

112 at Taylor Homes Begin Punching Clock



BRIAN JACKSON SUN-TIMES PHOTOS

Elaina Robertson (left) and Chavel Adams, and Marvin Jackson (in photo at right), are among residents participating in a jobs program at the Robert Taylor Homes. Elected local advisory councils of Robert Taylor will act as employers of a new cleaning service.



BY OLIVIA WU
STAFF WRITER

With some of their own as bosses, 112 residents of the Robert Taylor Homes on Tuesday stepped into new jobs and training as part of what the CHA claims is its "largest employment program."

It's a response to national leaders "who have said that public housing residents need to work," said Ron Carter, director of economic development for the Chicago Housing Authority.

The CHA joined forces with the Muhammad Ali Community and Economic Development Corp. and the Community Workshop on Economic Development. Elected local advisory councils of Robert Taylor will act as employers of a new cleaning service.

The new janitorial program joins the car-wash, laundry and child-care initiatives already in progress. The goal is to provide entry-level, part-time jobs.

Elaina Robertson, 29, a mother of four, received a cleaning service job. "It means a lot," she said. "It means I'll be in the community and it will be a clean place."

Robertson previously worked as a cashier in a gas station. "I want

to be able to better myself," she said.

Chavel Adams, 29, a mother of three, emphasized the commitment to community. Adams said she last worked at a nursing home and has been on public aid "too long." She took on this program because "I wanted to contribute to the community."

The CHA hopes the small businesses eventually will move into the private sector, Carter said.

At the same time that new workers in the CHA train on the job, they—as well as their bosses—attend classes in life skills, vocational and career development.

Altogether, CHA is investing \$1 million to \$1.2 million of its operational budget on the venture.

Participants should be self-sufficient in between six months to two years, Carter said.

Marvin Jackson, 26, was born in the South Side's Taylor homes. He signed up for the better pay (\$7.50 an hour) to "stay way from trouble" and to set an example to the kids in the community.

Jackson previously worked at a Taco Bell restaurant that was far away and difficult to get to. The Du Sable High School graduate hopes that this initiative "leads me to a better position."