U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

THE BRIDGE

THE OFFICE OF HOUSING COUNSELING NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 12 JUNE 2016

Housing Counseling Helps to Attain & Sustain Homeownership

HUD Celebrates National Homeownership Month This Year's Theme … *Dare to Own the Dream*!

Washington, DC - June is in store for a sensational celebration of tweeting, blogging and sharing information. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is celebrating National Homeownership Month, inspiring people everywhere to Dare to Own the Dream.

To commemorate the month, HUD is hosting a Twitter Chat series that will debunk popular myths around homeownership regarding Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans and HUD housing counseling services.

The American Dream is much more obtainable than most people realize. This year's theme acknowledges those who have "dared to own the dream," and encourages potential homebuyers to take that leap of faith and work with HUD approved housing counselors to make their own dreams come true.

Taking the Myth-Information out of Homeownership

To kick off the conversation of homeownership, HUD is conducting a weekly series of Twitter Chats, every Thursday on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. The series addresses misinformation commonly associated with purchasing a home, and will arm audiences with the information needed to debunk specific "**myths**" related to:

- Homeownership (Week of June 6)
- FHA financing (Week of June 13)
- Housing counseling (Week of June 27)

A series of video vignettes, addressing each myth, will be released every Tuesday during National Homeownership Month. HUD encourages everyone to join the conversation about housing myths by using the hashtag **#OwnTheDream,** and to direct their sentiments using the following handles: ***@FHA_gov***, ***@FHAgov,*** ***@SecretaryCastro***, *and* ***@HUDgov.***

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FROM THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Sarah Gerecke
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Housing Counseling

Greetings,

June is National Homeownership Month, which recognizes the critical role owning a home plays in communities across America. The Office of Housing Counseling is proud to have a key role in working with our HUD-approved housing counseling agencies and other housing stakeholders to assist clients to attain and sustain homeownership.

Lately, I've been on the road spreading the word about the benefits of housing counseling because we know that "Housing Counseling Works!" Numerous studies by independent experts such as the Urban Institute have documented that counseled borrowers working with housing counseling agencies have more savings, better credit, fewer debts, fewer delinquencies, better loan modifications, and far fewer foreclosures than similar uncounseled borrowers. Today, there are 2,000 HUD-approved housing counseling agencies that reported outcomes affecting 1.4 million families in 2015.

Impact of Housing Counseling in FY 15

Households that:

Received both one-on-one counseling and group education:	100,872
• Received Information on Fair Housing, Fair Lending, or Accessibility Rights:	213,433
A counselor developed a sustainable household budget:	403,370
• Improved their financial capacity:	178,188
Gained access to housing resources:	170,237
• Gained access to non-housing resources:	113,764
(Homeless or potentially homeless) Obtained temporary or permanent housing:	10,143
• Received rental counseling and avoided eviction:	16,698
Received rental counseling and improved living conditions:	24,663
• Received pre-purchase counseling and purchased housing:	38,145
Received reverse mortgage counseling and obtained a HECM:	52,136
• Received non-delinquency post-purchase counseling and improved home conditions or affordability:	33,564
Prevented or resolved a mortgage default:	93,289
• **Total Impacts:**	**1,448,502**

In this edition of *The Bridge*, we feature agencies making a difference in the lives of clients through education, information, and empowerment. We learn from client success stories and testimonials, the impact of housing counseling on stabilizing the lives of clients and families. For some, it may take a few months to get housing ready and for others, it may take a few years. Oftentimes, the common thread is a dedicated housing counselor who guides the client through the homebuying process for however long it takes.

While the housing market is turning around in a positive direction, we must continue to increase the visibility and stress the importance of housing counseling as a critical part of the homeownership process.

Sarah

INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF HOUSING COUNSELING

Washington, DC - HUD works hard to increase availability and awareness of housing counseling by consumers and key industry partners. National Homeownership Month provides an opportunity to highlight the role that HUD-approved housing counseling agencies play to ensure consumers make responsible choices about homeownership. We also take the opportunity to bust some myths about housing counseling.

During recent speeches, HUD Secretary Julian Castro and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Housing Counseling, Sarah Gerecke shared the importance of housing counseling. On May 10th Secretary Castro spoke of the "Impact of Student Debt on Housing Choices" at the National Association of Realtors *Regulatory Issues Forum*.

He said, "To date, 1.3 million families have taken advantage of our decision to cut FHA mortgage insurance premiums. In 2015 alone, the FHA endorsed more than 753,000 home loans — up 27 percent from the year before. And a majority of these loans are being secured by first-time homebuyers — more than 80 percent of FHA-insured mortgages this past February went to folks opening the door to their first home.

It's just one reason we're working so hard to expand HUD's housing counseling network so that buyers, especially first-time and first-generation homebuyers, have the support they need to navigate what can be a daunting process." Read the full text of Secretary Castro's speech here.

In March, Secretary Castro was the headliner at the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals Keynote Luncheon. He shared the importance of understanding the home-buying process: "But we also recognize that in addition to the economic tools I just mentioned, folks need access to the educational tools required to navigate the housing market. Knowledge of the "dos and don'ts" of the home-buying process is just as important as any down payment or insurance. That's where housing counseling comes in."

"Since 2009, HUD-approved housing counselors have helped more than 12 million people to manage their money better, to bolster their credit scores, to do everything necessary before buying a home, and to adjust to life after the closing date." "And this work has made an impact for folks like Jessica from Chicago, who got help from the Spanish Coalition for Housing. She'd just gotten divorced and her credit was in ruins. She wasn't sure how to recover, so she asked for help, and a counselor named Anna Jimenez answered the call. Together, they rebuilt Jessica's credit. She learned the "ABCs" of being a responsible homeowner. And eventually she was able to sit at that closing table, sign those papers, and get the keys to her new home."

"Owning a home is a lifetime achievement," Jessica says. "It may take longer than you expect, but the secret is staying committed and working through each step to becoming a proud homeowner." Now that kind of achievement won't make headlines these days. It won't be a breaking story on any of the networks. But, it's the kind of progress that moves our nation forward." Read the full text of Secretary Castro's speech here.

DAS Sarah Gerecke discussed the attributes of housing counselors and the state of housing counseling today in her keynote speech: "Reflections on Professionalism from the Housing Counseling Field," at the *Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund* luncheon. The overall theme was "Professionalizing the Field of Financial Counseling and Coaching." She spoke on how the following four key attributes of professionalism are evident in housing counselors participating in HUD's Housing Counseling Program:

1. Quality
2. Consistency
3. Community
4. Accountability

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MAKING THE DIFFERENCE WITH HOUSING COUNSELING

Hauppauge, NY- The Long Island Housing Partnership, Inc. (LIHP) is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to provide housing opportunities for clients who, through the ordinary unaided operation of the marketplace, are unable to afford decent and safe homes. LIHP has aided potential homebuyers in achieving their goals for more than 28 years.

In order to foster its mission, as a member of the Housing Partnership Network (HPN), LIHP performs comprehensive housing counseling services five days a week, 52-weeks a year, by six full time counselors. LIHP provides a multitude of programs and services to prepare families for the intricacies of homeownership, to enable them to secure financial assistance with down payments and closing costs, to make certain they are aware of predatory lending practices, to help them with refinancing, to lead them to the fairest home equity loans, and to educate them as to how to maintain and secure their homes.

One aspiring homeowner, Michelle Bueno, said "housing counseling made the key difference in her ability to buy a home." The Hempstead, New York resident first sought help in 2010 at the Long Island Housing Partnership. The program receives grants for housing counseling from lenders, local and state agencies as well as private corporations and foundations.

Bueno, 42, met with her housing counselor, JoAnn Massaro, who advised her to clear up credit problems and build up her savings in advance of beginning the home buying process. JoAnn spent time working with Michelle offering support and advice as needed.

Five years later, after paying down old debts, Bueno was on track to buy a three-bedroom townhouse to be built in North Hempstead, New York. The home's sale price was nearly $315,000, but JoAnn Massaro helped her get $118,000 in local, county and state grants, in addition to approval for a low-interest mortgage through a state program for first-time home buyers.

The counselor urged her to "not give up, go forward and do everything you need to do," recalled Bueno, who works as a surgical technologist and has two sons, ages 6 and 11.

L to R – LIHP's Carrie Roman, Susan Sassone, Carol Yopp, Maria Sanz

She stated, "I was determined to do the right thing for myself and my children." At this time Michelle and her family are anticipating moving into their new home in New Cassel, Long Island by the end of this year once the construction is complete.

LIHP also has a highly specialized Foreclosure Prevention Team, which works very diligently with homeowners to achieve the most favorable outcome for each family. Below are a few testimonials from the appreciative families that rely upon LIHP to maintain their homeownership or work with them to make a smooth transition to alternative housing, if necessary.

Carrie Roman's clients wrote:

"When I sat at her desk that afternoon, I was relieved to see that there was help for us. By no means had Carrie promised us anything but offered assistance and assurance that she would be following our case. After many months and visits, we were approved for the loan modification which helped us out tremendously. I am truly thankful for Carrie and her hard work. Thank you so much for everything that you have done for us."
~~~~Eileen from Centereach, New York

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CREATING RESPONSIBLE & SUSTAINABLE HOMEOWNERS

Ontario, CA – Inland Fair Housing and Mediation Board (IFHMB) has been in business since 1982. The HUD-approved agency has provided housing counseling services to the Inland Empire region of Southern California since 1993. In recent years, IFHMB has found itself on the front lines of the subprime mortgage meltdown and subsequent recession.

Responsible and Sustainable Homeownership

The collapse of the mortgage industry in 2007 highlighted many lending practices that had thrived in the shadows of this largely unregulated industry. Poor underwriting practices and unscrupulous real estate professionals contributed to an "anything goes" atmosphere, and many people ended up with loans that were unsustainable for homes that they could not realistically afford.

IFHMB is dedicated to the empowerment and education of current and future homeowners, providing them with the tools needed to navigate the complex waters of mortgage financing and home retention. Through IFHMB's one-on-one housing counseling and first-time home buyer education curriculums, clients are presented with the realities of homeownership and provided tools and methods to understand and communicate with their lenders.

By being introduced to budgeting techniques and understanding "cash flow" as it relates to pay dates, clients learn how to reduce late fees and penalties, which results in significant monthly savings. Participants also receive education regarding planning and budgeting for ongoing and future maintenance costs; future homeowners learn that homeownership is more than a mortgage payment.

Detailed foreclosure prevention tools and alternatives, as well as a complete understanding of the foreclosure process and how to communicate with a lender if trouble arises, are stressed during counseling. IFHMB, through its "First Time Home Buyer" course, focuses on all aspects of the home buying process, including understanding the difference between what the bank states is affordable and what might be more reasonably affordable for the individual homebuyer.

One of IFHMB's success stories that demonstrates how education creates responsible and sustainable buyers, was Mr. Hernandez. He was days away from closing on his new home and just needed to complete a First-Time Home Buyer Class, which was a requirement to receive down payment assistance. After attending the budgeting and expenses segment of the course, which features real life examples of the difference between affordable ratios using gross income versus net income and the importance of a home inspection, which he had previously been talked out of, Mr. Hernandez called his agent during a break and canceled his transaction.

On paper, Mr. Hernandez could have afforded the original mortgage. However, empowered with the education and knowledge he received, Mr. Hernandez opened escrow three months later, purchasing his home for $50,000 less than the original contemplated loan amount. After completing the home inspection, several defects were uncovered and Mr. Hernandez was able to negotiate the repairs and an additional reduction of the sales price.

In the end, Mr. Hernandez entered a 30-year mortgage with a payment 30 percent of his net income, rather than being responsible for the earlier payment amount, which would have been 38 percent of his gross income. As a homeowner, he could now rest comfortably knowing that he could afford his payment and continue to support and provide for his children.

Mr. Hernandez is only one of the many homeowners who has benefited from counseling and been empowered to responsibly attain their piece of the American Dream.

PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING WITH COMMUNITY LAND TRUSTS

Duluth, MN – One Roof's Community Land Trust Program began in 1991 as Northern Communities Land Trust. The program has grown to become a nationally recognized land trust serving three counties in the Twin Ports region.

The purpose of One Roof's Community Land Trust is to:

1. Provide access to affordable housing for households earning less than 80 percent of area median income;
2. Increase the quantity and quality of the housing stock in the community;
3. Empower residents to become successful homeowners; and
4. Preserve the long-term affordability of housing in the community.

A Community Land Trust is a private nonprofit corporation created to acquire and hold land for the benefit of a community and provide secure affordable access to land and housing for residents. Historically, One Roof's Land Trust households have on average, a gross income of $29,700. As homeowners, these hardworking individuals and families now have the security and opportunity to invest in their neighborhoods and communities.

One Roof builds new homes and rehabs older homes using a model that permanently preserves the affordability of housing. Qualified low to moderate income homebuyers can purchase high quality homes at a significantly reduced price.

One Roof maintains ownership of the land; which homeowners lease for a small monthly fee. When homeowners move, they agree to pass on the benefits they received by selling their home below market value to another income-qualified buyer. Land Trust homebuyers build equity and receive a share in the appreciation of their homes when sold.

Since its beginning as the Northern Community Land Trust in 1991, the land trust program has built or rehabbed 276 homes in Duluth, Cloquet, Two Harbors, Hermantown and Proctor. Including resales, One Roof has assisted 383 households in securing a mortgage and purchase a land trust home.

"One of the Best Choices I Ever Made!"

Alyssa and her son at their home

Alyssa became a Community Land Trust homeowner at the end of December 2014. Looking for an opportunity to start over, Alyssa discovered One Roof's Home Buyer workshop and counseling program, and realized that she had the resources to begin a new life.

"I never thought owning a home was possible on my income as a single mother. Since purchasing our home it has become our safe haven. It's a comfort to know that I could provide a home for my son while paying less than I had been paying for rent."

"Now that my son has celebrated his second birthday in our home, I'm so thankful this is the place where he turned one, took his first steps, said his first words and learned to use utensils. I can see in my son's innocent eyes and hear in his sweet giggle how comfortable and happy he is here." "I tell anyone I know who is considering buying a house about One Roof's Community Land Trust program because I know how much it means to me. It gave me the chance to start over and has been one of the best choices I ever made."

FIRST TIME HOMEBUYER BENEFITS FROM LIVE NEAR YOUR WORK PROGRAM

Baltimore, MD – The mission of St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center Inc., is to create and maintain equal housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income people, primarily in Baltimore City, and to encourage and support strong and diverse neighborhoods. A NeighborWorks® chartered member, St. Ambrose is a non-denominational 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It is one of Baltimore's oldest non-profit housing providers with over 120,000 families served since 1968.

St. Ambrose recently had the pleasure of assisting a first time homebuyer, Ms. Emily Brunk, a Registered Nurse at the University of Maryland Medical Center, find the ideal home for her circumstances. Emily's story was touching because she wanted to find a home near her job for several reasons that were admirable and selfless.

Ms. Brunk came into St. Ambrose on February 13, 2016 and completed the in-house homeownership workshop. Two weeks later, St. Ambrose scheduled her one-on-one counseling. Emily wanted to live closer to her job and informed her counselor that she had two roommates, one who she considers a mentee/little brother. Emily wanted to make sure he was able to afford his rent and complete his Registered Nurse residency. Additionally, she needed convenient access to Interstate 95 because this would allow her to travel to visit her sister, who attends school in Annapolis, MD.

After listening to Emily and understanding the importance of her request, St. Ambrose's housing counselor immediately did research to help Emily achieve her goals. The agency helped her secure $2,500.00, which Emily used along with closing and down payment assistance through the Live Near Your Work program offered by her employer. Baltimore City Housing matched her employer's contribution with an additional $2,500.00. What a joyful day when Emily closed on her home in March 2016 and was able to live near her job!

Ms. Brunk was so grateful for St. Ambrose's services and support during her home search that she followed up with pictures and a short thank you. She experienced how St. Ambrose housing counselors love helping people fulfill their dream of homeownership!

Hello Ms. Petty,

Just wanted to let you know my closing on my house went through just fine. Thanks to you and a few other really amazing people, I am now a homeowner!

Emily Brunk

Photo collage of Emily at her new house with her realtor.

(continued from pg. 4 – Making the Difference with Housing Counseling)

Carol Yopp's client wrote:

"Thank you for all your efforts on my behalf. I dropped off my bank statements at your office and met with the free legal service attorney. I also filed my papers at the Suffolk County Clerk's office. Meeting you was a life changing day for me. I really thought that my life was over, that there was no light at the end of the tunnel and that I was a failure. Your professional expertise and reassurance gave me hope, Carol. I can never thank you enough. Know that you are making a difference in people's lives. Last night I had the first decent sleep in almost a year. Thanks again."
~~~~ Denise from Wading River, New York

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INQUIRING MINDS WANT TO KNOW

One of the critical steps in executing a HUD grant is to ensure your agency staff have access to eLOCCS. This month's segment focuses on resources to help you establish or renew eLOCCS access.

Q: What is eLOCCS?

A: Effective March 31, 2015, the Line of Credit Control Systems (LOCCS) transitioned away from the LOCCS Voice Response System (VRS) to the internet version of eLOCCS accessed through Secure Systems. LOCCS is the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) primary grant and subsidy disbursement system that handles disbursement and cash management for the majority of HUD grant programs.

Organizations and individuals have access to these grants through an internet version of LOCCS called eLOCCS, where Business Partners with appropriate authorization can access, manage, and drawdown against their HUD grant portfolios.

Q: I am a new grantee to HUD. What do I have to do to register for access in Secure Systems and eLOCCS?

A: A new grantee must first identify who will be the Approving Official/Coordinator. This individual must be the Executive Director, Director of a Department of the Agency or a Board Official. Grantee must at least identify one (1) user to access the Electronic Line of Credit Control System (eLOCCS) to request funds under the Comprehensive Housing Counseling (CHC) grant.

A new grantee must establish a bank account with a financial institution to serve as the designated Grant bank account for the receipt and deposit of grant funds from the U.S. Treasury. The account may be a separate bank account or a subsidiary account within the grantee's general fund (or other fund). The grantee must submit a completed SF 1199-A form to receive these funds. Instructions on completing this form are found at: LOCCS Access Guidelines for Grantees.

Q: Can you share LOCCS tips? *(i.e., passwords expiring, where to find more information on line, where to call for assistance, etc.)*

A: The following tips will ensure successful/continued access to your Comprehensive Housing Counseling grant funds:

- Approving Officials and Users MUST access Secure Systems and eLOCCS every 60 days, even if your organization is not making a draw request. Develop a reminder process to ensure compliance.
- Notify your Point of Contact immediately if your organization changes Approving Official and/or User, or needs to add a User.
- Refer to the following three detailed user guides that outline the steps of gaining access to Secure Systems, eLOCCS and LOCCS:
  1. eLOCCS Registration Guide
  2. eLOCCS Getting Started Guide
  3. LOCCS Access Guidelines for Grantees
- Never share your user ID or password.

When in doubt, contact your Point of Contact BEFORE you contact any other Division within HUD.

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HUD CELEBRATES NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH (cont.)

(continued from pg. 1 - HUD Celebrates National Homeownership Month)

Joining us on social media and rounding out the efforts will be dozens of HUD partners and housing counseling agencies who will encourage their networks to get involved in debunking the myths around homeownership. An online toolkit will be available to download the National Homeownership Month graphic identifier and other materials. Ultimately, everyone can play a role in educating and informing consumers about the real facts – and opportunities – around homeownership and home financing.

Join the Conversation

(continued from pg. 7– Making the Difference with Housing Counseling)

Maria Sanz's client wrote:

"You have gone to bat for me and my son for years and each time with love, concern, wisdom and professionalism. You get to the point, eloquently and with so much class!! Thank you for being in our lives. You walked us through it, took our hands and showed us the path to take. I will never forget that very special call when you said, "Hi Ruby, this is Maria and I have good news for you…' Thank you for making life easier with So Much Love!!"

~~~~ Ruby from Riverhead New York

(continued from pg. 3 – Increasing the Visibility of Housing Counseling)

In summarizing the state of housing counseling today, DAS Gerecke said, "Creating a profession does not solve every problem. Federal funding was very generous during the recession, with $400 million appropriated for housing counseling at the height of the crisis. Today that number is down to less than $90 million as many parts of the country have recovered from the recession. The number of HUD-approved agencies has been falling also and we are very concerned with the loss of access to counseling when other housing needs, like affordability and – yes—scams, remain so great."

"Still, there is a consistent Federal appropriation that leverages $4 - $6 non-federal dollars for each taxpayer dollar, as well as numerous state, local and private housing counseling programs that promote the benefits of HUD-approved agencies to their consumers. We are working toward a vision where housing counseling is not a well-kept secret but a service demanded by the consumer as a routine part of any mortgage transaction like a home inspection, with a sustainable revenue source. We have a long way to go, but we are getting there." Read the full text of DAS Gerecke's speech here.

Nevada Partners Celebrates New Homeowners

North Las Vegas, NV- Nevada Partners is a local HUD-approved housing counseling agency in North Las Vegas, Nevada with a unique partnership to help casino workers become homeowners. The agency offers homebuyer education and one-on-one pre-purchase housing counseling. In addition, through the Culinary and Bartenders Housing Partnership, Nevada Partners is also able to offer down payment assistance for first-time homebuyer members of the local culinary and bartender unions. This assistance can be layered with other programs offered by the agency including the IDA and WISH programs, making the dream of homeownership a reality. Jodi Mobley, Director of Housing Programs, shares two recent success stories for National Homeownership Month.

Kyndra decided to find out more about the Culinary and Bartenders Housing Program offered by Nevada Partners after hearing about it from the union. She works long hours as a Lounge Server at the MGM Grand, so she didn't have a lot of extra time on her hands. Kyndra decided to attend Housing Programs Orientation on July 27, 2015 and after some thought, she moved forward with the process. She attended the homebuyer education class September 25, 2015 and identified a loan officer she liked. She was preapproved for a $150,000.00 loan. Kyndra could afford a higher purchase price with a higher payment due to receiving tips, but wanted to make sure that she could still make the mortgage payment if anything were to happen and she wasn't making tips any longer. When Kyndra met with her housing counselor on November 23, 2015, she was so prepared that she received approval right then (one of the few)! After a little over 60 days to find the home of her dreams, she finally closed on her cute two-story southwestern style home with a split two-car garage, at the beginning of March 2016. As Kyndra finished signing her loan documents she said, "Thank you for all of your help in getting my loan closed." By making smart choices learned at the homebuyer education classes, Kyndra experienced the great outcome of homeownership.

Jose works as a food server at the Caesars Palace Hotel and Casino. He's been employed there for over 26 years. He is the single dad of two beautiful girls and had been wanting to purchase a home for them for some time. Last year, he decided it was about time to make it happen.

In July 2015 Jose attended the Housing Partnership 8-hour class, to prepare for the road ahead and received his certificate. He came in promptly for his one on one with the housing counselor in August and was given the green light. He started looking at homes whenever he wasn't working. He found a home he loved that was a short sale. He placed his offer in October and began his wait. His realtor was persistent in following up on the offer to the bank and after waiting over six months, Jose's offer was approved and the purchase was finalized.

He knew this was the house for him and his daughters. He purchased a ranch style house with a pool and beautiful covered patio. His girls are excited and looking forward to having some fun in the sun this summer in their own pool. Jose is happy that he was patient and says it was worth the wait!

CHAMPION OF SERVICE

Gray, KY – **Beverly Isom** has been a dedicated employee at Kentucky Communities Economic Opportunity Council (KCEOC) Community Action Partnership for 10 years. Advancing through several positions in the agency, Beverly became the Homeless Services Manager in 2014. Although her official job title implies a primary focus on homelessness, Beverly's role in the success of many of KCEOC's housing programs is not surprising of those who know her best. "Beverly's growth in the housing counseling program is nothing short of amazing," said KCEOC's Vice President. "When our previous pre-purchase counselor retired, I asked Beverly if she could take on this role. Her response, as with anything I ask of her was, I can do it."

Beverly became a NeighborWorks certified Housing Counselor in 2012. Since that time, she has counseled over 150 individuals; this includes the many foreclosure prevention services she has provided to keep families from losing their homes. The economy of Southeastern Kentucky has been declining for several years due to the deterioration of the coal industry. In October 2015, the area received another devastating blow with the layoff of 180 local workers from CSX railroad, yet another impact of the declining coal industry. When the layoff was announced, Beverly jumped immediately into action using social media to inform the community of the availability of the Unemployment Bridge Program (Hardest Hit Fund).

The workers were not technically eligible for the program until after the first of the year, but Beverly began communicating with them immediately to prepare them for the process. As a result, 28 CSX workers had applications submitted on their behalf; which was quite an achievement considering the time involved with the program and other job duties.

The adoption of the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling had been a goal for KCEOC for quite some time. Because Beverly understood the impact this could have on the agency and services, she was determined to complete the necessary trainings required for this to occur. In 2015, Beverly finished the trainings, allowing KCEOC to adopt the National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling; this includes both individual and group education. The adoption of these standards has strengthened the counseling program, a goal that is part of KCEOC's efforts to continuously improve services.

Beverly has put the skills she has acquired through counseling into other avenues at the agency. She processes Rapid Re-Housing, Weatherization, Home Rehabilitation, and HouseWorks applications, while also seeing the clients throughout the process. She handles applications for Appalachian Service Project, connecting families with this partner for small to moderate repairs of their homes during the summer months. Beverly always goes above and beyond her job duties to make sure clients are served in every way possible, and ensures they leave the office with all the information they need to meet their housing goals.

When asked why she is so passionate about her job Beverly replied, "When I am sitting across the desk from a low-income individual who is currently living in unimaginable conditions, or a low-income first-time homebuyer, counseling them on how to purchase and keep a home it is an overwhelming feeling. The look of hope and excitement in their eyes is what pushes me to continue this job. It is so rewarding to be able to educate and assist people in a life changing way."

As she laughed Beverly said, "After the process is over the last thing I say to them is, now go home."

CONGRATULATIONS BEVERLY ISOM,
YOU ARE A CHAMPION OF SERVICE!

THE BRIDGE **is pleased to recognize Champions of Service who have provided exemplary service in the Housing Counseling arena and Success Stories highlighting client's achievements. Nominations of persons both inside and outside of HUD are welcomed.**
Please send your nominations by the 20th of each month to: thebridge@hud.gov.

SUCCESS STORY

Pittsburgh, PA – Many housing counselors witness how their client's excitement of home buying is quickly dampened by the immense pile of paperwork and the dollar amounts never previously contemplated. For example, when Antonio received his pre-approval from a lender he found on the internet, he was floored by the list of upfront fees and the amount of interest he would have to pay over the next 30 years.

Through the HUD website, Antonio was directed to ACTION-Housing, Inc., a HUD-approved housing counseling agency. ACTION's housing counselor sat down with Antonio and his girlfriend and reviewed their existing paperwork from the on-line internet lender. The counselor noticed a few blemishes on their credit reports and suggested they clean up their credit, contact the student loan companies to initiate an income based repayment plan, and save up for a down-payment and closing costs. Although Antonio was anxious to get into a new house, he was advised and decided it would be in his best interest to take a step back and regroup. The counselor worked with Antonio to develop an action plan to build his credit and a savings plan based on what his budget showed he could save each month.

Antonio spent the year tidying up his credit, saving money, and waiting patiently for his perfect house to appear on the market. He was looking for a very specific house; it had to be large enough for his girlfriend and their four children and he did not want to leave the school district. Through that year, he emailed his counselor with questions about escrow accounts, mortgage insurance, interest rates, and various loan products he was seeing. A year after Antonio came into ACTION, he sent his counselor a frantic email. He had found the house of his dreams but had no idea what the payment would be. After some investigation into the amount of the real estate taxes and an estimate for the homeowner's insurance, the counselor gave him an estimated payment broken out into principal, interest, taxes and insurance.

With a pre-approval from a local, well respected bank in hand, Antonio put down an offer that was accepted. Antonio still had questions about the inspection and the formal mortgage application that his counselor was more than happy to answer.

Despite the fact that Antonio was able to purchase a house when he walked into ACTION Housing's office, he was not prepared. A slight decrease in interest with a prime loan serviced locally saved Antonio at least $19,000 over the life of the loan. With his counselor's guidance as an impartial advocate, Antonio was able to get a model loan with an affordable payment for his dream house.

(continued from pg. 8 – Inquiring Minds Want to Know)

Q: I have not accessed eLOCCS for several months and now I am getting an error message. How do I reset my password?

A: Please contact your OHC/Point of Contact immediately for assistance. *Please note*: A Grantee must access Secure Systems/eLOCCS within 90 days of their last access date to remain active. If not, Secure System/eLOCCS will terminate access and the agency is required to submit a new HUD 27054 form directly to their POC. *Remember:* Passwords must be changed within 60 days from the last time a password was established. If a grantee's password expires, LOCCS will suspend access within eLOCCS and the grantee must then submit another HUD 27054 form.

Q: We have changed banks. How do I update my banking information in LOCCS?

A: Should your organization change financial institutions, follow the guidance located at this link: LOCCS Access Guidelines for Grantees. You should contact your POC for additional assistance.

Q: What if my Point of Contact is unavailable to assist our organization with an eLOCCS/Secure Systems question?

A: You may email: housing.counseling@hud.gov and your request will be given to a backup eLOCCS team member who will contact you.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

HUD Affordable Housing Programs

HUD's affordable housing program includes: 811PRA, HOME, HOPWA, HTF, and NSP, as well as Multifamily Preservation Programs such as RAD and Section 236 Preservation.

Buying a Home

Thinking about buying a home? HUD has information that can help! Got questions? Talk to one of our housing counselors!

National Industry Standards for Homeownership Education and Counseling

A set of guidelines for quality homeownership and counseling services. Industry professionals who adopt these standards can be trusted to provide consistent, high quality advice.

National Housing Resource Center

An advocate for the nonprofit housing counseling industry, as well as for housing consumers, for communities of color, for the elderly, and for under-served populations.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Know Before You Owe

Designed to help consumers understand their loan options, shop for the mortgage that's best for them, and avoid costly surprises at the closing table.

FHA Homeownership Centers

Many of the mortgage insuring processes are centralized into four Homeownership Centers: **Atlanta**, **Philadelphia**, **Denver** and **Santa Ana** each supporting a specific geographic area.

Freddie Mac

Whether you rent, own, or plan to buy, Freddie Mac offers the resources to help you make informed decisions and support your success.

Fannie Mae

Whether you're a current homeowner, prospective homebuyer or a renter, Fannie Mae has resources and information available to you.

June 14-15, 2016	Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Servicing and Loss Mitigation Live Training Oklahoma City, OK – Host: HUD

Visit the new Office of Housing Counseling Training webpage to keep up-to-date on the latest training, events, and webinars. If you missed a webinar, visit the new Webinar Archives webpage to access previously recorded sessions.

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