



Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, Missouri

201 Switzler Street, Columbia, MO 65203

Office: (573) 443-2556 ♦ TTY: (573) 875-5161 ♦ Fax Line: (573) 443-0051 ♦ www.ColumbiaHA.com

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Contact: Phil Steinhaus
Chief Executive Officer
Columbia Housing Authority
(573) 443-2556, Ext 1100
psteinhaus@columbiaha.com

Becky Markt
Director of Resident Services
Columbia Housing Authority
(573) 443-2556, Ext 1250
bmarkt@columbiaha.com

Families enrolled in CHA Family Self-Sufficiency Program Experience Great Success in 2009

Columbia, Missouri - February 5, 2010 - Families who participated in the Columbia Housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency Programs experienced great success in 2009 in their ability to obtain and maintain employment, set and reach career goals, obtain higher education, and gain financial stability. The Section 8 FSS Program started in 2006 followed by the Public Housing FSS Program in 2008. Both Family Self-Sufficiency Programs are sponsored by the Columbia Housing Authority and located in the newly established Family Self-Sufficiency Center inside the newly remodeled J.W. "Blind" Boone Community Center.

During the past year, 40 families participating in the Section 8 FSS program increased their household income by an average of \$10,013. Public Housing FSS families increased their household income by an average of \$3,573. Six families reached their goals and completed the program in 2009. Over \$20,000 was disbursed to these graduates from their escrow savings accounts. Additional program successes are listed below.

The CHA Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is a voluntary program designed to assist Columbia families in becoming economically independent and self-sufficient. FSS is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people living in Public Housing and receiving Section 8 housing assistance by providing coordinated services and connecting program participants to appropriate supportive services and resources in the Columbia community. FSS Coordinators assist program participants in designing a five-year self-sufficiency plan to obtain their personal goals. FSS Coordinators also help families choose career paths, set realistic goals, overcome barriers to success, and gain employment.

All families receiving Section 8 or Public Housing assistance pay 30% of their adjusted household income for rent. As their household income goes up, the family's share of rent goes up accordingly. The Family Self-Sufficiency Program provides financial incentives to program participants by matching rent increases related to gains in household income in an interest bearing escrow account. Upon successful completion of the program, participants are able to use their escrow accounts to reach goals such as homeownership, opening a small business, pursuing higher education, becoming more financial stable, etc.

According to Marie Litchfield, CHA Section 8 Specialist, "FSS is **the** vital step in helping Columbia's low-income families achieve their goals and break the cycle of poverty. Not all housing authorities offer an FSS program. The City of Columbia is very fortunate to have the FSS program in place to help local families reach economic self-sufficiency!"

Family Self-Sufficiency Success

The 2009 reporting year results for the Housing Choice Voucher Family Self-Sufficiency Program are as follows:

- Number of unduplicated households assisted: 59
- Number of individuals that received services: 210
- Number of households that experienced an increase in household income: 40
- Average dollar increase in annual household income: \$10,013
- Number of households that successfully completed their Contract of Participation: 6
- Dollar value of FSS Escrow accounts disbursed to program graduates: \$20,251
- Number of new FSS escrow accounts established:..... 16
- Number of Housing Choice Voucher FSS participants who successfully graduated from the FDIC Money Smart Financial Education Curriculum: 49

“This is a program that actually works for the betterment of our Columbia families. Every day, our program participants strive hard to reach their goals. These are the goals they set for themselves; we did not set their goals for them. I am very proud of each participant and the hard work and dedication they have put into reaching for a better life!” Caira Dean, CHA HCV FSS Coordinator

The Columbia Housing Authority has a similar program in place for Public Housing residents. Participants in the Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency program are required to complete a Job Readiness Program and a Financial Management Class. The Family Self-sufficiency Coordinator works one-on-one with each participant to seek employment and focus on personal goals. In 2009, the Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency reported the following outcomes.

- Number of residents that have completed their GED: 4
- Number of residents that have opened a savings/checking account: 14
- Number of residents that no longer receive TANF: 4
- Number of residents that have obtained full time employment: 6
- Number of residents that have increased their earned income:..... 24
- Average dollar increase in annual household income: \$3,573.00
- Number of local service agencies that have partnered with the FSS Program: 298
- Number of residents that have completed the Job Readiness Program: 17
- Number of residents that are taking online college courses: 4
- Number of residents that have completed a clerical skills program: 7

The Columbia Housing Authority offers the Family Self-Sufficiency Programs to all Public Housing Residents and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher participants. CHA also collaborates with local social service agencies in helping FSS families overcome barriers to reaching their goals.

“The Columbia Housing Authority is in the process of transforming itself into an agency focused on family self-sufficiency,” said Phil Steinhaus, CEO. “We have created a Family Self-Sufficiency Center inside our newly remodeled J.W. “Blind” Boone Community Center in order to better serve our families. This allows us to provide a family-friendly location for our Moving Ahead Programs designed to help youth succeed in school and families work toward self-sufficiency.”