



## **Meet Joy Watson**

**Executive Director**

**Rice County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (RCHRA)**

*SE MN Workforce Development Board (WDB) Member since 2017*



### **Why did you decide on a career in the Human Services sector and who/what influenced you to decide on this career choice?**

I actually have a teaching degree, but didn't get a teaching job right out of college. I applied for a job as a developmental disabilities case manager and ended up really liking the work, so I stayed in the field.

### **Tell me about your role at Rice County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (RCHRA). What is the primary purpose of RCHRA?**

To provide an adequate supply of decent, safe, and affordable housing.

### **What are some of the major programs that RCHRA offers?**

The main program we offer is the Section 8 program, an income-based rental assistance program. We also administer a few smaller rental assistance programs and a home ownership program.

### **Who qualifies for HRA and what benefits does the person receiving HRA receive?**

We serve people who earn less than 50% of the area median income. For families with rental assistance, the family pays at least 30% of their income toward the rent and the HRA pays the remainder.

### **What are some ways RCHRA has worked with Workforce Development, Inc.?**

The HRA administers a self-sufficiency program as part of Section 8, and WDI has provided a variety of classes about work readiness to our participants.

### **How does RCHRA interact with businesses in Rice County communities?**

The HRA offers an economic development loan program with the purpose of job creation; any business in Rice County can apply.

**How has the lack of available and affordable rental housing impeded on the ability of businesses to recruit and hire employees in Rice County?**

Rice County has several large manufacturers, many of whom are expanding and hiring; but there are times when people accept jobs in the county only to later decline because there is no available housing. This is an issue facing all the cities within Rice County.

**Are there any workforce housing programs available to assist businesses with this problem?**

There is a grant program through the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

**Are there incentives available to encourage developers to consider building affordable housing in Rice County? If so, can you tell me more about the incentive(s)?**

Rice County offers tax abatement and an economic development loan program.

**What is the most rewarding part of your work?**

I really love administering the home ownership program. It's so great to see families purchase a home, especially when it's something they never dreamed they could do. It's so nice to be part of a family accomplishing their dreams.

**Any other information you'd like to share?**

Contrary to the stereotype, most our participants are working, most of them full time, but because of the high cost of housing they aren't able to manage without some assistance.