

Award Winner

City of Manassas Housing Department

NMA is proud to announce the 2008 winner of its Excellence in Housing Award is the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services.

Home Ownership through the FSS Program

At a time when homes nationwide are being foreclosed, over the last year the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services has successfully helped housing choice voucher (HCV) program clients purchase and close on their own homes through their participation in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Director Ray Spicer wrote "Each of our homeowners have an improved quality of life, entered into the social community they desired and...have become productive members of their community."

Commitment to Learning Leads to Success

City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services staff members have years of housing experience, and make a continuous effort to increase their knowledge by attending trainings and community networking meetings throughout the year. The staff stays up-to-date on what other housing departments are doing and on community resources available to better serve their clients.

In addition to growing their knowledge, the staff also passes on what they know to their clients. The skills and industry knowledge of the staff has helped clients learn better money management skills and propelled the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services to have the most successful homeownership program in Virginia.

Other Tools That Promote Self-Sufficiency

In addition to money management, the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services also offers clients various opportunities to learn and develop other skills necessary for self-sufficiency. They include education and job opportunities, seminars on topics ranging from job retention to credit scores to resume writing, and new transportation options.

These tools and trainings have lead to improved self esteem and self worth, increased confidence, and a sense of purpose in program participants.

Nan McKay & Associates recognizes leaders in the assisted housing industry through agency performance, community outreach, and efforts to break new ground for the future of the industry. We want to congratulate the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services success with helping housing choice voucher (HCV) program clients purchase and close on their own homes through their participation in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. Because of your service to your community and your employee performance, you have been chosen as a recipient of the 2008 NMA Excellence in Housing Award.

Recognition from VHDA

The Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) operates the HCV program in Virginia for 38 administrative agencies that do not have a local authority, including the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services.

VHDA conducts Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP) audits annually. The audit determines the compliance level for:

- Program outreach and wait list management
- Income and eligibility verification
- The leasing process
- Housing quality standards compliance inspection
- Annual reexaminations

For fiscal year 2007, the City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services received a "Perfect High Performer" SEMAP rating – as well as a commemorative plaque from VHDA, and a monetary award.

Excellence in Housing

The City of Manassas Housing Department of Family Services has demonstrated excellence in managing its FSS program and helping clients transition into being homeowners.

It is a model the public housing industry can look to as proof that the right mix of knowledge, dedicated staff, and motivated FSS program participants can lead to success stories of self-sufficiency.

Award Winner

Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority

NMA is proud to announce Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority (DMHA) as the 2008 winner of the Pioneer in Housing Award.

A Simple Philosophy

The main objective of the DMHA River Commons project was to rehabilitate an existing DMHA building to provide public housing to low to moderate income residents of Montgomery County, as well as creating permanent supportive housing for at least 50 chronically homeless people.

Chronically homeless people are those who have continuously lived on the streets for at least a year, or have been homeless at least four times in the past three years. In 2004, more than 6,000 people in the Dayton area were identified as homeless, about 200 of which are considered chronically homeless.

DMHA's philosophy was simple – if you give people access to decent, safe, affordable housing and on-site supportive services, then many will choose to do things to keep their home and become contributing members of society.

“Out of the Box” Thinking

DMHA Executive Director Gregory D. Johnson had the idea to use an existing DMHA building slated for demolition, change its appearance and name, and create the supportive housing system it needed.

Working closely as a team, DMHA staff was able to:

- Develop a plan to see if the idea was feasible, which included looking at mechanical issues and evaluating needed building improvements
- Reach out and forge key partnerships with Montgomery County, the City of Dayton, The Other Place (a homeless outreach group), and Goodwill
- Establish a “Good Neighbor Agreement” with surrounding priority boards
- Begin construction on the project in June 2007, which included extensive plumbing, air conditioning, kitchen updating, a new hallway entry area, creation of office space, and interior and exterior aesthetic improvements
- In three months, complete the project by Sept. 3, 2007, with a grand opening the next day

Setting an Industry Example for Compassion

With an initial budget of \$906,000, the 100-unit building that was once scheduled to be demolished because of its high cost for renovation was not only saved but improved and able to provide housing to existing DMHA participants and new ones.

At the grand opening, 61 previously chronic homeless people moved into their new homes. River Commons is the first permanent housing project under Dayton's 10-year plan to end chronic homelessness and reduce overall homelessness.

Dayton City Manager Rashad M. Young said the DMHA project “is a strong example of how intergovernmental cooperation can work to help solve a global problem. This project has been the first success in combating chronic homelessness in (our) community.”

River Commons Delivers Results

River Commons features 24-hour security, an on-site program manager, two case workers, desk attendants/engagements specialists, a “jobs first” employment program, various supportive services, monthly life skills education classes, and social development and enrichment opportunities.

Tracking from September 2007 through March 2008 revealed 71% of the tenants that participated in employment support services became employed – surpassing the HUD benchmark goal of 18% within 12 months. Additionally, 98% of previously homeless tenants remained housed at River Commons for seven months or longer – also surpassing the HUD benchmark goal of 70%.

DMHA is a Pioneer in Housing

Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority clearly went above and beyond community partnership into multi disciplinary and creative community collaboration.

DMHA Executive Director Mr. Johnson wrote that the DMHA “takes pride in being a(n)...advocate on behalf of our clients, on community issues and services that affect their ability to secure and maintain housing, while facing the many ongoing challenges this industry presents.”

“As an agency, we will continue to ‘look outside the box’ now, and in the future, to ensure that our residents receive decent, safe, affordable housing.”