

## Stepping Up to the Challenge: The Vision Revealed

### Description



By Jessica Schultz Pleasant

**Solving community problems requires vision and follow-through. While many in Anchorage recognize the difficulty of addressing homelessness, real vision begins upstream from the obvious personal tragedy of so many—by assuring those on the cusp of homelessness do not fall into the abyss.** That is the mission of ***Shiloh Community Housing, Inc. (SCH)***, which held its ***First Annual Juneteenth Celebration and Capital Campaign Kick-Off*** at its new ***Community Resource Center***, located in the Mountainview Community in Anchorage, 3127 Commercial Drive, on June 16, 2023.



D. Sheneé Williams, Shiloh Community Housing, Inc. CEO.

Goal of the center is to **disrupt the cycle of homelessness**, not for homeless people, explained **D. Sheneé Williams, CEO**. *This is for people who are housed, we don't want to add more people to the homeless community that we all know is very strained. We're trying to keep people housed. We have an idea of what we need to do to assure as many as possible are living a self-sustaining life.*

# The Community Resource Center

*A One Stop Shop to Meet Your Needs in Your Neighborhood!!*



Shiloh Community Housing, Inc. will expand program services and meet the urgent needs of our community through the development of a Community Resource Center. The goal of the Community Resource Center is to develop, operate, and maintain a multi-purpose venue that generates revenue and safeguards long-term organizational sustainability.



## Meeting the community's needs

Shiloh Community Housing, Inc. vision is to remove the barriers to safe, affordable housing such as age, income, sustainable employment; lack of education or under-education; and lack of training/skills which would prevent a person from obtaining sustainability and acquiring permanent housing.



## The Resource Center will provide:

- Offices for lease; with the vision that agencies and service providers will operate in a centralized location.
- An internet café that will make high-speed broadband services available for those that can't afford it; will also offer access to printer, copier, and fax machine.
- A soup/sandwich shop and food options for users of the Internet Café and other patrons.
- Several conference spaces will be available for community/business meetings; these can also serve as community gathering places.
- A wellness center will provide access to physical and mental health services and training for entrepreneurs, job referrals, and money management (from budgeting to wealth building).
- A furniture bank where donated items will be distributed.
- A certified kitchen that can be rented for meal preparation by portable food service businesses.

**For more info contact**  
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## Hand-Up Instead of Hand-Out

This SCHI event featured a fundraising telethon to raise capital for the center. Blessed by the contribution from GCI of a very substantial building, it is the dream of organizers to establish a place where persons in need can learn of options and means for reaching first objectives and then Life Goals.



Hear it here: <https://youtu.be/q8L37r7chsg>

Outside the Resource Center was live music, food, and face painting. The lively program was structured around luminaries of the Black Community and music of the culture. Weather was beautiful and attendees even more so.



Kristen Long and her partner (not pictured) performed a Gospel Rapp.

During the event Alaska resident **Chantelle Martin**, 30, was at work providing face painting services. Her four-year-old son **Nehemiah** was by her side, full of charm and a big smile. Chantelle moved to Alaska from California and was guided to resources that brought stability and employment to her life. She is now a trained certified nursing assistant.



Hear Martin here: <https://youtu.be/eQHhAhFEGA>

Martin is on the path of entrepreneurship, creating a business providing the public with opportunities to have fun with art and community. *We're just out here doing what we love to do. We love to paint,* said Martin.

**Martin can be hired for social events. She also offers private parties for up to 10 people. Her prices are affordable, as she provides refreshments and the art supplies needed. She has a clear drive to make her child's life better by improving their circumstances.**

From the Program celebrating Juneteenth:

**George Washington Carver**, aka *The Peanut Man* was ahead of his time, contributing to environmental science and sustainability before it became fashionable. Local musicians performed examples of the historical progression of black inspired music genres—blues, gospel, jazz and hip hop

[1]Why Juneteenth is Important.

**Tours of the Resource Center highlighted the vision for what might be the last time before construction is completed. Optimism prevailed, with each room containing poster boards of artist renditions of the anticipated completion—expected in July 2023.**

SCHI CEO Williams is the spark plug with a Board of Directors under Chairman **Ed Wesley** hitting on all cylinders. Williams is **GCI Trailblazer of the Year of 2022**: *I'm excited about today's event to kick off our capital campaign and celebrate Juneteenth., she said.*

## Building a Bridge of Homelessness Prevention

A lot of hand-wringing goes on in Anchorage about the HOMELESS PROBLEM. It's an old problem and it requires initiative, which is what Williams showed when she inquired with GCI about the Commercial Drive facility it was selling. As the CEO of SCHI—with a proven record of addressing homeless prevention since 2007—Williams made sense when she pitched her vision. GCI came to believe in the **SCHI Resource Center Concept** so much it DONATED the building to this function. GCI also guaranteed to provide communication services to the resource center for the next five years.

## The Vision Today

Williams described each room's future purpose during the tour. Williams was understandably proud of the community's efforts. A magnificent conference room with large windows on the building's corner walls, facing east with a breathtaking view of the mountains. Other rooms include an area for donation distribution, training areas for skill development, an **Internet Café** and an on-site childcare center for clients. Offices connecting clients to housing needs, and behavioral and physical healthcare services will fill out the mission.

The graphic is a light blue rectangular area with a grid of small white crosses. It contains several elements:

- Top Left:** A dark blue box with the text "SHILOH COMMUNITY HOUSING, INC" in white.
- Top Middle:** A photo of a blue plastic basket filled with various household items like a red fire extinguisher, a green plant, and purple fabric.
- Top Right:** A dark blue box with the text "HOME STARTER KITS" in white, a small house icon with a heart, and the "Shiloh COMMUNITY HOUSING INCORPORATED" logo.
- Middle Left:** A photo of a kitchen stove with a red-handled frying pan and a silver pot.
- Middle Right:** A photo of a storage area with shelves and a desk with a lamp.
- Bottom Left:** A QR code.
- Bottom Middle:** A dark blue box with four white arrows pointing left and the text "scan this code to find out more".
- Bottom Right:** A dark blue box with the text "SEE OUR LIST OF ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE IN NEED" and "We are also accepting donations!".
- Very Bottom Right:** A dark blue box with the text "FIND OUT MORE: 907-770-2993".

Williams explained the center’s financial literacy program, which aims to work with the banking and commerce industries to aid in education and community development. The resource center will be able to teach financial literacy to those older residents that may or may not have had any experience with financial planning.

*We’re going to have all the way from the novice—just learning how to build a budget—to wealth building, retirement planning, investment planning, the whole nine yards from the financial perspective,* explained Williams.

Williams acknowledges a general failure in the educational systems of Anchorage in this regard. SCHI hopes to fill in financial literacy gaps many adults feel they lack, but also to prevent that need in the future.

***This resource center as a whole will fill many gaps, said Williams.***

**A visionary looks forward and SCHI is forward-thinking.** Youth of Alaska are future leaders who will have the duty to maintain all the success anticipated from restoration of Mt View. **SCHI’s LIFE Program** provides transitional housing for young adults ages 18-24, male and female. Williams reported this program has been open in the neighborhood since 2007. In the LIFE Program residents are eligible for up to two years.

Young adults ages 16 to 26 may take advantage of **Life@Work**, Williams said: *We have a workforce development program because we know in order to be sustainable you need a good job. We’re hoping that same population can get the training to get on the right track with the right career.*



**LET'S GET  
to work!**

# LIFE@WORK

Shiloh Community Housing LIFE@Work program is a work readiness program for young adults in-school and out-of-school. The program offers a comprehensive array of services to help young adults:

- ✓ **Attain Work Readiness Skills**
- /// **Remove Barriers to Employment**
- 📎 **Obtain Training Credentials**
- 🎓 **Explore Educational Opportunities**
- 👜 **Discover Employment Possibilities**

Call for more information  
1-907-770-2993

Visit Us at:  
[www.shilohhousing.org](http://www.shilohhousing.org)

For revenue, the resource center will provide office space for rent to organizations affiliated with the center's mission. News of the pending center has resulted in many organizations reaching out to SCHI. *We've had the veterans...the labor unions, come talk to us... [W]e're going to have a job center. So, the **Department of Labor** will be here... this facility plans to house a broad range of services, said Williams.*

SCHI now has a number of facilities to achieve their goals for affordable housing, transitional housing for youth, and a center for furniture donations. Williams stated the donated furniture items will be picked up by the organization. There will be a process to find quality furniture—items that work and new

owners can be proud to have in their home.

**This is a historic first. SCHI Has a Vision and People who say they CARE about Homelessness in Anchorage need to step up with meaningful contributions to this effort, NOW.**

Do you have extra furniture just taking up space?

Shiloh  
COMMUNITY HOUSING  
INCORPORATED

**DONATE TO THE FURNITURE BANK!!**

Call 907-770-1319 if you have items to donate. We accept gently used, clean, complete, working, usable items to provide to clients in need.

FIND MORE INFO @:  
[WWW.SHILOHHOUSING.ORG](http://WWW.SHILOHHOUSING.ORG)

#### References:

[1]Why Juneteenth is Important

Juneteenth has been observed by the black community on June 19 each year. This is due to the fact that not all slaves were immediately freed after **President Abraham Lincoln** signed the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863. Texas was the last region to free the slaves. Today's **Juneteenth** has been known by many names over the decades. It has been known as **Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, Black Independence Day**, and the present official federal holiday is **Juneteenth National Independence Day**.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Lincoln's proclamation freed more than three million slaves in the Confederate states. News did not reach those slaves still in bondage in Texas until two years after the end of the **Civil War**. Union soldiers marched on Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865. The slaves broke out in song and prayer. They celebrated with music, dance, and food. Immediately the residents of Texas began to observe Juneteenth, making the first official Juneteenth celebration just one year

after the event. Over the past century other states began to recognize the date too.

**Category**

1. Alaska Hope
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**Date Created**

June 24, 2023

**Author**

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