

ONE VOICE

Housing Authority of
the City of Austin
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www.hacanet.org



Creating and sustaining healthy communities that promote individual responsibility, economic growth, human dignity and hope for the future



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Self-Sufficiency Success

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Miriam Segovia has lived in public housing for 17 years, raising three children as a single mother. While working 16-hour days, she dreams of becoming self-sufficient and acquiring her own home.

Like Miriam, self-sufficiency is something most individuals desire to accomplish, relying only on oneself for all the necessities of life. Self-sufficiency can be hard to achieve, but is well worth the struggle when one's goals are accomplished. Individuals often need a helping hand to attain self-sufficiency and reach their goals. This is where the Housing Authority of the City of Austin steps in.

HACA seeks to break the poverty cycle by serving as a catalyst for our residents to become self-sufficient. In 1993, this mission became a reality when the Department of Housing and Urban Development introduced the Family Self-Sufficiency program. The purpose of the FSS Program is to assist HACA families (Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8) to become less dependent on public assistance to employment through gainful skills and employment.

Clarissa Campos, Family Self-Sufficiency coordinator for public housing, has worked for HACA for three years and has been with the FSS program for a little over a year. Clarissa says the FSS program is a wonderful opportunity for resident to achieve economic independence.

"Achieving self-sufficiency is not always easy, but with the resources and support provided by the program residents have a better chance of reaching their life goals," Clarissa said.

Miriam did just that. After much insisting from HACA employees, Miriam joined the FSS program in 2000. Since then she has taken classes from ACC, obtained a higher paying job and saved approximately \$17,700 in escrow money. Miriam has accomplished all of the goals set forth when she joined the program in 2000

and will graduate from the program in October. Miriam found the house she has always dreamed of and her escrow money along with \$10,000 from the Down Payment Assistance Program will help her turn her dream into a reality.

Miriam says she is still pushing her neighbors to become members of the FSS program.

"I recommend this program to any HACA resident," Miriam said. "It has helped me a lot and I am glad HACA gave me this opportunity."

Since its inception, the FSS program has watched 52 residents graduate with over \$467,000 in combined escrow money. This October more residents will be added to the list of program graduates.

Program participants sign a five-year contract stating they agree to make a concerted effort to achieve economic independence and reach the goals set forth by themselves and their FSS specialist/coordinator. A FSS contract is executed based on the rent the family is paying at the time the contract is signed. As the family's rent increases due to earned income

from gainful employment, a percentage of their rent increase is matched and credited monthly to an escrow account. The escrow account accumulates until the individual reaches their goals and graduates from the program. The highest escrow earned by an individual while in the program reached almost \$28,000.

In addition, HACA's Community Development staff works with participants to identify personal and professional goals. The goals can range from obtaining a GED to purchasing a home. Participants are required to meet with their Family Self-Sufficiency specialist on a regular basis to update the progress of these goals.

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**"I am glad HACA gave me this opportunity."
Miriam Segovia
Family Self-Sufficiency Graduate**

Did You Know?

At the September 21, 2006, the HACA Board of Commissioners approved a contract for the final work (Phase III) to complete the interior accessibility modifications at the Salina Apartments?

Our Mission

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin is a public agency whose business is to:

- ensure that safe, quality affordable housing opportunities exist for families of low income
- break the poverty cycle by serving as a catalyst for our residents to become economically self-sufficient
- create meaningful partnerships to maximize available community resources for our residents
- efficiently and effectively meet federal, state and local mandates

HACA will pursue entrepreneurial opportunities to address emerging trends and respond to the challenges of the future.

Important Phone Numbers

HACA Administration	477-4488
24 Hour Resident Hotline	495-1897
Maintenance Work Orders	477-8518
Section 8	477-1314
Fire/Police	911
Non-Emergency Police	311
Poison Center	800-764-7661

ONE VOICE Newsletter

Published by the Housing Authority of the City of Austin
Natashia Elstad, Media Relations Specialist

Comments, articles and photographs are welcomed for the One Voice newsletter. E-mail submissions to natashiae@hacanet.org
Or by mail to:
HACA, Attn: Natashia Elstad
P.O. Box 6159
Austin, TX 78762

All submissions must have a name and phone number to be considered. Due to space limitations, the editor reserves the right to reject or edit copy as necessary.

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FSS Program Contacts

Clarissa Campos, Public Housing FSS Coordinator- 477-4488 ext. 2160
Irma Hernandez, Section 8 FSS Coordinator- 477-4488 ext. 2110
Louise Sawaki, Section 8 FSS Coordinator- 477-4488 ext. 2115

PHAS CHANGES

HUD has restructured the PHAS Inspections and will no longer be present on properties at the dates listed in the September One Voice. We apologize for the confusion. Thank you.

FIRE PREVENTION

The month of October celebrates National Fire Safety month and Fire Prevention Week, October 8-14. Help keep HACA fire free.

Here are some scary fire statistics from the National Fire Protection Association:

- Three in 10 reported house fires start in the kitchen- more than any other place in the home.
- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of house fires.
- 40% of candle fires begin in the bedroom causing 30% of deaths resulting from these fires.
- According to a 2004 NFPA study, only one in four Americans have devised and practiced an escape plan in case of a fire.

Here are some FIRE SAFETY TIPS from the National Fire Prevention Association to prevent house fires:


- DO NOT leave stovetop cooking unattended and keep an eye on food in the oven.
- Keep cooking areas clean and clear of combustibles such as potholders, towels, rags, food packages and spilled food.
- DO NOT leave candles unattended.
- DO NOT burn candles near flammable objects such as curtains, clothing and books.
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out of children's sight and reach.
- Plan and practice a fire escape plan.

Customer Service Surveys


Recently, HACA's annual Customer Service Survey was sent out to all public housing and Section 8 residents. This survey assists HACA in identifying our customer service quality. Your comments are very important to us, so please take the time to fill out the survey and return to HACA in the envelope provided with the survey. Please do not send other papers or checks with the survey because they may not be forwarded to the correct department. Only return the survey in the envelope. If you are a resident and did not receive a survey, see your manager for a copy. Surveys must be completed and returned to HACA by Friday, October 13. Every response is very important to us and we thank you for your input.

Return to HACA by Friday, October 13.

VOTER REGISTRATION



★ The Tax Assessor-Collector Office, 5501 Airport Boulevard, 7:30 - 5:30, M-F, or by calling (512) 854-9473 twenty-four hours per day
An application will be mailed to you the next business day.



- ★ The Department of Public Safety, the Department of Human Services and Department of Health when applying for services
- ★ Austin Public Libraries
- ★ U.S. post offices located in Travis County

Upcoming Elections

Tuesday, November 07, 2006 -- Joint General and Special Elections
Voter Registration Deadline: Tuesday, October 10, 2006
Begin Accepting Applications to Vote by Mail: Friday, September 08, 2006
Final Day to Accept Applications to Vote by Mail: Tuesday, October 31, 2006
Early In Person Voting Begins: Monday, October 23, 2006
Early In Person Voting Ends: Friday, November 03, 2006

INCOME TAX PREPARATIONS

Join over 8,000 households helped by Community Tax Centers last filing season.

Do you know that you can get your taxes prepared for free?

Community Tax Centers is an IRS-supported program that offers FREE income tax assistance to Central Texas residents. Our volunteers are trained and certified to help you complete your current and prior year income tax returns.

You may qualify for our services if you are:

- a single filer who makes up to \$25,000 a year
- a household that makes up to \$50,000 a year*

*special considerations are made for households with more than 4 members.

Why lose a big part of your own money to INSTANT REFUNDS?

Electronically file your tax returns through us at NO CHARGE. And if you're confronted with a verifiable emergency, we can refer you to services that may help speed the delivery of your refund. Get ALL of your refunds at no cost!

Do you have a tax issue that needs to be addressed now?

Take advantage of our year-round services. Contact us to schedule an appointment with a volunteer trained to handle your complicated tax problems.

Call 2-1-1 or log onto www.communitytaxcenters.org for more information.

Self- Sufficiency continued from page 1

Every year FSS members are recognized for graduating from the program at the annual FSS Banquet. This year HACA has incorporated the Homeownership Program into the banquet to recognized residents who have entered into homeownership.

Clarissa says the banquet is a great opportunity to highlight the hard work accomplished by residents throughout their duration in the program.

"It is so exciting to see the joy and pride on the residents faces as they are individually recognized and the smile of family and friends there to support them," Clarissa said.

The FSS program has grown significantly, but is looking for more residents interested in becoming self- sufficient. Public housing resident are encouraged to contact their FSS specialist for more information. Housing Choice/Section 8 residents are currently unable to sign up because of a large wait list, but the wait list will be opened this November and all Housing Choice/Section 8 residents are encouraged to fill out an interest form.

Halloween Safety Tips

by Jaime Salinas

With witches, goblins and superheroes descending on neighborhoods, the HACA Safety Section offers some safety tips to help prepare your children for a safe and enjoyable trick-or-treat holiday. Halloween should be filled with surprise and enjoyment, and following safety practices can keep events safer and more fun.

Children

- *Children should carry a flashlight and their costumes should be brightly colored or have reflective tape to highlight them.
- *Costumes shouldn't have trailing material or tails long enough to cause falls.

Trick-or-Treating

- *Always travel in groups, preferably of three or more people.
- *Stay away from houses that are not well lit. Never go inside a stranger's house!

Residents

- *Turn on outdoor lights, and replace burnt-out bulbs.
- *If you use candles in your jack-o-lantern, keep it safely away from trick-or-treaters.

HACA Property Improvements

The Planning and Development team is dedicated to making the Housing Authority of the City of Austin a place residents are proud to call home. The following are improvements that are currently under way, are completed or are scheduled for the near future:

Current Project Status

ADA/504 Unit Renovations-Chalmers-In design stage for upgrades to Kitchens & Bathrooms of 18 "504" Units.

Site Erosion & Drainage Improvements-BTW- In design stage for retaining walls and site grading to improve drainage conditions. Site has been surveyed and scope is developing.

Completed Projects

Faucet Replacements-Bouldin

CD Bldg. Renovations-BTW

GFI Plug Upgrades-Manchaca II/ Manchaca Village

Do you want great things for your child, but sometimes struggle with him/her about school?

HACA and AISD are sponsoring two workshops for parents providing resources to help your child succeed in school. "Building Strength Toward Student Success- the path to graduation and college" will provide information and resources regarding stress management, anti-bullying, attendance, truancy, family communication and coordination with the schools. Come have a meal and learn about the support that is available to parents and students.

Meadowbrook Community Room- Tuesday, October 17th, 6-8pm

Bouldin Community Room- Wednesday, Oct. 25th 11:30 - 1:30pm

For more information please contact Barbara Jackson, Drop Out Prevention Coordinator, at 477-4488 ext. 2145

Citywide Advisory Board Notes



Next City Wide Advisory Board Meeting is October 10, 2006

The Citywide Advisory Board discussed several tabled topics this month. Sabrina Campbell, Housing Operations Coordinator, attended the meeting and gave a presentation on keeping HACA properties in top shape. The biggest issue is completing work orders. Residents can help by calling in work orders before inspections begin. We want to remind residents that they are responsible for calling in a work order and it is very important to get a work order number for each issue they call in. Please allow five to seven days for non-emergency issues such as cracks in a refrigerator seal, a broken cabinet door or a closet door replacement to be repaired or replaced. If a member of the HACA maintenance team has not fixed the issue after one week, follow up on the work order by talking to your property manager. The property manager can use the work order number to get information on the called-in

request. Please call a work order as quickly as possible when you know something is broken, missing or needs repair.

Call in works orders promptly, don't wait for an inspection to take care of maintenance issues

WORK ORDERS (512) 477-8518

Energy Conservation Tips

by Energy Manager James Bean

Change a Light, Change the World with ENERGY STAR

The ENERGY STAR Change a Light, Change the World Campaign is a national call-to-action from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to encourage every individual to help change the world, one light - one energy-saving step - at a time

Residents can attend an Austin Energy presentation and receive FREE light bulbs and a discount coupon to Home Depot.

The next presentation will be October 19 at Rosewood/Salina.