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500 attend annual New England Affordable Housing Management Association conference

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Twelve New England affordable housing professionals and management companies were recognized for their talent and expertise and proven knowledge of property management rules and regulations during the 25th Anniversary Conference and Trade Show of the New England Affordable Housing Management Association.

Also honored were 139 NEAHMA members who, this past year, earned recognition by the National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA). Of these, 122 were facilities professionals. More than 500 people from across New England gathered for the two-day conference at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel, representing a broad cross-section of property owners and management firms, and local, state and federal housing agencies as well as industry vendors. Ten past NEAHMA presidents were in attendance.

In his opening remarks, Scott Ployer, NEAHMA president and director of facilities management & capital planning at The Community Builders, Inc., said, "NEAHMA is financially sound and we are growing." He thanked members for their tireless work to improve their communities and for continued support of NEAHMA and involvement in a wide range of philanthropic and professional development. Ployer announced that the NAHMA Educational Foundation awarded 21 scholarships to students in affordable housing communities -- twice as many as 2012. He also discussed a 2014 initiative to promote a new credential for Green Property Management (CGPM); an affiliation with RentalHousingDeals.com to help prospective residents locate affordable housing throughout the region, and a training initiative co-developed by NEAHMA, MassDevelopment and IREM Boston Chapter 4 presented through Boston's Mel King Institute.

In an open letter to members, Ployer wrote, "Collectively we represent all six New England states. We serve tens of thousands of residents each day, improving their quality of life, providing safe, decent and well-maintained Communities of Quality and, all along the way, dedicating ourselves to helping all of them. Ours is truly a mission of love, hope and, yes, again ... commitment."

In her remarks, Gianna Solari, president of the National Affordable Housing Management Association based in Virginia, commended NEAHMA for its leadership in many areas, notably participation in the new credentialing certification process.

The new designations that were awarded, National Accredited Housing Maintenance Technician (NAHMT) and National Accredited Housing Maintenance Supervisor (NAHMS) are designed "to recognize those apartment maintenance professionals, who, through their completion of strict requirements, have met the highest possible industry standards."

Julie Kelliher, NEAHMA executive director based in Braintree, said those earning the new credentials adhere to a national Code of Ethics and are dedicated to providing safe and decent housing to all eligible residents. She told recipients, "The Credentialing Program will open doors for

you. You will be recognized for your professionalism by current and future employers, and will have the power and support of a national organization. You will also benefit from networking opportunities in the apartment housing industry." Certified NAHMT or NAHMS professionals are listed in the Association's national directory.

Participants attended panels and workshops focusing on industry updates and new regulations from officials of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and state agencies such as MassHousing, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, Navigate Affordable Housing Partners, Maine State Housing Authority, New Hampshire Housing Finance Vermont Housing Finance Agency, Spectrum Enterprises and Rhode Island Housing. Attendees earned professional CEU credits as well.

The conference program included introduction of young affordable housing residents who created posters depicting life in their communities.

The 2013 award winners were:

Exemplary Elderly - Shillman House, Framingham, MA - Jewish Community Housing for the Elderly

Exemplary Family - Davis Commons, Brockton, MA - First Realty Management Corp.

Outstanding Turnaround of a Troubled Property - Blackstone Terrace, Woonsocket, RI - Housing Management Resources, Inc.

National Affordable Housing Professional of the Year (NAHP) - Janet Hines, Peabody Properties, Inc, Braintree, MA

National Affordable Housing Professional Executive of the Year (NAHP-e) - Bill McGrath, First Realty Management Corp, Boston

National Affordable Housing Professional of the Year NAHMS - Steve Donoghue, Housing Management Resources, Inc., Quincy, MA

NEAHMA Property Professional of the Year, Manager - Kerri D'Amico, Peabody Properties, Inc, Braintree,

NEAHMA Property Professional of the Year, Maintenance - Kenneth J. Crowley, JCHE, Brighton, MA

NEAHMA Property Professional of the Year, Resident Service Coordinator - Reina Acarapi, First Realty Management Corp, Boston, MA

Lifetime Achievement Award - Sue Johnson, The Success Group

Agency Staff Member of the Year Awards: Sam Falzone, Vermont Housing Finance Agency and Joe Crissafulli, HUD

Among the conference's gold sponsors attending the VIP reception were: Navigate Affordable Housing Partners, ARS Restoration Specialist, Dauby O'Conner & Zaleski, Bain Pest Control Services, Inc., Pro-Care, Inc., KTM Properties, LLC/ Radiant Electrical LLC, HD Supply, Roto Rooter, Watch All Pest Control, Berman Adjusters and ServiceMaster by Gilmore. The conference also featured a trade show/expo where vendors displayed information about their products and services.

Next year's conference will take place on October 15-16, 2014 at The Four Points Hotel in Norwood. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, employers and policymakers have warned that the region's high cost of housing undermines its ability to attract and retain workers and businesses. Kelliher said "Affordable housing is a key part of America's infrastructure, impacting health care, law enforcement, commerce and educational success. Affordable housing is high on the public policy agenda in every New England state."

Formed in 1989, NEAHMA's mission is to facilitate communication between management agents and local HUD and state housing finance agencies, to provide quality training and education on regulatory, legal, legislative and management related topics and to promote quality affordable housing. NEAHMA is a member of NAHMA, the national association, that includes the industry's most distinguished multifamily managers, owners, and industry stakeholders.

For more information about NEAHMA events and membership, visit www.neahma.org, or contact executive director Julie Kelliher: (781)-380-4344.

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