

Self-Helper

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Self-Help Housing Success Story – A Long Road Home



Beatrice and her children celebrating her U.S. Citizenship.

There are amazing stories that happen all the time as a result of the self-help housing program. NCALL would like to highlight successes in this newsletter. One such story is that of Beatrice, a self-help housing purchase repair client of Interfaith Housing Alliance (IHA) in Frederick, Maryland.

The photo shown above portrays a very happy day in 2017, but Beatrice's life hasn't always been so happy. Married in Cameroon to her partner of 10 years in 1997, her husband left her in 1998 to come to the United States. Three years later, Beatrice joined her husband in the U.S. only to discover that he had drastically changed.

The physical and mental abuse began immediately, and it was only after her oldest son, then 6 years old in 2011, stood up to his father asking him not to beat his mother. The father then turned on the boy, so Beatrice called 9.1.1. and the father was removed from the home of Beatrice and her 3 children. That was when she found out that her husband had borrowed a lot of money in her name only.

(Continued on Page 2)



Providing comprehensive, quality services for Self-Help Housing

Success Story (Continued from Page 1)

She knew she couldn't afford to pay the money back, so she sold her home and paid off the tremendous debt her husband had kept hidden from her. She knew she was starting over, but never afraid of hard work, Beatrice continued to persevere. She worked the night shift at Frederick Memorial Hospital so she could care for her children during the day. She sought help from Heartly House and was given good advice on how to overcome the trauma a victim of domestic violence experiences. The Housing Authority helped her to find a place

to live and referred her to the Prosperity Center's Credit Café.

At the Credit Café, her advisor told her to "stick to Miss Carol and you are going to be blessed." He was referring to Carol Riggles, IHA's Homeownership Program Manager. And that is exactly what Beatrice did. She learned how to manage her credit, reduce her debt, raise her credit scores and save for the future.

In May 2018, Beatrice purchased a home in a wonderful neighborhood

near excellent schools and not far from work. Beatrice says, "All I want is for my children to have a good life." When asked what her next goal in life will be, Beatrice said she plans to move up her career path from a Certified Nursing Assistant to a Licensed Practical Nurse. We all have no doubt that Beatrice will make her new dream come true as well!

If you have any participant success stories, please share them with NCALL for us to print here and post on the Spotlight website.

Securing the Spotlight and Other Updates

As you all should know by now, the Spotlight, www.selfhelphousingspotlight.org, is a national website that NCALL administers for self-help housing grantees. It is an online presence that links all self-help grantees nationwide and helps connect interested parties to programs in their area. Recently, it has had some important updates.

The Spotlight now has a SSL certificate to make it a secure. The URL now begins with "https:" instead of "http:." The "s" symbolizes that the site is secure. This is primarily to encrypt information sent over the website, such as a contact form. However, the biggest benefit for all grantees is that the site should now rank higher in search results. This means there will be more visitors to the website over time. There has been a consistent increase over the past two years, and we hold steady with at least 1,500 visitors a month.



Another benefit is perception – viewers will trust the website more knowing it is secure. Since 75% of traffic to the website comes through Google searches, this is important.

The website now has a Google Translate button. This bright orange translate button is at the bottom corner of the site. The button is sticky – meaning it always shows on the page even if a user scrolls up or down. It works well on desktop or mobile devices. The button

translates all text between English and Spanish.

Lastly, more links have been added to the "In the News" page. This is where we can link to stories that have been published nationwide about self-help housing. If your organization makes the news, let us know and we will link it to the Spotlight.

Please let us know if you would like any updates to your organization's page!

Spending and Budget Updates

According to the Housing Assistance Council (HAC), it seems as if rural homeownership funds are on track to be fully used this year. As of August 31, USDA had made 6,209 mortgages from its Section 502 direct program totaling about \$945.6 billion, higher than the \$911.7 billion obligated by the same date last year. It seems likely to use all available funds for this program by the end of FY18 on September 30, as it did last year. The proportion of Section 502 direct funds loaned to very low-income borrowers was at 33.2%, below its 37.6% at this time last year and 38.1% at the end of last year.

According to USDA RD, it also seemed likely that most of the 523 grant funds would be spent, thanks in large part to a flurry of applications that came in late in the fiscal year. Seemingly the only money that may be left is some money in the pot held specifically for use in persistent poverty counties.

To check out obligations by state, visit HAC's website (www.ruralhome.org) for a full report that is updated monthly.

As far at the upcoming fiscal year, Congress is still working on

appropriations for FY 19 and on the Farm Bill. Congress has divided appropriations bills for FY19, which begins October 1, into several "minibuses." The USDA and Transportation HUD measures are combined with the Interior Department's bill, and the programs' funding levels are still under discussion in conference committee.

USDA RD Program (dollars in millions)	FY 17 Final	FY 18 Final	FY 19 Admin. Proposal	FY 18 House	FY 19 Senate
Loans					
502 Single Fam. Direct	\$1,000	\$1,100	\$0	\$1,000	\$1,100
502 Single Family Guar.	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000
504 Very Low-Inc. Repair Loans	26.3	28	0	28	280
514 Farm Labor Hsg.	23.9	23	0	27.5	23.8
515 Rental Hsg. Direct	35	40	0	45	40
Grants & Payments					
Rural Housing Assistance Grants (RHAG) (Includes 504 Grants & 533 HPG)	-	30	0	45	40
504 VLI Repair Grants	28.7	30	0	-30	-30
516 Farm Labor Hsg.	8.3	8.4	0	10	8.3
523 Self-Help TA	30	30	0	30	30
533 Hsg. Prsrv. Grants*	5	10	0	-15	-10
521 Rental Assistance	1,405	1,345	1,351	1,331	1,331
HUD Program (dollars in millions)	FY 17 Final	FY 18 Final	FY 19 Admin. Proposal	FY 19 House	FY 19 Senate
CDBG	\$3,000	\$3,300	0	\$3,300	\$33,000
HOME	950	1,362	0	1,200	1,362
SHOP	10	10	10	10	0
Housing Counseling	55	55	45	55	45
Choice Neighborhoods Initiative	137.5	150	0	150	100

USDA Changes to RD Handbook-1-3550

Reminder: USDA Rural Development has partially revised Handbook-1-3550.

This year, USDA's Single Family Housing (SFH) Direct Division published an update to Handbook-1-3550, in two Procedural Notices (PN). The handbook changes aim to simplify and make more efficient the process of Single Family Direct Loans and Grants, as well as to clarify program requirements.

Partial revisions were made to some areas, including homeownership education training, packager's certification, packaging fees, appraisals, RD's letters, cover letter, credit score range, income verifications, house inspections, insurance (builder's risk, hazard, flood) and timelines. Attachment 3-A was entirely revised; Attachments 3-G, 3-H and 3-J were partially

revised and/ or reorganized.

You can access Procedure Notice (PN) 508, released on February 2, 2018, at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/pn508.pdf>, and Procedure Notice (PN) 513, released on June 4, 2018, at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/pn513.pdf>. These PNs show the changes. Download the updated HB -1-3550 here <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/hb-1-3550.pdf>. One of the more important chapters that grantees deal with is Chapter 3, which can be accessed here, <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/3550-1chapter03.pdf>.

Upcoming HAC Conference to Include Self-Help Track

Join hundreds of your friends and colleagues for the **2018 HAC Rural Housing Conference**.

More than just a collection of workshops and plenaries, the conference is about coming together to share collective experiences and build expertise. A Self-Help Housing track is being planned. Registration is now open!

HAC's 2018 conference is being held in Washington, DC at the Capitol Hilton Hotel on December 5-7. Preconference activities are planned for December 4th, including the National Rural Self-Help Housing Association's Annual Meeting.

Complete This Word Search for a PRIZE!!

IT'S PARTY TIME



Need a break after all that reading?! If you are the first person to turn in this puzzle to Jill at jlordan@ncall.org, you will win

your choice of \$25 in Facebook Advertising to promote self-help or business card mini flyers.

Find these words:

- Advocacy
- Citizenship
- Conference
- Insulation
- Loans
- Moisture
- Packager
- Pride
- Prizes
- Spotlight



N O H C X K U X U T E P Y X N
M O F Z X P I B H O C A X T D
V O I B S C J G H O N C B P U
A J I T V T I H I V E K I Z W
J L O S A L O I W U R A W U P
P S N O T L G G T O E G N V Z
G M G O I U U R B S F E I Y U
J Q P O M W R S O R N R Q B M
S S E D I R P E N L O A P F J
A D V O C A C Y G I C R O H M
N B I H P T W U T G I R W L K
A O Z P I H S N E Z I T I C U
V K T B W D G M E S H E D X L
O L R I L I V S W E K Z N K P
Z Y C V Q Z W A U S P K F V E

5 Steps to Prevent Moisture in New Homes

One essential element to securing the long-term durability of any home is moisture control. In fact, much of what we know about applied building science today was the result of early work investigating the moisture impact on buildings. There are five things you can do to prevent excess moisture during new home construction.

Mind Moisture Content in Wood Framing

Experts recommend wood moisture content of no more than 15%, not to exceed 19% for mold prevention. Higher than that and you're setting the stage for mold development and other moisture-related problems like wood rot. Grantees must not only measure and monitor the moisture content of the wood, but also take steps to prevent moisture uptake. Since protecting wood framing is critical, it is recommended that grantees dry in the homes as soon as possible by installing building papers and glazing. This will help keep the framing as dry as possible, thereby reducing the chances of exceeding that moisture threshold.

Construction moisture, in general, is a big problem because if you start with a wet building, it's going to take longer to dry out, which can lead to some of the issues you see with nail pops and cracking drywall.

Air Seal + Insulate

Air-transported moisture, particularly through a building envelope that is not properly air sealed and insulated, can cause a building structure to degrade. The



Condensation, decay and mold due to air leakage transportation moisture into an exterior wall assembly at an unsealed electrical outlet.

best defense against this is to keep moist air out of the building through effective air sealing prior to insulating. Air sealing is key to preventing moisture in wall cavities, and it's an element that can't be overlooked when insulating a home.

Turn off the Furnace

Contractors often use the central furnace in a new construction home as a heater during the finishing stages of construction. However, this can cause major problems, including corrosion from chlorides, construction dust, and condensation in the furnace and/or vent system, even though the furnace may be a non-condensing surface under normal conditions. Turning the furnace off will prevent condensation within the furnace and duct system.

Use a Ventilator or Dehumidifier

There's no way to avoid construction moisture completely, so in addition to the strategies

outlined above, grantee's should use a ventilator or dehumidifier to remove moisture during construction. Using a ventilator or dehumidifier will get the moisture out of the foundation, floor, and wood. Contractors should aim for moisture content of less than 15% in wood and a relative humidity rating during construction of less than 70%.

Controlling Moisture in Walls

While more stringent energy codes have been good for energy efficiency, they've increased the opportunity for building condensation. To control moisture buildup in the building envelope, it helps to use continuous insulation, an interior air barrier and an interior vapor barrier in cold climates.

In terms of priority, first control for temperature, then air, then vapor, keeping in mind that moisture from exterior sources such as rain and

(Continued on Page 6)

Preventing Moisture *(Continued from Page 5)*

heat produced humidity will occur. Building envelope condensation is best controlled by using an exterior air barrier, ventilated cladding, and an exterior water control layer such as a house wrap or continuous insulation.

Conclusion

While it's not possible to remove all moisture sources from a construction site, the practices detailed above will help manage the most common causes of excessive and potentially harmful moisture issues in new construction homes.

Section 502 Direct Packaging Website

The certified packaging process now has a dedicated website for packagers and intermediaries. The site includes upcoming certified packaging training sessions, trainings on program/packaging topics, resources (such as a link to the intermediary coverage map), and the Loan Packaging Express newsletter. Visit <https://www.rd.usda.gov/direct-loan-application-packagers> to view the new site!

Income Banding Proposed Rule

A [proposed rule](#) would make several changes to the Section 502 direct and guaranteed loans, including adopting a pilot that broadens eligibility and has been tested in select states since FY16. To qualify for a mortgage, a family with between one and four people would need to have an income below HUD's four-person limit, and a family with between five and eight would need to fall below the eight-person amount. [Comments](#) are due by October 30.

NRHC Fact Sheets

Looking to do some advocacy? Want to talk to state and federal officials, but aren't sure what to say? The National Rural Housing Coalition (NRHC) has fact sheets grantees can use to help! Visit <http://ruralhousingcoalition.org/fact-sheets/> to check them out.

Regional Conference Call Planned

NCALL will be hosting another regional conference call on **Thursday, October 25th at 10:00 a.m.** for an open discussion. Please join us and be prepared to share your thoughts and questions. More information will be coming out closer to the call.

POST YOUR CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS ON INSTAGRAM

WITH HASHTAG **#SELFHELPHOUSING**



AND CONNECT WITH SELF-HELP HOUSING FAMILIES NATIONWIDE!

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Published Quarterly
by NCALL Research
Karen Speakman, Executive Director
Jill E. Lordan, Self-Help Director & Editor
Articles contributed by NCALL staff.
Phone (302) 678-9400
Fax (302) 678-9058
www.ncall.org

