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Where will they go?

BY TEVIN STINSON
 THE CHRONICLE

While the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem (HAWS) waits to hear back from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the 201 residents who call Crystal Towers home continue to cope with unsafe living conditions. Lynn Landingham, who was recently relocated to a new unit, said the first night she slept in her apartment she was attacked by bedbugs.

"It's just awful. I feel like nobody should even be living in that building. It's infested with bedbugs. It's a hazard to your health," continued Landingham. "I just moved into a new apartment and they didn't treat it for bedbugs or anything. After the first night, I had to throw my mattress and everything away."

Landingham and other residents said in the past they would see an exterminator come regularly, but they haven't seen any treatments done on the building in months. "It's been over a year since I've seen anything done to treat the bugs in the building," Landingham said. "They don't do anything about bedbugs anymore."

Landingham said residents have also complained about abandoned furniture in the hallways and residents urinating in elevators and other common areas.

The sale of the 11-sto-

ry public housing unit for seniors and those with disabilities was first announced last summer. At the time HAWS said the building was in need of more than \$7 million in repairs that they cannot afford. HAWS Executive Director Larry Woods told The Chronicle the living conditions in the building were "substandard," with constant complaints from residents of bedbugs, roaches, leaks, and a faulty elevator.

In March of this year, The Chronicle received word that HAWS was in the process of closing a deal to sell the property located on West 6th Street behind First Baptist Church. According to HAWS Vice President of Real Estate Development, Kevin Cheshire, at that time they had already identified the best offer, but were waiting to hear back from HUD. Over a month after the sale of Crystal Towers was expected to be complete, the HAWS is still waiting for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to finalize the deal.

Cheshire said, "Right now it's just wait and see if HUD gives us the green light to go ahead and sign the contract." Last week through text message, Cheshire said they were still waiting to hear back from HUD and that he did not know how long it would take.

Despite the current



The sale of Crystal Towers will displace 201 Winston-Salem residents.

Photo by Tevin Stinson

conditions and what seems to be the inevitable sale of the building, many of the residents don't know where they will go when Crystal Towers is sold and transformed into a high-end apartment building, similar to others that have taken over downtown.

Once the sale is approved, HAWS will offer residents the option of moving into another one-bedroom apartment at an-

other HAWS location or a voucher for a one-bedroom apartment, which can be privately owned or outside the city or state. But with a waiting list that is already filled, there aren't many vacancies available for the 201 residents of Crystal Towers and those already on the list.

Which raises the question: where will they go?

As a long-term solution to the pending housing cri-

sis, Cheshire mentioned the sale of Crystal Towers would be used to build smaller housing developments with about 40 to 50 units. Cheshire never mentioned what the plan would be to house displaced residents until the new developments were built.

While sitting in his lawn chair outside the building, a long-term resident known simply as Thomas seemed optimistic

that HAWS would find a place for residents of 625 W. 6th Street to go. In a perfect world, he would like to stay. He said although the building has its problems, Crystal Towers is in a prime location.

"I don't want to move because this is in a perfect location. We're close to downtown, the bus stop is right across the street. This is a good spot."

P.L.A.Y. music program big hit at Easton Elementary

BY TEVIN STINSON
 THE CHRONICLE

Students at Easton Elementary channeled their inner Wolfgang Mozart last week when they showed off their skills on the violin during a concert held in the gymnasium for parents, faculty, and staff.

Since the beginning of the school year, students enrolled in the kindergarten program at Easton have had the opportunity to learn beginner violin techniques from musicians with the Winston-Salem Symphony. The initiative, P.L.A.Y. (Piedmont Learning Academy for Youth)

Music has been introducing students to the violin for the past three years. According to President and CEO of the Winston-Salem Symphony, Merritt Vale, Easton and three other schools, Old Town, Diggs-Latham, and Jefferson Elementary, participate in the music program.

Each student begins with a cardboard violin that they make and decorate themselves. After learning how to care for their cardboard violins for a few weeks, students then upgrade to the real thing.

What makes the program at Easton unique is students receive violin instruction during the school day. At the other participating schools, P.L.A.Y. Music is held after school. Principal Colin Tribby said next year they plan to extend the program to include first graders.

Tribby, who is a mu-

sician and former music teacher at Easton, said it has been amazing to watch the students grow to enjoy the violin and grow in other areas as well.

"They have become so responsible and respectful of the art that they're practicing and they're only kindergarteners," said Tribby. "I can't wait to see how they progress next year as first graders."

During the concert last week, each kindergarten class took turns showing what they've learned so far this school year. Students in Mrs. Baker's, Mr. Greene's, Mrs. Montes' and Mrs. Amara's classes all wowed the crowd with their performances.

For more information on the Winston-Salem Symphony or the P.L.A.Y. Music program, visit <https://www.wssymphony.org>.



Photos by Tevin Stinson

Breely Powell-Fulton, a kindergartener at Easton Elementary, shows off her skills during the P.L.A.Y. Music concert on May 14.

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