

Archives

Adver

Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL){PUBLICATION2}

A new beginning

May 13, 2005

Section: A SECTION

Page: A16

Next week, **a new** director takes the reins of Sarasota's public housing, **a** job that comes with decades' worth of baggage. The local community must help him overcome it.

William Russell, appointed by federal officials, arrives at **a** time of crisis and opportunity. The crisis stems from many years of inadequate investment -- social **as** well **as** financial -- in the properties that house hundreds of the city's poorest residents.

The opportunity is of more recent evolution. It consists of heightened community awareness, **new** local funding avenues, political commitments and social-service networking. Utilized properly, these elements present **a** chance to significantly improve public housing, much of which is now obsolete, uncomfortable and poorly maintained -- if not outright unsafe. Such conditions do not inspire cooperation or trust from the residents, whose participation is critical to the goal of well-run public housing.

Indeed, **a** look back over 30 years of news clippings about Sarasota's public housing shows an endemic distrust between residents and management.

Russell's challenge is to overcome that legacy and re-energize an agency beset by financial and maintenance woes.

He'll need to show leadership, fairness and effectiveness. In return, he should expect able assistance from local governments, residents and volunteers, social-service providers, and our congressional representatives (who help set essential funding).

Russell's arrival is **a new beginning** -- and an end, we hope, to the disappointments of the past.

All content © 2004 Herald-Tribune Corp. and may not be republished without permission.

Send comments or questions to [NewsLibrary](#)

All archives are stored on a SAVE™ newspaper library system from MediaStream Inc., a Knight-Ridder Inc. company.