NOVEMBER 2026

THE HACA VOICE

From the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville

Feature Story

"You Are Not Alone": Ella Santos Shares Her Story at Helpmate's Vigil

Ella Santos, President and CEO of the Housing Authority of the City of Asheville, spoke at Helpmate's annual Domestic Violence Vigil on October 29, sharing her experience as a survivor.

"My experience has taught me that domestic violence can happen to anyone," Santos said. "Domestic violence does not care about your race, your age, your income, your education, or your title. Abuse does not discriminate."

Santos went on to address the shame that can keep people from seeking help, including those whose professional success or outward confidence may hide what they are experiencing at home.

She also emphasized how access to safe housing can help survivors move forward. Leaving an abusive relationship can mean facing uncertainty about where to live while trying to regain stability. A safe home can provide the space to seek support and begin rebuilding.

HACA is strengthening its policies to better support survivors, including reinstating housing preferences that give eligible survivors of domestic violence a faster path to safe housing. Through referrals from the community's coordinated entry system, survivors can join a priority waiting list.



Throughout her remarks, Santos called for survivors to have a voice in decisions affecting their lives, while making clear that no one owes the public their story.

"Sometimes, the bravest thing a survivor can do is quietly rebuild their own life," she said. "And that is enough."



The Racing to Feed America team is gearing up to serve 1,000 hot meals, give away 250 turkeys, and bring neighbors together on November 21.

Resident Support

Good Food, Good Company: Racing to Feed America Returns

A hot meal, a turkey for Thanksgiving, and a chance to catch up with neighbors. The fourth annual Racing to Feed America event brings all three to the Arthur R. Edington Education & Career Center, 133 Livingston St., on Saturday, November 21, from noon to 6 p.m.

Sponsored by HACA and founded by Asheville native and former WNBA player Rhonda Mapp, Racing to Feed America helps people access nutritious food while bringing the community together. This year, organizers plan to serve 1,000 hot meals and give away 250 turkeys on a first-come, first-served basis. Everyone in Asheville and surrounding communities is welcome.

WNBA legends Kym Hampton and Ivory Latta will host, with music by DJ Supaman and booths where local businesses will share information.

Save the Date

- **When:** Saturday, November 21, noon to 6 p.m.
- **Where:** Arthur R. Edington Education & Career Center, 133 Livingston St.
- **What:** 1,000 hot meals, 250 Thanksgiving turkeys, music, and community resources. Meals and turkeys are available on a first-come, first-served basis.



Resident Support

A Record September: 47 People Move Into HACA Communities

In September, 47 people moved into HACA homes, setting a new monthly record. The milestone reflects HACA's work to improve day-to-day operations, including bringing in an experienced maintenance provider to prepare vacant apartments for new residents more quickly. By streamlining that process and keeping affordable housing at the center of its work, HACA is helping more people move from waiting for a home to settling into one.

Celebrating Marvin Jean Jacques' First Year at HACA

November marks one year since Marvin Jean Jacques joined HACA as Chief Operating Officer. He brought experience in public housing, transportation, and civil rights, including more than five years with the New York City Housing Authority. Before joining HACA, he led communication and engagement for the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Civil Rights. Known for his hands-on leadership style, Marvin focuses on community relationships and improving day-to-day operations.

Staff Spotlight



Marvin Jean Jacques
Chief Operating Officer

"My first year at HACA has been an opportunity to listen and learn. As we look ahead, I want to keep strengthening those relationships, improving how we serve families, and making sure residents feel heard and supported. I'm excited to build on that work."

Officer Spotlight

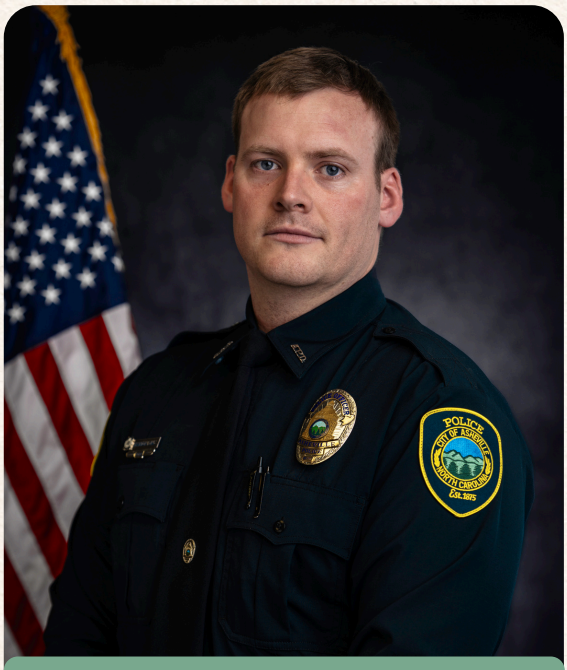
Meet Senior Police Officer Brandon Lonic

Brandon Lonic knew by middle school that he wanted to work in law enforcement. Growing up in Brevard, he found role models among the local police.

“I had great officers who I looked up to,” he says. “It showed me how much of a difference you can make in someone’s life.”

Now with five years at the Asheville Police Department, Lonic serves on its Public Housing Unit. His work brings him into HACA communities, where he wants residents to know they can turn to him with questions and concerns.

“I want residents to know that I am here for them,” he says. “I care about their safety and their concerns.”



Brandon Lonic
Senior Police Officer, APD

By the Numbers: HACA’s Community Baby Shower

HACA’s Community Baby Shower welcomed more than 150 families to the Arthur R. Edington Education & Career Center on Oct. 3. Families received 24,000 diapers, 24,000 wipes, 105 blankets, and 196 sleep sacks, along with connections to local resources for new and expectant parents.

Thank you to Baby2Baby, AmeriHealth Caritas North Carolina, Healthy Blue NC, Sistas Caring 4 Sistas, Asheville Dream Center, Chaka Gordon, and Ascend Women’s Health for helping HACA families.

Staff Feature

Ella Santos Marks One Year as President and CEO

November marks one year since Ella Santos became HACA’s President and CEO after serving as Chief Operating Officer. Her first year has focused on strengthening housing operations and building community partnerships. That work includes connecting residents with community resources, alongside HACA’s core mission of providing safe, quality, and affordable housing.



“Every family we serve deserves a safe home and to know they matter. That responsibility is personal to me.”

— Ella Santos, HACA CEO & President