A Closer Look at our Unsung Heroes

Working with Residents

This month, we are focusing on a group of Unsung Heroes who either work directly with residents or ensure that... Read More

Federal Government Passes Trust Fund, Tax Credit Update
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Where Did All the Vacations Go?
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Job Offerings, Workshops and Seminars

Board Meetings
- September 3, 2008
  9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
  Plymouth Housing Group
  2117 Third Avenue, Seattle
- October 1, 2008
  9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
  Plymouth Housing Group
  2117 Third Avenue, Seattle

Monthly Meetings
- September 12, 2008
  12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
  WSHFC
  28th Floor, Board Room
  1000 Second Avenue, Seattle
- October 10, 2008
  12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
  WSHFC
  28th Floor, Board Room
  1000 Second Avenue, Seattle

For more information, contact Haley Wotza at 206.682.9541 or haley@housingconsortium.org

In The News
- The gem in the housing bill
- Bush signs housing bill to provide mortgage relief
- State, homeowners taking on lenders
- Homelessness: What's the deal?
- $56 million in Housing Authority repair needs worry senior tenants
- Street Kings in Seattle

http://www.icontact-archive.com/wdULhsdhg709jEMHRbHlspk2YUmsK7I7w=3  Page 1 / 4
Laura Evans, Homeownership Program Manager, Homestead Community Land Trust

Laura works directly with HCLT homebuyers and homeowners at every stage of the process: Doing outreach, fielding initial inquiries, teaching education classes, working one-on-one with applicants to help them become purchase ready, assisting households through the purchase and closing process, providing ongoing support, and handling re-sales. She is organized, personable, has learned to expertly navigate the maze of rules and regulations that comes with layering multiple sources of public funds, and handles towering paperwork with grace. In her 13 month tenure, she has assisted 18 families to purchase land trust homes. This tremendous accomplishment in its own right is even more impressive considering that she was also learning the ropes in a new field of work.

Federal Government Passes Trust Fund, Tax Credit Update

After seemingly endless steps, major housing reform bill becomes law

If you’ve been following Congress’ action on housing programs, you are probably dizzy by now. Over the last month or so, multiple housing bills have been combined and shuttled between the House and Senate for successive approvals. At long last, Congress passed H.R. 3221, the American Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 on Saturday, July 26th. President Bush signed the bill on Wednesday, July 30, 2008.

A highlight of the bill is the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the first new federal housing program targeting rental production specifically for extremely low-income families since 1974 when Section 8 was created. As part of a compromise, funding set-aside for the trust fund will be diverted to cover potential losses from the bill’s foreclosure prevention programs for the next three years. All funds will be diverted in 2009, half in 2010, 25% in 2011 and in 2012 the trust fund will receive all the intended funds. Using the bill’s formula, the trust fund would have received $557 million in 2007. HUD will administer the funds and has been tasked with developing an allocating plan.

The other key components of the bill for HDC members are the updates to the tax credit program. The bill sponsored by our own Senator Maria Cantwell was incorporated into the larger housing bill and includes many of the provisions supported by housing providers including clarification of the general public use issue which should address recent concerns related to farmworker, artist, veteran and other population specific housing.

This bill contains too many provisions to summarize in this article, so for more detailed analysis see:

Cantwell’s Summary
Seattle Times: “The gem in the housing bill”
National Council of State Housing Agencies’ bill summary
National Low Income Housing Coalition’s summary of Housing Trust Fund

City of Seattle, HDC, Homeless Coalition Host Levy Events

Large turnout demonstrates strong commitment for renewal

As part of the 2009 housing levy planning process, the City of Seattle’s Office of Housing in collaboration with HDC presented an initial assessment of housing needs to an audience of over fifty at the Washington State Housing Finance Commission on July 2nd. The presentation is the result of months of analysis of by OH staff, of census data, market trends and a host of other sources about the housing needs of various populations in Seattle.

The analysis demonstrated the continued urgent need of housing for extremely low-income households. Rents in Seattle have increased 17% over the last two years, making more families rent burdened and forced to choose between basic needs like groceries and health care. In fact, according to OH’s estimates, 21% of renters are paying more than half of their income for housing costs.

Participants in the event asked clarifying questions and discussed issues relating to the levy’s renewal.

The following week, on July 8th, OH worked with the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH) to host another well-attended, energetic event focused on homelessness at the East Cherry YWCA. OH staff gave an overview of the current levy and its accomplishments including nearly 1,000 homes set aside for formerly homeless households. The issue of how the levy relates to other funding sources was also raised including the creation of a backlog of projects funded by the levy but waiting for state funds and federal tax credits.
The group broke into small discussion circles to give input on issues such as how housing can be built more efficiently, whether vouchers should be used and other creative methods of maximizing the levy’s resources.

The Office of Housing’s next step in Seattle’s 2009 levy planning is to convene a group of expert housing practitioners and representatives from a broad base of community interests including labor, business, philanthropy, lenders, and others as part of Technical Advisory Committee. The TAC will meet during September and October to provide advice on levy administration and implementation policies. In addition, OH will convene a group of civic leaders along similar lines as in previous levies. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

HDC has thus far given an overview of the levy at our April Monthly Member Meeting and gathered members in late May for an initial discussion about issues to be considered for the 2009 levy. In addition, a group of HDC members approved by the board have convened to guide HDC’s steps related to the levy.

Where Did All the Vacations Go?

The importance of “getting away”

Fewer and fewer Americans are taking regular annual vacations. In fact, the diminishing number of those that do go on vacation will take work along, keeping themselves in the work frame of mind that the vacation was meant to relieve in the first place. Numerous studies have proven the physical and mental health benefits of taking a regular vacation, especially in this increasingly chaotic society. These benefits include: keeping stress levels low, promoting creativity, staying off burnout, enhancing job performance and promoting healthy relationships.

As it is, vacations are disappearing quickly with only 14% of Americans getting two weeks or more vacation this year. An astonishingly large portion of the population no longer gets any annual leave, while those that do worry that using it could either portray a lack of commitment to the job or lead to a catastrophic result upon their return. It should also be noted that while we Americans are averaging two weeks or less of vacation per year, our European counterparts are averaging five to six weeks per year.

Whether it is to stay at home and tend the garden or be whisked off to some tropical island, time to relax and escape is essential to maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Simply put, the point is this: use your vacation. All the HDC staffers are; you should too.

Sources:
http://www.timeday.org/
http://stress.about.com/od/workplacestress/a/vacations.htm

Employment Opportunities for Housing Organizations

See the HDC employment listing page for more current listings. Deadline for newsletter posting is 25th of the month. All prior postings are erased unless the posting organization renews its posting.

- Executive Director, Environmental Works Community Design Center
- HIV/AIDS Housing Advisor, Building Changes
- Executive Director, WA Homeownership Resource Center
- Project Engineer, King County Housing Authority
- See our website for more information about these and other employment opportunities.

Workshops, Seminars, Conferences

- August 7-8, 2008, Chicago, IL
  Green Homes and Sustainable Communities 2008: The Annual National Symposium on Green Affordable Housing and Development
- September 15-16, 2008, Tacoma, WA
  Housing Washington 2008
- November 5-7, 2008, Chicago, IL
  5th Annual AHF Live Tax Credit Developer’s Summit: What’s Next for Affordable Housing?
- November 5-7, 2008, Boston, MA
  Spectrum’s Annual Symposium
- November 20-21, 2008, Seattle, WA
  Spectrum Tax Credit Certification (C3P) 2008 Classes