



*Armecker Wright (next to Mayor Rahm Emanuel), Oakwood Shores resident and Mariano's baker, celebrating the grocer's ribbon cutting ceremony in Bronzeville with Mayor Emanuel, CHA CEO Eugene Jones Jr., Bob Mariano, Aldermen, project developers and community members.*

A new grocery store coming to your neighborhood is always good news, but for Armecker Wright, it means so much more. The Oakwood Shores resident is one of 97 CHA residents who is working at the new Mariano's in Bronzeville, and her road to success started with her own great attitude, big smile and determination to land a job at the store that's just one block from her home.

CHA sold the land to developers Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives and WBS Equities, LLC and as part of the land sale, Mariano's agreed to hire CHA residents. CHA's role in the project underscores how its investments in people and community assets are making an impact on people's lives and Chicago neighborhoods.

Wright, a former CHA resident who moved to Oakwood Shores almost nine years ago, had been without regular employment for a while and was seeking a job when she walked by the store and noticed they were hiring. She signed up for one of several events sponsored by CHA, Centers for New Horizons and the Chicago Cook Workforce aimed at helping CHA residents get their applications processed.

She was nervous at first when she started the hiring process, but sailed through the screenings and three rounds of interviews, performing well at every stage until she was offered a job.

Her sparkling personality and smile were among the first things the people at Mariano's noticed when she interviewed. Wright said, "They told me 'it was your smile that got you in the door.'"

Once hired, the 46-year old mother of three worked diligently at every training assignment and was moved up another level in the bakery, eventually taking on more duties and responsibilities.

Wright beamed with excitement when she talked about going to work and having a steady job that will help her support her family. "I am so excited. I love serving people. I am so excited that Mariano's chose me to be one of their bakers," she said.

The proximity of the job to her home is important to Wright and underscores how community assets like grocery stores help area residents with not only access to fresh food and produce, but jobs.

"This is down the block from my house, and I don't have to worry about transportation, I don't have to worry about my kids because I am right here," Wright said.

She's ready to get to work now that the store has finally opened. "This is a beautiful place to be," Wright said with her trademark smile. "I am really excited about being here. For somebody to come into your store and see your smile, when they come in the door that's the first thing they get is my smile. Then they get their dessert."