

# Millie Cook Retires from the Akwesasne Housing Authority



On Thursday, July 31, 2014, the Akwesasne Housing Authority paused in its daily operations to celebrate the long time career of Mrs. Millie Cook, who retired from her services to the community after fourteen years.

Millie began her career with the Authority in July 2000 and held several positions within the Resident /Housing Services Department. Millie's work focused heavily on serving the senior residents of Sunrise Acres Elderly Complex. She was also active on the Senior Advisory Committee through the Office for the Aging, and the AHA's Community Fund. She was always rallying to raise funds, help out the seniors with any of their needs, and worked to increase opportunities for senior members to age gracefully in place.

Millie was celebrated during the AHA's employee appreciation day, and was bid a fond farewell at a special dinner held in her honor Thursday night. AHA's HR Manager, Ms. Colleen Leaf, commented that "Millie went above and beyond to bring a personal touch to the services provided to the community, especially the elders." Millie's supervisor, Housing Services Manager, Ms. Melanie Conners, stated that "Millie is a kind and compassionate person, but at the same time she will let a person know their responsibilities as a homeowner as it should be. She was the go-to person for the Sunrise tenants, and she will be greatly missed!" Melanie light heartedly spoke to the rest of us being "very envious" in her retiring, as she presented Millie with some special departmental gifts from her and Theresa (Cole).

Long time co-worker, Ms. Lorraine Thomas, read a heart-felt poem she wrote for Millie reflecting on her choices now that she has retired. Executive Director, Retha Herne, recollected Millie's job interview back in 2000, and fondly related how Millie's personality

fit perfectly for the position for which she applied. She jested on how Millie always had her own little anecdotes to add to a conversation. "In the spirit of saying 'see ya later', because its never goodbye, the staff of AHA are all in this together in wishing you all the joy in your retirement you can muster up, with many new and exciting experiences.... We just have to make you walk out of here with our own little 'gems' as you adjust to life after AHA." Then one by one, in several touching moments, AHA staff brought forth a little sign or placard to place around her neck, read each little message, and said their individual goodbyes with hugs.

Retha then told her, "Millie, we will miss your many contributions to the AHA, the conversations, the comradery, but simply, we will miss you, that spunky happy person we saw every day [for fourteen-years]." Retha's speech ended with a special presentation of a beautiful Mohawk basket made especially for her, with several private notes from each AHA employee and some of the Sunrise tenants she worked with through the years. "Take this, put Punchy to bed, find a quiet corner, and look inside", she said.

Board Commissioner, Ms. Barbara Lazore, then presented Millie with a bonus for her fourteen years of service, on behalf of the AHA Board. She urged Millie to complete her many personal projects, but also said that she may get bored after a while and interested in future employment somewhere else. She jokingly said that she may be a great candidate for tribal chief one day.

Millie said her own words of final farewell with thanks to the AHA, and also reflected on her job interview. "When I came back from Rochester fourteen years ago wanting to take some time off, my sisters told me 'nah, you'll be bored, so apply for a job!' I went through the interview, and thought it went very well. I never thought I'd get the job; then Retha called me to tell me I was hired." "It was the best feeling to hand a new homebuyer the keys to their new home. It gave me great satisfaction in working with the families and seniors in our community."

As one of her several "retirement signs" proclaim, "Retirement is when you stop living at work, and begin working at living!" True, Millie, so true! May you always remember this, and carry our best wishes wherever you go!

~Akwesasne Housing Authority Staff, Board, and Tenants