

## Local, National, and International Guests Celebrate Gateway@Buckman Road Expansion

US Department of Housing and Urban Development  
 Neighborhood Network Website  
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 URL: [www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwnew\\_1001.html](http://www.hud.gov/nnw/nnwnew_1001.html)



Alexandria, VA-"Neighborhood Networks opposes poverty with hope and opportunity," noted Ghanaian Ambassador and guest of honor His Excellency Alan Kyerematen, as he addressed residents and invited guests at the grand opening of the newly expanded Gateway@Buckman Road Neighborhood Networks Center. Addressing residents and invited guests, including local school district and county government representatives and HUD officials, the Ambassador also noted that the level of technological innovation at the center offers residents a basis to compete.

Held on May 9 in Alexandria, Virginia, the opening celebration was a festive affair. Many residents-immigrants from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ghana, Guinea, Jamaica, Korea, Liberia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Sierra Leone, and Togo-dressed in the traditional costumes of their native communities. A dance troupe of young women wearing brightly dyed African sashes danced to the beat of Afro-pop music.

HUD Mid-Atlantic regional director, Milton Pratt, thanked the residents and staff of Buckman Road for making the center a reality. He also praised the programs and equipment at the new center. He noted that the Gateway program reflected one of the great qualities of Neighborhood Networks-that it serves so many different needs. Pratt said access to the center's technology provides residents with Internet access.

Noting the number of operating centers has now surpassed 1,000 nationwide, HUD Neighborhood Networks Director Delores Pruden thanked and congratulated Community

Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC)-the nonprofit that purchased the 204-unit Section 236 subsidized housing complex in 1996-and its staff for their success with the Buckman Road center and previous centers. "This opening demonstrates your commitment to your residents. HUD is so proud of what you have accomplished," Pruden said.

CPDC Chairman of the Board Eugene Ford stated: "I'm glad I lived long enough to see this redevelopment and partnership." Al Browne, Vice President of Community Development Programs at CPDC, highlighted the many outstanding programs and services offered at the expanded Gateway@Buckman Road Neighborhood Networks Center.

Dana Kauffman, Fairfax County supervisor for the Lee district, said that the new opening represented "development, partnership, and investment done right. By name and by fact, we have created a Gateway."

Thomas Dowd, regional administrator for the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment, and Training Administration praised the center's employment training programs. "It takes money to develop our workforce, but money doesn't mean a thing without good dedicated staff," he said. "You have good dedicated people here....This country offers people opportunity, saying: you provide the commitment and hard work. This community provides the opportunity."

Karina Chicas, a local resident and Buckman Road program assistant, delivered an emotional address. Chicas, a single mom, described how the staff and program at Buckman helped to change the direction of her life. "I was flunking out of college, and I didn't care," Chicas said. "Mary Cabriele [CPDC program manager for The Gateway@Buckman Road] was one of the people who believed in me and kept me going. Mary knows what I can do and pushes me. Now I do that for the students I work with. They think because I wear a suit and drive a nice car, that I have it easy. I let them in on the real me-what I went through to get where I am." Chicas thanked HUD and CPDC for caring about the community.

The new center serves a community of 525 residents. It has two rooms that have a combined 29 computers, a reception area, a conference and tutorial room, a small reading room/library, and a workroom. With the expansion of the center, CPDC also plans to offer services to a greater numbers of residents and expand the range of services, including:

- Specialized software application skills training.
- Arts and cultural activities.
- Academic enhancement.
- Job and career counseling.
- Life-skills instruction.
- Community involvement.
- Basic literacy and ESL training.
- Job-skills training.

The Fairfax County Consolidated Community Funding Pool recently awarded grants of \$25,000 per year for fiscal years 2003 and 2004 to the Gateway@Buckman Road to strengthen their after-school academic enhancement programs.