

10400 Detrick Avenue
Kensington, Maryland
20895
(301) 929-2382

www.hocmc.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, May 2, 2007

CONTACT: Susan Krimer Yancy
301-962-5505

MEDIA ADVISORY

11th ANNUAL "Family Fun Day" at Wheaton Regional Park Saturday, May 12th

Fundraiser will support Program for Low Income Families

**Benefit sponsored by Suburban Maryland Association of Insurance & Financial Advisors;
Funds will assist HOC's Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS)
*Local officials invited to attend***

The **Greater Washington Association of Insurance & Financial Advisors** has partnered with **D.C. Life Underwriters Foundation** to sponsor *their 11th Annual Family Fun Day* at Wheaton Regional Park (Shelter A) at the end of Shorefield Road on Saturday, May 12th, 2007, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The event is both a fundraiser for Housing Opportunities Commission's (HOC) Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program and a day of fun and relaxation for FSS families. The FSS Program is a five-year program designed to help families in public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (formerly Section 8) programs to move from dependence on public benefits to economic independence. ***This event is not open to the general public.***

"At a time in our county when demand far outweighs the supply of affordable housing and access to the kind of help that FSS offers its clients is rare, it is wonderful to be able to celebrate a program that has been so successful for lower income households," said HOC Chairman Michael Kator. "This is a wonderful example of a public/private partnership working to support the Montgomery County community," he added.

Montgomery County council members and state delegates and senators representing the county have been invited to attend the event. An HOC Commissioner will join the FSS families at this annual event.

Again this year, the event is being sponsored by the Greater Washington Association of Insurance & Financial Advisors (GWAIFA). This year, GWAIFA has partnered with D.C. Life Underwriters Foundation and hopes to raise more funds to benefit the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program families.

Family Fun Day will feature Stardust the Clown/magician (performing pro bono), train & carousel rides, fire truck and police demonstrations, games & prizes, a raffle, face painting, a barbecue lunch and more (thanks to donations from Chevy Chase Supermarket, McDonalds, M-NCPPC, Sam's Club, Sniders and Stardust the Clown). Tax deductible donations will be accepted at the event.

A fact sheet about the Family Self-Sufficiency Program is attached. For further information about the FSS program, including volunteer and donation information, contact: 301-929-5643.

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

###

NEWS RELEASE





10400 Detrick Avenue
Kensington, Maryland 20895
(301) 929-2382

www.hocmc.org

FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

Fact Sheet

Program Overview

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is a federally mandated program designed to assist families in public housing and Section 8 programs to achieve self-sufficiency over a 5- to 7-year period and to end dependency on welfare assistance.

FSS Program Features:

- 441 families voluntarily participate in the program, primarily composed of single female heads of household with one or two children;
- Establishment of an escrow savings account based on increases in earned income;
- Each participant is required to sign a Contract of Participation as a commitment to the goal of economic independence;
- Each participating family is assigned to a case manager who provides guidance in career planning and assistance in the resolution of personal and family issues and other resources;
- Financial assistance, often transportation assistance, child care and tuition/book costs, is provided for participants to gain education or additional training, and to obtain/maintain employment.

Ten-Year Success Highlights:

- FSS's successful participants are all now free from welfare cash assistance and employed at a livable wage;
- A total of **454 FSS families have successfully graduated and completed their career goals, 108 of whom (25%) have purchased homes;**
- 1/4 of the FSS families who have purchased homes **advanced from welfare assistance to home ownership within 5 years;**
- 1/3 of all FSS graduates advanced from unemployment/welfare assistance to self-sufficiency;
- Average earned income of FSS graduates increased from \$9,180 to \$27,130 annually-nearly **200% average increase in earnings** (now earning an **average of \$13 per hour**); 80% took college, job skills or technical training while enrolled in FSS; 30% completed college, technical training, or GED (high school equivalency) while in FSS;
- Of the *currently* enrolled FSS families, 84% are employed, 33% of whom were welfare or unemployed families.

Lessons Learned:

- The link between housing and social services is inextricable. Housing provides the stability which allows families to focus on career development and self-sufficiency;
- Intensive case management is critical to success;
- Low income families, often unskilled and without significant job histories, need a minimum of five years to become self-sufficient;
- Funds to assist participants with transportation, child care, books and tuition are essential in helping eliminate obstacles which often stand in the way of success.

March 2006



10400 Detrick Avenue
Kensington, Maryland 20895
(301) 929-2382

www.hocmc.org

Highlights of the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program

Housing Opportunities Commission – 301/929-5679

- HOC's FSS Program began in February 1993
- Mandated slots: 1,468; 441 due to a waiver (366 Section 8 + 75 Public Housing)
- Case managers (50 FSS families each) provide individualized services: Assessment, short- & long-term goal planning, career development, work on budgeting, problem-solving skills & personal & family barriers to success (depression, low self-esteem, poor job skills, alcohol/drug or abuse history, lack of hope), job retention, livable wage jobs with benefits
- 40 to 50 volunteer case managers (mentors), including several FSS graduates, are trained & supervised by FSS staff & work 1-on-1 with FSS families
- Other case management: Our HOC staff, non-profit housing programs & the local Department of Health & Human Services
- Participants report that the caring & supportive case management is the most helpful feature of the FSS Program
- Client support funds are available for child care, tuition/books, transportation
- HOC's Employment Initiative Program (EIP) offers weekly employment support groups that address motivation, job punctuality, reliability, coping in the workplace, self-esteem, job skills, resume development, interview techniques, dressing for success (c. 150 participants/year)
- HOC's EIP has job developers who find volunteer work placements for those needing more skills, or they help find paid employment for those job-ready
- HOC's EIP offers free day & evening classes in GED, English language, writing, business communication skills (oral & written), Internet, basic, intermediate & advanced computer skills & sewing classes at HOC's Public Housing Family Resource Centers, libraries, public schools, government centers, community college & businesses. The teachers are volunteers.
- Partnerships with the public & private sectors: Businesses (for EIP's training rooms, volunteer work, jobs; discounted Weight Watchers & driving schools; link with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the National Capital Area), non-profits, county agencies, schools, colleges. Donations solicited for professional clothing, used computers & printers, software, sewing machines, training manuals.
- Volunteer tutors work 1-on-1 at all levels of study
- 100 volunteers: Recruitment by semi-annual library postings, media Public Service Announcements, listing at Montgomery County's Volunteer Bureau, speaking engagements to service & civic organizations
- College work-study students provide administrative & special project assistance
- High school students earn "community service" hours for special events, etc.
- Family Fun Days: One Saturday each month (free trips & transportation to museums, beaches, parks, etc., as an opportunity to socialize & get more out of life)
- Advocacy for our low-income residents with local, state & federal representatives; our FSS participants speak out publicly to broaden the public's understanding.