

Bio for nominations for NCRC NAHRO

Alan Zais

NCRC Position you are running for on the ballot: Senior Vice President

Agency and job title: Winnebago County Housing Authority (WCHA) and Boone County Housing Authority (BCHA), Executive Director

Years with current agency: 20

Years in housing industry: 25



What are some of your responsibilities at your agency?

Our agency has included many programs that include HOPE VI, RAD I and II, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Capital Fund Financing Program, public housing, Housing Choice and Project Based Vouchers, a state funded voucher program, Mainstream Vouchers, Veterans Assisted Supportive Housing Vouchers, Family Unification Vouchers and an affordable housing development nonprofit.

But really, my greatest responsibility is to our residents and to my team. For our residents it's the reason for our two pronged strategic direction of mixed finance programs which helped protect the affordable housing programs, and resident services programs to improve the quality of life for families. We have the Resident Opportunities and Supportive Services Coordinator and Family Self-Sufficiency Programs, and this has helped create participation in such demonstration programs as Youth Aging Out of Foster Care and the Ex-Offender Graduated Reentry Program.

For my team, it's ensuring that they see the value and care of their work, while knowing they are appreciated and receive coaching and the ability to bring their insight and creative approach to our residents and programs. And the need of creating the leaders who will commit their lives and grow with our agencies and industry.

Why are you running for a position on the NCRC Board?

I would look for the values I place on our agency for our residents, housing and our team and that my work translate for all of us and our individual agencies and to our representation as a regional NAHRO organization.

For example, our management of BCHA has seen the need to find ways for small agencies to find the resources to expand services and revenue, retain local governance and leverage their representation to our legislators and community leaders. Our management of WCHA has seen a need to find ways to partner with other agencies and leverage community resources to create

these partnerships and relationships. I've worked through this in my career with our membership with NAHRO, as Senior Vice President of the Illinois Chapter and twelve years of serving on the International Resource and Global Exchange Committee of the national NAHRO to learn of the best practices that we can replicate and the disastrous practices to avoid among the programs in other countries. I have also served many years on the regional board for both the International position and as an At-Large board member.

But we all have a personal story of what brings us to work with these programs, and I think I have grown into this through my life. I grew up in a military family and we lived in nine cities across the country in eighteen years with assisted housing. We lost our home for a time because of a sibling in trouble and it led to a break up of our family in a difficult decision to regain housing eligibility. My first management job saw the problems of a person who worked their whole life as a waitress and now tried to get by in their senior years in only one room that they could barely afford to live, another person who lived alone and attended nearby community college while having the mobility of only their left hand, and another person who had to give up all their possessions and family to escape an abusive relationship. We all know stories like these, both of ourselves and the families we serve, and they shape us for the work we bring to this unique and special industry.

My hope is that these many experiences, both professionally and personally, help bring a representation and view for all of us.