



Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, Missouri

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHA Families Benefit from Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Columbia, Missouri - June 21, 2017: Families receiving housing assistance through the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) have benefitted significantly from the opportunities and support provided through the HUD-funded Family Self-Sufficiency Program. The CHA currently has 135 families participating in the program. The CHA employs two (2) full-time Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators with the funds received through this federal program.

On Tuesday, June 13, 2017 U.S. Senators Roy Blunt (Mo.), Jack Reed (R.I.), Tim Scott (S.C.), and Bob Menendez (N.J.) introduced the bipartisan Family Self Sufficiency Act, which would streamline and improve the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. (See attached press release). The CHA is pleased that this vital program has received bi-partisan support.

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program provides supportive services for families to develop a five-year plan for self-sufficiency. Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators help the family develop and implement the plan and connect families with resources that aid them in achieving their goals. These resources range from financial management training to enrollment in school and employment training and interview skills. Financial incentives are also paired with increases in income.

All families receiving housing assistance through the CHA pay 30% of their adjusted household income for rent. When a family enrolls in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, they establish their income baseline and their goals to increase their income through employment. As employment income increases, their share of the rent increases accordingly. Through the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, the CHA makes a

deposit equal to the rent increase in a special escrow account that the family can cash out when they graduate to self-sufficiency.

There are 135 families currently enrolled in the CHA Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Sixty-four (64) of these families (47%) have a total of \$170,009 in escrow as a result of their increased earnings through this program. This comes out to an average of \$2,656 per family with funds in escrow. Since the beginning of the CHA's Family Self-Sufficiency Program in 2006, 55 families have graduated from the program. These families escrowed \$245,768 during their participation in the program, an average of \$4,469 per family. When they graduate from the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, families may use their escrowed funds to make a down payment on a home, purchase reliable transportation, or address other needs that support them in self-sufficiency.

"The Family Self-Sufficiency Program plays a critical role in helping the Columbia Housing Authority move people from poverty to self-sufficiency," said Phil Steinhaus, CEO of the CHA. "The best way to reduce our waiting lists for affordable housing is to help people move in, move up, and move out," said Steinhaus. "We cannot afford to warehouse people in poverty, so we must support them in their efforts to become self-sufficient."

Established in 1956, the Columbia Housing Authority (CHA) owns and operates 751 units of affordable housing while also administering 1,180 housing vouchers through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Through these programs, the CHA provides rent subsidies to low-income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

With over 1,900 units of assisted housing options, the CHA represents approximately 9% of Columbia's rental market. The CHA's mission is to provide safe, healthy, and affordable housing opportunities to low-income individuals and families. In carrying out this mission, the CHA seeks partnerships and collaborative efforts with local organizations and other governmental agencies that provide services to improve the quality of life for CHA residents.

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