Spotlight On…Our Resident Relations Specialists (RRS)

Every building in the MHA has a Resident Relations Specialist (RRS). Your RRS is here to help address any concerns you may have including repair issues, payment issues, building safety issues and more. The RRS will inspect your building and each apartment at least once a year. Along with your building captain, the RRS helps to organize building meetings where you can get updates, exchange information and meet with your neighbors. They also help ensure that every MHA resident is aware of the rights and responsibilities that come along with living in MHA housing.

Rose Rivera is the RRS for the following MHA buildings:
9 East 3rd Street; 13 East 3rd Street; 21 East 3rd Street; 56 East 4th Street; 57 East 4th Street; 58 East 4th Street; 60 East 4th Street; 65 East 4th Street; 83 Second Avenue; and 89 East 3rd Street

Rose can be reached at (212) 477-5340 ext 103 or RRivera@csmha.org.

John Paul “JP” Figueroa is the RRS for the following MHA buildings:
13 Stanton Street; 23 East 3rd Street; 25 East 3rd Street; 27 East 3rd Street; 63 East 4th Street; 67 East 4th Street; 69 East 4th Street; 71 East 4th Street; 73 East 4th Street; 75 East 4th Street; and 77 East 4th Street

JP can be reached at (212) 477-5340 ext 102 or JFigueroa@csmha.org.

Did You Know?

MHA Has Air Conditioner Safety Requirements

Air conditioners that stick out past the window line must be supported by a proper bracket. If you cannot install this yourself, MHA recommends using an insured contractor, store or vendor. It is residents’ responsibility to pay for the bracket and installation. Air conditioners must not be installed in windows that lead to fire escapes. For more information call the MHA office or see: www1.nyc.gov/site/buildings/homeowner/installing-air-conditioning-unit.page

Stay Cool! With some help from the City

The City is accepting applications for their Cooling Assistance Program, which gives out a limited number of free air conditioners. To qualify you must meet Home Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP) requirements and have at least one family member who suffers from a heat-related health problem. You can apply for the program by calling (212) 331-3126 or writing to: NYC Human Resources / HEAP P.O. Box 1401 Church Street Station New York, NY 10008

For more information on the program go to: www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/service/3945/cooling-assistance-program

Con Edison is also offering a $30 rebate for customers who purchase a new Energy Star air conditioner (which uses about 15% less energy than older models). Call (800) 430-9505 for an application or apply online at: conedisonresidential.com/appliance

~ Contributed by Sarah Perillo
When Micha (pronounced Mee-sha) Gerland stepped from his shower that fateful March afternoon in 2015, he expected to get dressed and head to his job at a nearby German restaurant. Instead, a loud boom and his shaking apartment in the East Village made him realize his plans would have to wait. Micha and one of his roommates locked eyes for a moment, grabbed their phones and wallets and headed out the door where they went down a stairway rapidly filling with dust.

When he got to the street and looked back, Micha saw the front of 121 Second Avenue sheared off and a fire starting to spread through the building next door. An illegal tap into a gas line caused the explosion, killed two people and hurt nearly 20 more, some severely. The fire destroyed three buildings on the avenue and disrupted nearby businesses for months.

He lost everything that day -- his home, his belongings, his sense of security -- and became instantly homeless. Up to that time, his life had been more predictable, if adventurous. He’d sold all his belongings five years earlier and moved from Germany to New York City with just two large bags to pursue work and life opportunities.

He eventually settled with three roommates in the apartment on Second Avenue, and as other intrepid people in the city, he juggled several jobs. In addition to his restaurant work, Micha offered graphic design services and tutored adults in the German language. But now he was in survival mode, staying with friends, couch surfing.

Then, a lucky break: a friend pointed him to the Good Old Lower East Side, a neighborhood organization that directed him to Cooper Square MHA, which offered temporary emergency housing for victims of the explosion.

Micha met with Operations Director Joel Hernandez, who showed him a newly renovated studio and offered a one-year lease. Having had roommates to economize, he could now rent without sharing. Although small, “I had my own apartment,” he says.

After that year, Micha qualified to become a shareholder. “It’s the first time I felt that I had a home in the States,” he says. He is now focused on creative projects. After searching in vain for appropriate material for his adult students, “I thought I should write my own book,” he says. Micha is working on several stories based on the experience of a German person coming to the United States and what he will encounter. At the end of each, he will include a related vocabulary list. With his graphic skills, he’ll design the book himself.

Some culture adjustments include the use of air conditioning in homes and businesses. He explains that Germans prefer fresh air. But does he own an AC in the city’s sweltering temperatures? “Oh, hell yes,” he says. And in Germany, “no one stands in line to get in a supermarket.” Here, as any Trader Joe shopper knows, the line is inevitable.

Micha recognizes his good fortune. His commute to his current job at Southern Cross Coffee is a mere three minutes. His place is affordable and he is safe. He hopes to give back to the MHA with his creative skills.

Of his home, he says, “It’s a great gift, it’s an awesome gift.”

~ By Francine Lange

MHA BUILDING UPDATES

Major Repairs – Our Maintenance Dollars at Work

We are planning to perform the following major capital work starting in summer 2018:

- New windows at 13 Stanton Street (to address heat issues in the entire building)
- Major boiler work at 63 East 4th Street
- Replace water heater and circulator pump for boiler at 9 East 3rd Street
- Replace water heater at 83 Second Avenue
- Replace roof door and repair bulkhead at 69 East 4th Street

CULTURE CORNER

Club Free Time...

…is a membership service for New Yorkers that offers free, or extremely reduced admission fees to hundreds of plays, shows, concerts, exhibits and talks around the city.

From Off-Broadway to Carnegie Hall to City Opera - there's something for everyone. It's very affordable - $20 per year!

Check out www.clubfreetime.com

~ contributed by shareholder Rachel Aydt

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

CSMHA: During Business Hours (212) 477-5340 *Wednesday Hours 9am - 3pm / After Hours Emergencies: (212) 396-8927
Cooper Square Committee: (212) 228-8210
Public Assistance, SNAP Benefits, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP): 311

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