A ‘Buckner Place’ to Call Home

By Nanette Vallejos

Jacksonville—The Buckner Division, a part of the Children’s Home Society (CHS), celebrated a milestone in March when it opened “Buckner Place”—its new Independent and Transitional Living facility for youth in foster care.

The brand new residence will give foster care children who have experienced years of trauma and abuse a special place to call home—a place that provides nurturing, encouragement and guidance to them. Buckner Place combines a group home for pregnant teen girls and teen girls who already have children, with independent living apartments for those who have aged out of foster care.

CHS of Florida recognized the need for an Independent Living program simply from looking at the outcomes of children in foster care. Many young people, ages 19, 20 and 21, still need a “safety net” for themselves and their young children to help them navigate the ups and downs of young adulthood. Thirty-six (36) percent of youth who have aged out of foster care have not yet obtained a high school diploma or GED by age 20. Additionally, many of these youth become drug addicts, prostitutes, homeless, incarcerated and/or die.

Buckner Place allows for program staff to put a strong emphasis on independence by providing each girl with a dorm-style unit that contains a full-service kitchen, which helps each girl better learn how to care for herself and her children. Not only do the apartments provide independence for girls in foster care after they turn 18 years old, but also provides access to the same services and caring staff as each continues her individual journey toward adulthood.

The facility strengthens our efforts to stop the generational cycle of abuse and neglect by allowing us to provide services to two generations of children, simultaneously. By working with teen parents, the center emphasizes the importance of their own developmental stages while demonstrating the same lessons for their growing babies.

“For youth aging out of foster care, it can be a very scary process, especially if they have no plans or support systems in place,” said Kymberly Cook, CHS Buckner Division executive director. “Through Buckner Place, they have the opportunity for a ‘transitional’ learning experience without the uncertainty.”

Since 1993, the Buckner Division has provided residential services to teen mothers and their babies. This new facility continues that unique program, but takes it to an entirely new level of care with state-of-the-art amenities and enhanced independent living training.

The project was financed with support from the City of Jacksonville, through SHIP funds; Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing), through seed money for transitioning teens aging out of foster care; the CHS Foundation, with funds through the estate of Thad and Loca Lee Buckner; and private donors. In addition, the project was awarded $249,000 through Florida Housing’s Demonstration Loan Program.

For more information on CHS programs, visit www.chsfl.org. Nanette Vallejos is a development specialist—public relations for Buckner Division, CHS-Jacksonville.
In 2009, Florida Housing was awarded $1.04 million that will assist approximately 3,825 troubled homeowners. In 2010, we were awarded $1.8 million under the Hardest Hit Housing Markets program, which allowed us to provide 9,845 counseling events to assist struggling homeowners. Last year, we were awarded $1.6 million under this program, which funded approximately 7,345 counseling events. This year, we have received $1.5 million to help an additional 3,825 troubled homeowners.

In February, the US Department of Treasury (Treasury) announced the “Housing Finance Agency Innovation Fund for the Hardest-Hit Housing Markets” (HFA Hardest-Hit) to provide meaningful financial support for families in the nation’s hardest-hit housing markets. First round funding designates $1.5 billion to five states: Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan and Nevada. Florida is slated to receive $418 million. This funding will bolster our efforts to assist Floridians who have experienced unavoidable hardships and are in danger of losing their homes. Subsequently, Treasury announced five more states that will share an additional $600 million in Hardest-Hit funding (North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Oregon and Rhode Island).

The centerpiece of our proposal is the Mortgage Intervention Strategy that earmarks $343 million to help unemployed or underemployed homeowners who have experienced true hardships to sustain and keep their homes. We expect this strategy to assist up to 12,000 families in Florida. Treasury will take approximately four to six weeks to give final approval of states’ proposals, so we expect to have a program in place in Florida later this year. We’ll keep you abreast of new developments regarding the program; in the meantime, for more information on the Hardest-Hit Fund, visit our Web site at www.FloridaHousing.org.

The 2010 Legislative Session came to a close on April 30. Although the proposed legislation to repeal the cap on the Housing Trust Funds did not pass, Florida Housing was fortunate to be appropriated approximately $35 million earmarked for down payment and closing cost assistance for first-time homebuyers. This funding will be used to assist qualified homebuyers achieve the “American dream” of homeownership, while helping to absorb the increasing inventory of existing homes currently available for purchase throughout our state.

Last year, we announced our participation in the Tax Credit Assistance (TCAP) and Tax Credit Exchange (Exchange) programs, created through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. These programs allowed us to fund 82 developments, to date (8,014 total units). Close to half of the developments funded through these programs were either previously awarded housing credits that could not find equity investors, or had previously awarded funding de-obligated as a result of legislation requiring Florida Housing to return $190 million to the state treasury to help address the 2009 budget shortfall. This stimulus funding is being well-used to assist in Florida’s economic recovery by creating employment opportunities and affordable housing, statewide. For a complete listing of the developments funded through the TCAP and Exchange programs, visit our Web site and click on “ARRA of 2009” on the homepage.

Florida Housing appreciates being recognized as a strong and capable partner to our state’s housing and economic recovery. We look forward to leveraging all available funding to take full advantage of these and other resources to effectuate the best possible results for our citizens.
Broward County and the City of Fort Lauderdale Add Two New Housing Developments to Provide Affordable Housing

By Meghan Russell

Fort Lauderdale—The Housing Authority of the City of Fort Lauderdale and Carlisle Development Group recently hosted joint ceremonies for two new affordable housing developments for low-income families. The ground-breaking ceremony was for Northwest Gardens I, and the grand opening ceremony was for Dixie Court Apartments III.

More than 75 people attended the ceremonies, including elected officials, City of Fort Lauderdale staff, bankers and local community leaders. Providing low-income families with safe, secure, affordable housing is the goal of the joint-venture between these two developers. Together, they bring 243 affordable housing units to Broward County—Northwest Gardens I will include 143 units and Dixie Court Apartments III includes 100 units.

Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing) awarded $1.7 million in Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) for Dixie Court Apartments III, and $2.1 million in LIHTCs plus an additional $18.2 million from the Tax Credits Assistance Program (TCAP) toward Northwest Gardens.

“These developments are a testament to the hard work and dedication of the CRA, HACFL, and individuals like Tam English, who, together, were able to pursue outside funds and leverage local money which allowed this to be built,” said Matthew S. Greer, chief executive officer of Carlisle Development Group.

“Developments like Northwest Gardens and Dixie Court are a win-win for the community,” said City of Fort Lauderdale Mayor John P. Seiler. “They add jobs in the community and they provide safe, affordable housing for low-income residents of Fort Lauderdale.”

For more information on Carlisle Development Group, visit www.carlisledevelopmentgroup.com. Meghan Russell is a junior account executive with Becker Public Relations, Coral Gables.

Respecting Their Elders: Polk County Keeps its Mature Population in Mind

Polk County—The Winter Haven Housing Authority (WHHA) recently completed construction on Lakeside Terrace, an apartment development for seniors. This senior-living apartment complex is an 84-unit affordable housing community that serves seniors at 60% area median income (AMI), with 13 units set-aside for seniors at 40% AMI. Some of the amenities offered include a community media room, computer lab, fitness center, laundry room on each floor, shuffle board court and swimming pool.

In 2004, the WHHA decided it was time to update one of its largest communities—Orrin Circle Apartments. The land was once home to 65 units of public housing that through the years had become dilapidated and outdated. As a result, a plan was created to demolish and rebuild a premier housing community focused on the elderly.

Through Florida Housing’s Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, the WHHA received $1.2 million. Additional funding was provided by the City of Winter Haven; Polk County; a tax credit equity investment provided by Centerline Capital Group; and construction and permanent financing provided by CNL Bank.
New Issue Bond Program (NIBP) Tracking

As an update to the information previously featured in the Communicator, the New Issue Bond Program (NIBP) allows both state and local housing finance agencies to sell 60 percent of their Mortgage Revenue Bond (MRB) Issues to the US Treasury for up to a designated approved amount. The purchase of these long-term MRBs at a preset price established in December 2009 should help Florida Housing’s First Time Homebuyer (FTHB) Program to offer lower, competitive mortgage rates that, without this resource, might not otherwise be available. The goal of the program is to issue a combined total of $900 million of MRBs in 2010. This money, then, is used to purchase first mortgage loans made by trained and approved lending partners throughout the state as part of the FTHB Program. The accompanying graphic illustrates current utilization of these funds. Information on this program, including updates to the amount of funds used, will be contained in future issues of the What’s Developing newsletter so that you may follow the progress of this program.

Tallahassee-Based Housing Counseling Agency Receives Federal Grants to Help Homebuyers

The Tallahassee Lenders’ Consortium (TLC) recently received $62,464 through a Housing Counseling Agency grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Leon County Commissioner Bob Rackleff joined state Representative Alan Williams (District 8-Tallahassee) as Libby Lane, executive director of TLC, was presented a ceremonial check by Nicholas Shelley, HUD Jacksonville field office director.

TLC is one of 42 Florida-based HUD/FHA-approved housing counseling agencies included in HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan’s national housing counseling and training grant announcement in October 2009. Following a tour of high-foreclosure neighborhoods in the Orlando and Miami areas, Secretary Donovan said, “Now, more than ever, it is crucial that Americans understand how to manage their money, navigate the home-buying process, and secure their financial future. This critical funding will help counseling organizations continue to assist families in making more informed choices before they buy a home, and counsel families facing foreclosure.”

The housing counseling grants will assist families in becoming first-time homeowners and to remain homeowners after their purchase. The funding announced is part of $60 million in housing counseling agency grants awarded nationwide. For more information, visit HUD’s Web site at www.hud.gov.

UPCOMING Events

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IMPORTANT Resources & Links

1) For more information on Florida Housing’s First Time Homebuyer Program (FTHB), or how to become a participating lender, visit www.floridahousing.org.
2) For complete Bond Program Training at no cost to you or your institution, contact Pat Denihan, eHousing Plus, at (954) 430-6072.
3) For promotional materials, contact Natalie Zanders at natalyne.zanders@floridahousing.org. Please specify quantity and language needed.
4) For Florida Housing’s State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program Directory, visit www.floridahousing.org.
5) For Florida Housing’s First Time Homebuyer (FTHB) Program.

REALTOR Corner

Florida Housing offers a three-hour Continuing Education course, titled “Affordable Housing Solutions: What Every Realtor Should Know.”

Approved by the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), the course is taught in your location by Florida Housing Single Family Program staff and provides an overview of Florida Housing’s homeownership programs, with special emphasis on the First Time Homebuyer (FTHB) Program.

This program may benefit buyers in your market by providing them with access to 20-year, fixed-rate mortgage financing that may be coupled with down payment and closing cost assistance. The loans are originated through a large network of trained loan officers representing approved participating lenders and loan officers located throughout the state.

Currently, Florida Housing is working to complete the 2010 training schedule, which is limited to a maximum of 24 classes. Requests for trainings will be taken on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information on the course and to view the 2010 schedule, visit www.floridahousing.org or contact Natalie Zanders, single family program analyst, at natalyne.zanders@floridahousing.org or call her at (850) 557-4124.

LEADING Lenders

Each quarter, Florida Housing recognizes top-producing lenders for the First Time Homebuyer (FTHB) Program. Based on the number of purchased loans for the third quarter, the top producers are as follows:

(continued)
What's Developing wants to feature groundbreaking and open house events, and articles on projects and developments that are made possible using funding received from Florida Housing Finance Corporation. Please contact Cecka Rose Green, communications director, at cecka.green@floridahousing.org to submit your information.

COMMON Acronyms

AMHI Affordable Median Income
CBG Community Development Block Grant
CIL Community Workforce Housing Innovation Plan
CECL Elderly Housing Community Loan
ELI Extremely Low Income
FHC Florida Housing Coalition
FHDC Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse
FHFC Florida Housing Finance Corporation
FLC Florida League of Cities
FHRP Farmworker Housing Recovery Program
FTHB First Time Homebuyer
GFO Zero Act
GHP Gulf Opportunity Zone Act
HAI Homeownership Assistance for Moderate Income
HC Housing Credits
HHRP Hurricane Housing Recovery Program
HLP Homeownership Loan Programs
HMDA HOME Incentive Partnerships
HOF HOME Ownership Pool
HOPE VI Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere
HED Housing and Urban Development
LHGC Local Government Housing Trust Fund
LHIT Low Income Housing Tax Credits
MC Mortgage Credit Certificates
MMRB Multifamily Mortgage Revenue Bond
NHOM National Homeownership Month
NCSHA National Council of State Housing Agencies
NIDB Notice of Intent to Build
NIDC Notice of Intent to Construct
NCOD Notice of Endorsement
NCOE Notice of Endorsement
NOFA Notice Of Funding Availability
NOFA Notice Of Funding Availability
NBPR Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
NOPR Notice Of Proposed Rule Hearing
NPR Notice of Private Enterprise
PHFA Public Housing Authority
PLP Predevelopment Loan Program
QAP Qualified Allocation Plan
RRL Rental Recovery Loan Program
SAIL Safe Affordable Investment Loan
SMBRH Single Family Mortgage Revenue Bond
SHC Special Housing Assistance & Development Program
SHP State Housing Initiatives Partnership
SHT State Housing Trust Fund
TLC Tallahassee Lenders Corporation

For more information on FloridaHousingSearch.org, visit the Web site, or call the toll-free bilingual call center at 1-877-428-8844.

Florida Housing Search.org
A Free Place to List & Find Affordable Housing in Florida

Tallahassee—At the end of 2009, more than 3,180 million affordable rental unit surveys have been conducted on FloridaHousingSearch.org since its public launching in August 2006. During the same time period, the bilingual call-center has handled more than 140,000 Locator-related telephone inquiries and requests from the public and landlords.

In addition to allowing people to search for affordable rental housing that is best suited for their needs for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, FloridaHousingSearch.org also provides information on assisted living facilities and adult family care homes. The facility information and service is supported by the Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA) and the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA).

UPCOMING Events

Florida Housing Board of Directors’ Meetings
June 18 – 8:30 am-5:00 p.m.
Tallahassee City Hall, Commission Chambers
300 South Adams Street, Tallahassee
July 30 – 8:30 am-5:00 p.m.

September 10 – 8:30 am-5:00 p.m.
Tallahassee City Hall, Commission Chambers
300 South Adams Street, Tallahassee

Florida Housing Coalition Annual Conference
September 20-22
Rosen Shingle Creek Resort
9859 Universal Boulevard, Orlando

Florida League of Cities
Annual Conference
August 19-21
Westin Diplomat
3550 South Ocean Drive, Hollywood

National Council of State Housing Agencies Annual Conference
October 2-5
Sheraton Boston
39 Dalton Street, Boston

LEADING Lenders (continued from previous page)

MOLLY COBERLY
–Shelter Mortgage, LLC
“I have been with Shelter Mortgage for six years as of June 2010. Shelter Mortgage is a subsidiary of Guaranty Bank out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We offer all types of financing because we are a bank, and are proud to be helping many first-time homebuyers, along with seasoned buyers. I have been in the finance industry for most of my career, starting in Washington, DC, as a finance manager. I am originally from Maryland and earned both my undergraduate and master’s degrees there. I moved to Florida about 11 years ago. I feel the best part of this job is to see the faces of the buyers at closing when they receive the keys to their new home.”

DAVID STELBRINK
–First Bank Mortgage
“I am proud to work at Wells Fargo for [more than] three years. They are very supportive of the bond program, and my processors, underwriters, and closers help me tremendously to be successful in getting my bond loans to closing. I love helping people and the bond loans are my very favorite product. As a native Floridaian, I live in Sebastian, Florida, which is just south of where I grew up in Melbourne. I graduated from the University of Florida.”

DAVID STELBRINK
–First Bank Mortgage
“I am committed to the first-time homebuyer and have worked with Florida Housing’s FTHB Program since 2003. We have developed a team of first-time homebuyer specialists that assist buyers in the purchase of their first home, from prequalification to closing. My team (which includes Jordan Clark, Kim Caro and Joann Thompson) and I have helped many buyers achieve their dream of homeownership. Florida Housing’s FTHB Program has become the Gaver Team’s preferred mortgage program because of the many cost benefits to the buyer. I received Florida Housing’s Double Platinum Award in 2007 and the Platinum Award in 2008 for our efforts in assisting over 235 families achieve their dream of homeownership using this program.”

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