

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

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February 21, 2014

“City of Norfolk Housing Division Director to Omaha Position”

City of Norfolk Housing Division Director Sheila Miller will soon be leaving her position in Norfolk to assume duties as the CEO of the Douglas County Housing Authority in Omaha. As of March 1, she will be the Deputy Director and then move to the position of CEO in September.

“I’m excited about the new challenges. Many things will be the same as what I’ve been doing in Norfolk but on a much larger scale,” Miller said.

As an idea of how much larger, the Housing Division in Norfolk oversees the distribution of housing aid to 254 families in Norfolk. In Omaha, she will be responsible for over 1300 vouchers for needy families.

Her husband, Bill, who graduated from Norfolk High School and served as a sales manager with LG Electronics, has commuted to Omaha for flights across the country every week for 30 years. For the last year, he has been



living in Omaha and Sheila has commuted there for the weekends. Soon, neither one will need to travel very far home for the weekends.

Sheila started working for the City of Norfolk in 1984 as an administrative assistant with the Planning and Zoning Department. At that time, the department was also responsible for housing issues. Miller replaced Loretta Ludeman in 1998 as the City of Norfolk Housing Director.

Miller said that the division has distributed an average of \$800,000 of HUD funds every year for rental help for the elderly, handicapped or those in financial need. In 2013, nearly \$900,000 was

distributed. The money is not given directly to the renters. It is given out as checks to the landlords who own the rental apartments.

“Through the rental aid voucher system we have helped thousands of elderly and disabled citizens who’ve had no other recourse. We’ve seen people in need who used this opportunity to become educated and have better jobs so they don’t need assistance. This program was a stepping stone for them,” Miller said. Typically, those in need are able to receive aid to pay for a portion of their rent depending on their income. There is usually a waiting list for the 254 vouchers available for renters in need in Norfolk.

Miller estimated that hundreds of homes have also been repaired and made livable through funds made available through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. The division has distributed the funds to Norfolk people in need who wish to rehabilitate their homes or apartments by fixing windows, roofs or making other necessary home repairs.

Though there have been mountains of paperwork and miles of red tape that's required when working with state and national agencies, Miller has also learned about the rewards of government aid.

"It's good not to make presumptions about people that come in the door. Some have real hardships that you don't know about until you get talking to them. There are people who think they are entitled to some of these programs but you can't lump them all together. There are people in the community who really need us," Miller said.

Miller has won numerous state and national awards for her work in the Housing Division including the National Housing Award of Merit for Housing Innovation; the Orville Stanton Distinguished Service Award; and a housing innovation award she received in New York City from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials.

Miller's last day on the job in Norfolk is February 27. A replacement for her position has not been identified.

----Through the Norfolk Housing Agency, the Housing Division distributed \$871,269 to some 100 landlords in Norfolk in 2013.

----The Housing Division distributed state funds to help rehabilitate 15 homes in Norfolk in 2013.

----The Housing Division manages 90 of the 5,000 rental properties in Norfolk- all 90 of which are for low-to moderate-income tenants.

----Including the Housing Director, there are six staff members in the Housing Division.

----The Housing Division conducts day-to-day operations for the Norfolk Housing Development Corporation -a non-profit corporation that has developed low to moderate income housing in Norfolk in the past.

----The Housing Division also provides administrative work for the Norfolk Housing Agency which is an agency necessary to be in existence by the Federal governmental legislation.

----The Housing Division applies and receives HOME funds, Housing Trust Funds and Community Development Block Grants from the State of Nebraska Department of Economic Development for use in the Norfolk community.