new employees.

Hong Kong Bakery and Deli is currently analyzing the acquisition of a food truck to offer their dishes to the local community.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Mainstream Housing Choice Voucher Program (Mainstream Vouchers) is one of the many housing assistance subsidies the CDC/HACoLA offers. Mainstream Vouchers provide rental assistance for non-elderly persons with disabilities who are transitioning out of institutional or other separated settings; at serious risk of institutionalization; homeless; or at risk of becoming homeless.

On September 4, 2018, the CDC/HACoLA received 79 vouchers for a funding total of $916,688, giving the agency the 13th largest allocation of all 285 public housing authorities nationwide. The newly awarded vouchers will supplement CDC/HACoLA’s existing allocation of 100 Mainstream Vouchers. The last issuance of Mainstream Vouchers was in 2005.

The CDC/HACoLA will administer the Mainstream Vouchers in partnership with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and the Los Angeles County Health Agencies, a collaborative partnership of the Los Angeles County Departments of Health Services, Mental Health (the lead Agency), and Public Health to serve homeless patients who have a chronic illness or disability or are high utilizers of their services. The Health Agencies will coordinate or provide supportive services that will enable the individuals to live independently in the community.
Celebrating Higher Education

On July 19, 2018, the Los Angeles County Community Development Foundation (LACDF) awarded over $24,000 in Housing Authority Resident (HAR) Scholarships to 26 public housing and Section 8 participants attending a four-year university, community college, or vocational program. Awardees were recognized during the 2018 Reality Check Conference held at The California Endowment in Los Angeles.

The one-day conference, exclusively for participants of the CDC/HACoLA pursuing higher education, focused on life-skills workshops, career panels, and educational resources. Scholarship recipients included top high school graduates and first-generation college students aspiring to succeed in their chosen careers.

The LACDF is celebrating its fifth year offering the Reality Check Conference and Scholarship Awards Luncheon at The California Endowment. Since 1997, nearly $324,000 in scholarships have been awarded by LACDF. Scholarship funds are made possible through the generous donations of the California Community Foundation, Edison International, and the employees of the CDC/HACoLA.

Kids vs. Comedians Basketball Game, a Slam Dunk

On July 17, 2018, the CDC/HACoLA collaborated with comedian Marlo Williams to launch the first Kids vs. Comedians basketball game at the Carmelitos Public Housing Development. Ms. Williams’ fellow Def Comedy Jam comedians took to the court to play youth from CDC/HACoLA’s Carmelitos, Harbor Hills, and Nueva Maravilla Public Housing Developments.

The comedy team took time to motivate the youth to stay in school, dream big, and work hard for what they want to achieve. On the court, the comedians and youth displayed their athleticism through tough but friendly competition.

CDC/HACoLA was also represented on the court, with a team of staff members helping the youth residents warm up for the big game against the comedians. CDC/HACoLA staff also hosted activity stations such as bowling, mini golf, and Jenga for residents wanting to enjoy themselves while cheering on the sidelines. The spirit of the event was kept light and fun with barbecue and music by DJ Marty Mac.

The CDC/HACoLA strives to go beyond housing its residents by establishing partnerships and supportive services aimed at encouraging healthy lifestyles and personal success.
These days, work-life balance can seem like an impossible feat. As Federal funding fluctuated in the past few years, CDC/HACoLA staff, like many professionals across the country, have been asked to do more, with less. Employees have families and personal responsibilities to manage along with the day-to-day demands of their work. Finding a balance in managing these demands while continuing to make room for personal wellness can be challenging.

The CDC/HACoLA is committed to supporting employees’ personal wellness and celebrating what it collectively achieves through the dedication and willingness to serve clients.

On August 6, 2018, the agency unveiled its Serenity Room, a quiet, serene, distraction-free space. A relaxing place to step into for just a moment, to find respite, to take a breath, and refocus in the midst of the day.

Further, on August 23, 2018, to thank employees for their hard work and dedication to serving the residents and businesses of Los Angeles County, the CDC/HACoLA hosted a picnic with games, contests, and wellness resources. The event lent the opportunity for staff to reconnect with co-workers outside of their cubicle settings.

Finally, on August 31, 2018, the agency held its annual Employee Service Awards ceremony celebrating employees that have dedicated their careers to the CDC/HACoLA for 20, 25, and 30+ years. These employees have invaluable knowledge and expertise in their program areas, and are true representations of the agency’s dedication to serving Los Angeles County.

The CDC/HACoLA is dedicated to ensuring employees know they are valued, and are given the tools for long-term personal and professional growth.