



Oakland Housing
Authority

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**Oakland Housing Authority Adds Four to
List of Successful Family Self-Sufficiency Program Graduates**

Section 8 Tenants Use Escrow Fund to Buy Homes, Pay Off Bills, Start New Life

OAKLAND, Calif., February 19, 2008 – The number of successful graduates of the Oakland Housing Authority's (OHA) Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program keeps growing as four more Section 8 clients were recently added to the list, with escrow accounts in the tens of thousands of dollars.

- A 32-year old single mother of three, living in West Oakland joined the program in January 2003. Already working as a legal secretary, she had higher aspirations to become a paralegal. She studied hard, taking paralegal and real estate classes, and is now firmly established in a good-paying job as a legal assistant. She is planning on using her escrow account valued at more than \$16,488 to clean up her credit, and is pursuing her dream of owning a home.
- A 52-year old married father of two living in Northwest Oakland joined the program in January 2003, and with the support of his loving wife, has worked to clean up his credit, and to stay employed with a good-paying job. The escrow fund of \$8,848.74 will be used as a down payment for their new home, which they plan to purchase in the near future.
- Joining the program in January 2002, a 42-year old single mother of two from East Oakland had just recently graduated from Mills College with a degree in Computer Science. Determined to land a good full-time job in the computer industry, and armed with her degree, she took a part-time job and quickly climbed the ranks in the technology industry. She is currently working as a LAN support technician and

help desk coordinator, while all this time cleaning up her credit, and building an escrow fund of more than \$28,000.

- A 53-year old single mother of two is OHA's most prosperous FSS graduate, amassing \$46,338.57 in her escrow account. After recovering from a disability, she returned to her job, and patiently accumulated her funds. During her time on the FSS program, she also managed to purchase her first home. The near \$50,000 account is the biggest payout since the program's inception.

"The FSS program participants are motivated to improve their lives, and the lives of their families," said Linda Stone, FSS program coordinator. "Each participant has a big support group comprised of family, friends, and OHA staff cheering them on as they approach and reach their goals."

The Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency Program offers eligible participants the ability to build a savings account over a five-year period. Because rent in the Housing Choice Voucher (or Section 8) Program is income-based, as a tenant's income increases, so does the rent. But participating in the FSS Program allows OHA to match a portion of that rent increase into an escrow account, building what can amount to a substantial amount of money. Participants must set and meet several interim goals during the 5-year contract (perhaps work to clean up a credit score), and complete one final work-related goal.

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program was started in 1990 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). OHA's FSS program began in 1994, and currently has 250 OHA clients enrolled, with 128 successful graduates.

The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) is the City of Oakland's state-chartered and federally funded agency to promote the availability of quality housing for low-income persons. OHA works to promote the civic involvement and economic self-sufficiency of its residents and to further the expansion of affordable housing within Oakland. The Authority is currently helping to house 14,000 of the city's lowest income families. (www.oakha.org)

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