Funding for Public Housing Still Lacking

The Obama administration recently released the proposed fiscal year 2016 federal budget. The proposed budget includes several new program proposals such as tuition assistance for community colleges, but proposed funding for public housing, the housing choice voucher program and related services reflects minimal change.

So once again, having adequate resources is our greatest challenge. While the news is full of stories about a growing economy, a look behind the headlines reveals middle class and lower wage workers are not benefitting from the recovery. A report by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Worst Case Housing Needs: 2015 Report to Congress, just crossed my desk. The report states that 7.7 million Americans not receiving housing assistance were paying more than 50% of their income for rent in 2013, when data was gathered by the Census Bureau. This number is 9% higher than in 2009 when the recession was deepening, and 49% greater than 2003. So bottom line, the need for housing assistance continues to grow for lower income people.

In Summit County we presently have more than 16,000 families on our waiting list. We continue to try to educate local legislators and the public that stable, affordable housing, educational success and employment are all linked. Now, to convince Congress of that…

On a brighter note, we are increasing educational and workforce program efforts to “graduate” people from federal housing programs so that they can become self-sufficient while opening up a rental unit for a new family or individual in need.
Partnership with Laurel Lake Enhances Residents’ Quality of Life

Collaboration between AMHA and Laurel Lake Retirement Community has increased the quality of life for residents at Keys Towers and Sutliff for more than a decade, exemplifying the value of partnerships. Laurel Lake, a non-profit continuing care community, provides a registered nurse to offer encouragement to residents and provide services such as chronic illness management and wellness activities through their Personal Health Partners program.

AMHA service coordinators work closely with the registered nurse to provide support and ensure that other identified needs are addressed, such as transportation services and other public assistance benefits. Outcomes have been monitored, revealing improved overall wellness, health literacy and preventative care practices. One recent survey found that 38 percent of program participants used emergency services in the past year compared to 73 percent of non-participating respondents.

“Our strategic plan includes empowering residents to make sound decisions regarding their health in order to live independently and age in place,” stated Christina Hodgkinson, director of resident services. We look forward to continuing this successful initiative, and thank the team at Laurel Lake as well as all of our community partners.