

the
HOME
Edition



the
Head Start Program
at Clayton Homes

Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program ▶
Participants attend a Banking Seminar, along with presenter, Maxine Hammonds-Smith with HSBC Bank to learn about managing their money and identity theft. The FSS Program promotes economic independence among Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher participants.



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Our
Mission:

To improve lives by providing quality, affordable housing options and promoting education and economic self-sufficiency.

Houston Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

Timothy F. Seckinger, Chair

Rev. Myron E. Cloyd, Vice Chair

Rueben C. Casarez & Sheila R. Smith, Board Members

Ernie Etuk, Houston Housing Authority President and CEO

Housing Headlines

Good News in a Bad Economy

Houston Housing Authority earns a high rating from Standard & Poor's

As thousands of Houstonians struggle to find housing for their families in a credit crisis and declining economy, Standard & Poor's issued a new credit rating for the Houston Housing Authority which will help the agency assist additional families seeking affordable housing options.

In a major development, the Standard and Poor's credit rating organization has assigned an "AA-" rating to the Houston Housing Authority. According to S&P, "the Houston Housing Authority effectively balances maintaining a level of financial stability with achieving its overall public purpose goals."

"The S&P 'AA-' rating' will enable the Housing Authority

to attract investors, financial institutions and development partners during these difficult economic times to expand our portfolio of affordable housing here in Houston," said Ernie Etuk, President and CEO of the Houston Housing Authority.

Transforming communities and improving lives is a major goal for the Housing Authority. "Even in the midst of a federal funding shortfall," said Etuk, "we have been able to provide more than 60,000 people with a variety of housing options. Providing affordable housing not only improves lives of residents, but also helps improve and strengthen neighborhoods while contributing to the overall economy of the city."

DHAP-Katrina/Rita Program Extended By HUD & FEMA

The Houston Housing Authority is trying to contact more than 1,000 families currently receiving assistance as part of the DHAP-Katrina/Rita program. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are extending the rental assistance program, DHAP-Katrina/Rita, for six months. HUD and FEMA will provide additional assistance to families as needed until August 31, 2009 to give them more time to transition out of the DHAP program. By that time, participants are expected to become self-sufficient or be transferred if eligible, to other federal or state programs, including HUD's Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP).

Congress previously designed the program to transition those most vulnerable to the Housing Choice Voucher program; these included seniors, the disabled and families with extremely low-income. The new HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, is making funds available to transition all families currently enrolled in the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP-Katrina/Rita) to the HCV Program by the new deadline, as approved by Congress.

"With the clock ticking toward August 31," Houston Housing Authority President and CEO Ernie Etuk said, "we hope that these families will promptly respond to the Housing Authority's letters and calls before their DHAP assistance ends."

It is very important for people who have been assigned to the Housing Authority for the DHAP-Katrina/Rita Program to come to our main offices at 2640 Fountain View Drive, Suite 100. In order to expedite the process, families must bring personal identification, such as Social Security cards and birth certificates, and other documents that show their family income and assets. In addition, clients must also pass a criminal background check.

Approximately 1,100 families living in the Houston area are still receiving assistance through the Houston Housing Authority for the DHAP-Katrina/Rita Program, and, in the next 6 months, are eligible to receive transition assistance to the HCV Program. To take advantage of this opportunity, families should immediately contact the Housing Authority at (713) 260-0500.

Moving Forward ▶

Money Matters: Credit 101

Now that you've received your money from your tax returns, take the time to stretch your funds. Here are some tips to consider when doing your financial planning.



Get Paid What You're Worth and Spend Less Than you Earn

Make sure you know what your job is worth in the marketplace, by conducting an evaluation of your skills, productivity, job tasks, contribution to the company, and the going rate, both inside and outside the company, for what you do.



Create a Budget & Stick to It!



Pay Off Credit Card Debt on time and in full, when possible



Have a Savings Plan

For more information on financial planning, you can join the Housing Authority's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program. The FSS Program hosts seminars and events to educate residents on finances, continuing education and homeownership. This program is available to residents in Public Housing as well as participants of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The next financial seminar, *Using Credit & Credit History*, will be held on April 16, 2009 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Housing Authority main office. For more details, please contact (713) 260-0500.



HELP YOUR CHILD get a Head Start!



WHERE:

Clayton Homes
1919 Runnels, #B14
Houston, TX 77003

HOURS:

7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

- Currently enrolling children ages 3-5 years
- Special needs children are welcome
- Staff implements the Pre-K & Kindergarten curriculum
- Fourteen staff members to care for children
- Five classrooms
- Currently accepting enrollment for Fall 2009



Head Start students at Clayton Homes are pictured enjoying lunch.

Sign up and participate in HHA's affordable on-site Daycare through the Gulf Coast Community Service Association Head Start Program at Clayton Homes! If you're looking for a child care program that will focus on the emotional and mental development of your child, then you should consider the Head Start Program. This child care program provides immunizations & well-child exams, teaches healthy living, and works with parents on family goal-setting. Head Start also has programs for parents, including

employment referrals and adult literacy classes.

"Head Start provides a comprehensive approach to the child and family," said Tiamoiya Lee, Head Start Director of Gulf Coast Community Services Association. "We are committed to building a healthy rapport with the residents at Clayton Homes. It is not uncommon for participants to move and still have their child enrolled at our child care facility."

Celia Coreas, Clayton Homes Head Start Site Manager, has personally witnessed children grow emotionally and socially within the program. She recalls how a mother was hesitant to bring her special needs child to the program because he was not talking. "After a few months within the program, the child was talking and interacting socially," said Coreas, "We customized the curriculum to fit his needs and brought in specialists to work with his disorder."

If you are interested in investing in the education and development of your child, please contact (713) 228-0343 for enrollment opportunities at the Clayton Homes Head Start Program.

HHA News

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program Recognitions

HCVP FSS Member of the Quarter: Deborah Funches-Henderson

FSS Coordinators work closely with FSS members to link them to education, job training programs and supportive services to better prepare them for today's competitive job market. The ultimate goal is to develop local strategies to lead families towards economic independence and self-sufficiency. In order to highlight this positive program and its participants, one participant from the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program will be recognized each quarter.

Residents are nominated by their FSS Coordinators based on their overcoming obstacles in pursuit of their goals and their "good standing" status with the FSS Program.

Housing Choice Voucher FSS Member of the Quarter: Deborah Funches-Henderson.

Deborah Funches-Henderson is the extremely focused on accomplishing her goals. She is determined to provide for her kids and to provide a safe environment conducive to learning. She is also employed in the social services field because of her passion to help others in need.

"Ms. Funches-Henderson adheres to all of the suggestions and recommendations given by the FSS Team. She is diligent and goal-oriented, and is hopeful that she will be able to achieve the American Dream of homeownership," said Stephan White, FSS Coordinator.

Public Housing FSS Member of the Quarter: Kimm Perez

Ms. Perez displays a strong willingness and eagerness to move towards self-sufficiency by gaining suitable full-time employment. She has already obtained her Masters Degree in Psychology and is pursuing her Doctorate Degree.

"Kimm became my new inspiration and motivated me in my new position. She has also inspired me to stay very committed in my role and often reminds me of the payoff," said Bridgette Carter, FSS Program Coordinator.

HHA Launches New & Improved Website

The Housing Authority will be launching its new website by April 2009.

Community Connections

Free Tax Prep now through April 15th

Do you need to get your taxes prepared? The Housing Authority has partnered with Uplift 4th Ward to prepare tax returns for HHA residents. Visit the Neighborhood Resource Center, Room 113, located at 815 Crosby, Houston, TX and have your taxes prepared and filed on-line with e-file. Tax preparers are IRS Certified. Refunds back in 7 -14 days. This free tax service is available for residents with low to moderate income (\$45,000 or less annual income).

Please bring the following items with you when filing your taxes:

- 1) Proof of identity
- 2) Social Security Card or Individual Tax ID Letter for all individuals to be listed on the return
- 3) Copies of all W-2, 1098 and 1099 Forms
- 4) Amounts of any other income (including 2008 stimulus payment)
- 5) Child care provider's ID #
- 6) Amounts/dates of estimated or other tax payments made, etc.
- 7) Bank documents showing routing and accounting #s if requesting direct deposit



The Housing Authority will be launching its new website by April 2009. The new and improved website is user-friendly and easy to navigate. It is designed to put a wide variety of information, contact numbers, forms and other materials at your finger tips. Program forms will be available through the new website for your convenience. Please feel free to contact sbelton@housingforhouston.com with content ideas to help keep the site updated. We encourage you to take full advantage of this new site so we can do an even better job in providing affordable housing opportunities to you!

For more information, please email uplift4thward@gmail.com or call (281) 682-1259.

Everyday Living

Testing Tips for Parents during TAKS Testing

The Housing Authority wants to make sure that parents are doing their part to insure their students have the best opportunity to pass the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) Test. Throughout Texas, students will take the test in March, April and early May. These tests are critical in some grades for determining if a student will be promoted or graduate. As parents, here are some tips that you can follow to make sure your students can be ready for the test:

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Arrive to school on time.
- Eat a healthy breakfast.
- Wear comfortable clothing, as long as you follow school dress code.
- Do not forget to take medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- If you are supposed to wear glasses or contacts, wear them.

Parents can also give their students tips to reduce test-taking anxiety by telling them to:

- Pace yourself during the test.
- Remember you have as much time as you need. Don't panic if you have a memory lapse or mental block. This is normal. Go on to the next item and come back to the trouble spot later.
- Don't expect to know the answer to every question. Expect some items to be too hard. Just do your best.
- Ignore other test takers.
- Think positively & Don't give up!



Kelly Village residents are brushing up on their study skills.

Got Renter's Insurance?

Protect the Things You Value Most



As a renter, you may think that you don't need insurance because your property owner has insurance on the building. The property owner's insurance does not cover your personal property. Renter's insurance protects you

from loss of personal items from fires, burglaries or other natural disasters.

What can I insure?

Personal property such as clothing, appliances, jewelry, furniture, computer or even an iPod can be insured. Renter's insurance provides protection even if your items are damaged, stolen or destroyed.

Liability protection is also included with renter's insurance. This coverage can protect you if someone is injured on your property and will also take care of their medical expenses as well.

How do I get it?

Usually, you can obtain renter's insurance through the same company as your auto insurance. Contact your local insurance company and check out the rates available to you based on your inventory of personal belongings.

Renter's Insurance - don't leave home without it!

Health Focus

Foods that can Interfere with Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Did you know that you can interfere with your sleep just by eating certain foods? Maybe a rich, hearty dinner, topped off with a big slice of chocolate cake might seem like the perfect way to end the day, but it's wise not to eat a large meal within two hours of bed. However, a light snack before bed can help promote sleep. Try to make dinnertime earlier in the evening, and avoid heavy, rich foods as bedtime snacks.

Some bedtime snacks to help you sleep:

- A Glass of warm milk and half a turkey or peanut butter sandwich
- Whole-grain, low-sugar cereal or granola with low-fat milk or yogurt
- A banana and a cup of hot chamomile tea

In order to get a good night's sleep, avoid the following foods:

- Fatty and Rich Foods are hard for your stomach to digest and may keep you up.
- Spicy or acidic foods in the evening can cause heartburn, which worsens when you lay down.
- Drinking too much liquid may result in frequent bathroom trips throughout the night.
- Caffeine and Alcohol should be avoided. Hidden sources of caffeine include chocolate, caffeinated sodas, and teas- these foods and/or drinks can make you restless.



For more tips on how you can enhance your sleep, **visit www.helpguide.org.**

Upcoming Events



April 2009						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2009						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 31	25	26	27	28	29	30

April 2009

Cancer Control Month

4/10: Good Friday (HHA Offices are closed)

4/12: Easter Sunday

4/22: Earth Day

May 2009

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month & Older Americans Month

5/5: Cinco de Mayo

5/10: Mother's Day

5/16: Armed Forces Day

5/25: Memorial Day (HHA Offices are closed)

Around HHA



Seniors at Telephone Road hosted an Inauguration Watch Party to celebrate the monumental swearing in of President Barack Obama.

Residents participated in a fun-filled day of activities, which concluded with an Inaugural Ball.



HQS Manager for DHAP, Diedra Smith, visits with Property Managers from GFI Management Services, Inc. during a Property Owners Briefing for the DHAP-Ike Program.



Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program Participants attend a Banking Seminar, along with presenter, Maxine Hammonds-Smith with HSBC Bank to learn about managing their money and identify theft. The FSS Program promotes economic independence among Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher participants.

Wilmington Apartments hosted their Black History Program, which included skits honoring past and present history makers, singing spirituals and a Soul Food dinner.

Wilmington resident, Ja'Tyra Ledet, portrayed Harriett Tubman.



HOUSTON
HOUSING AUTHORITY

Important Telephone Numbers

HHA Administration	(713) 260-0500
Public Housing Operations	(713) 260-0701
Housing Choice Voucher Program Call Center (Formerly Section 8)	(713) 260-0999
HHA Homeownership Program	(713) 260-0633
Customer Service Hotline	(713) 260-0377
Neighborhood Resource Center	(713) 655-1940

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Comments, articles and photographs are welcomed for The Home Edition newsletter. All submissions must have a name and a phone number to be considered. Due to space limitations, the editor reserves the right to reject or edit copy as necessary.

Email submissions to sbelton@housingforhouston.com

Houston Housing Authority

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Visit us online: www.housingforhouston.com

HHA is a Fair Housing and Equal Employment Opportunity Agency