In February, the Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority participated in the “Affordable Housing & Education Summit, Building Partnerships to Improve Life Outcomes” in Washington, D.C. The event, sponsored by the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Urban Institute, provided the forum for AMHA and two other affordable housing agencies to present program case studies to a national audience. Several other national foundations and organizations concerned about educational outcomes for low income students and affordable housing attended the invitation-only event.

Joining me as participants in the conference and presentation were County Executive Russ Pry, his Chief of Staff Jason Dodson, Akron Public Schools Superintendent David James, Summit Education Initiative Executive Director Darren Wimer, AMHA Resident Services Director Christina Hodgkinson and AMHA Director of Strategic Engagement Chris Yuhasz.

The premise of the summit was, “that every child deserves access to stable housing and quality education to improve life outcomes.” The Akron/Summit County presentation focused on early childhood initiatives serving public housing families, the county-wide system-enhancement plan, “First Things First”, and the “cradle to career” model that depends on broad collaboration of education, government, schools, housing and other service providers to improve educational outcomes for all children in Summit County.

CLPHA and the Urban Institute intend to publish and share the program models highlighted at the summit with other housing authorities and school districts interested in building a stronger link between schools and affordable housing providers.

It was extremely gratifying to receive this important national recognition for work we began in 2007. We enjoy a level of cooperation among partners here in Summit County that is unique. We have said for many years that housing is a foundation for school, work and healthy families. It is exciting and encouraging to see national attention and a policy agenda emerging as a result of this critical research.
Edgewood Village’s Marian T. Hall Building welcomed a very special visitor, Pulitzer Prize winner for Poetry, former Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, and Akron’s own, Rita Dove.

Ms. Dove was raised in the Edgewood area and is a graduate of Buchtel High School. Accompanied by her husband and brother, Ms. Dove came to the senior building to view the special exhibit created in her honor that showcases her highly acclaimed books of poetry, *Thomas and Beulah* and *Selected Poems*. Cheryl Chlysta, branch manager at the Akron-Summit County Library Odom Boulevard Branch and HOPE VI Advisory Task Force member, was also on hand to greet Ms. Dove. Cheryl personally donated the books to the Marian T. Hall Building in 2012 in memory of her late father.

Guests mingled and enjoyed conversations about Akron’s history with Ms. Dove.

Ms. Dove is currently a professor in the Department of English at the University of Virginia. To learn more about her work and accomplishments, visit her home page at [http://people.virginia.edu/~rfd4b/](http://people.virginia.edu/~rfd4b/) and the 2014 documentary, *Rita Dove: An American Poet*, which focuses on Ms. Dove’s childhood and formative years growing up in Akron.