



Department of Housing
& Urban Development



National Homeownership Month Toolkit



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 3, 2016

I send greetings to all those observing National Homeownership Month.

Owning a home in America has been a source of pride and security for generations. From rural counties to bustling cities, homes offer an opportunity to lay down roots, start a family, and embark on new beginnings. During National Homeownership Month, we recommit to ensuring more of our people can reach for this fundamental piece of the American dream.

Over the past 7 years, rising home values have brought millions of families out from being underwater, and home sales have increased substantially. Today, America's housing market is on firmer footing, and more Americans are able to stay in their homes and afford their mortgages. But much work remains to be done.

This month's theme, "Dare to Own the Dream," emphasizes the importance of ensuring borrowers have the ability to purchase a home that serves them and their families well. My Administration will continue doing everything we can to make homeownership more accessible and sustainable by striving to make homes more affordable and building upon the successful policies that led to our housing recovery.

I commend all those who are working to make the vision of homeownership a reality for more people. I am confident that if we continue to work together on this critical issue, we can strengthen our communities and neighborhoods for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style.

FAMILIES ACROSS AMERICA BEAT THE ODDS WITH HOUSING COUNSELING

Greetings,

June is National Homeownership month, and to celebrate, HUD is honoring individuals/families who “Beat the Odds” and purchased a home with assistance from a Housing Counseling Agency. Twelve individuals/families were nominated by Housing Counseling Agencies to represent the millions of homeowners who overcame insurmountable obstacles to own their piece of the American dream. Each individual/family, representing all regions of the United States, has a unique and inspiring story to tell about their home buying experience and the education they received from housing counselors.

At the White House on June 21, 2016, HUD recognized these individuals/families who defied the odds to become homeowners, five of whom will be attending in-person. This Communication Toolkit can be used to amplify the stories of these families. You will find everything you need to reach out to local and regional media outlets.

I invite you to share the stories of how these families, with the assistance of Housing Counseling Agencies, have overcome obstacles to “Beat the Odds” when purchasing their homes. I also encourage you to recognize the individuals/families from your region with an event during and beyond National Homeownership Month to inspire others to explore the path to responsible homeownership with the help of a HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agency.

Sarah Gerecke
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Housing Counseling



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TALKING POINTS /KEY MESSAGES

Use key messages as the basis for talking points, presentations, media interviews, news releases, social media messages or outreach materials. Localize with information or stories from your own organization or community.

FACTS ABOUT HOMEOWNERSHIP ¹

- The U.S. homeownership rate is 63.7 percent.
- The average first-time homebuyer is about 33, at the front end of the Millennial generation.
- Approximately 80 percent of the 41.4 million Americans age 65 and older own their home.
 - They have the highest homeownership rate among all age groups.
- West Virginia, Michigan, New Hampshire, Delaware, Maine have the highest homeownership rates—70 percent or higher.
- Every state has a homeownership rate of at least 50%.
- The housing sector directly accounts for approximately 14 percent of total economic activity.

BENEFITS OF HOMEOWNERSHIP

- Homeownership is an American value and the cornerstone of our economy.
- Responsible homeownership is the key to building wealth and a strong middle class.
- Homeowners move far less frequently than renters, making it easier to build community networks and support systems.
- Homeownership offers tremendous freedom to create the living environment that you have always wanted.
- According to the National Association of Realtors, homeownership confers many benefits including
 - Greater awareness of the political process,
 - Higher incidence of membership in voluntary organizations and church attendance,
 - Lower teen pregnancy by children’s living in owned homes,
 - Higher student test scores by children’s living in owned homes,
 - Higher rate of high school graduation thereby higher earning,
 - Children more likely to participate in organized activities and have less television screen time,
 - Better health outcomes, including better physical and psychological health.
- Homeownership builds wealth over time and in the long run, buying is more cost effective than renting.
- Owning a home has positive tax implications for many families, and can often reduce tax burden.
 - Your mortgage interest and property tax payments may be deductible from your federal taxes, as well as many state taxes.
- According to the most recent Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances (2013), in the past 15 years, the net worth of the typical homeowner has ranged between 31 and 46 times that of the net worth of the typical renter.
 - Data shows that median homeowners had nearly \$200,000 in net worth or 36 times that of the median renter who had just over \$5,000.

¹ Twenty Interesting Facts About Home Ownership; Anthony Alfano

BENEFITS OF HUD-APPROVED HOUSING COUNSELING

- HUD's Office of Housing Counseling supports a nationwide network of nearly 2,000 Housing Counseling Agencies, which are tasked with providing individuals and families with the knowledge they need to obtain, sustain, and improve their housing.
- These agencies are trained and approved to provide tools to current and prospective homeowners and renters so they can make responsible choices to address their housing needs.
- HUD-approved housing counselors are impartial, trained professionals who can help you make the decisions that are right for you. They provide: homeowner education, pre-purchase and foreclosure prevention counseling, assistance with creating a budget and setting financial goals, fair housing information, and a host of other services.
- The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) supports HUD as a means to help make responsible homeownership available and sustainable for American families.
 - Research shows a strong correlation between pre-purchase, post-purchase and foreclosure prevention housing counseling and mortgage performance.
 - Independent research shows that delinquency, default and foreclosure rates for borrowers who have received counseling from a HUD-approved housing counseling agency are 30% lower than uncounseled borrowers.
 - Housing counseling allows more consumers to receive individualized and objective advice on understanding the rights and responsibilities of homeownership, to address credit and savings barriers, and to meet their overall housing and financial goals.

FAMILIES WHO "BEAT THE ODDS"

Twelve families had the opportunity to tell their stories at the White House in June 2016 in order to inspire and encourage other families to work with a housing counseling agency and Dare to Own the Dream.

- **CHALLENGES FACED:** Homeowners who "beat the odds" all faced significant challenges when attempting to unlock the doors to homeownership. These families invested the time to address common financial obstacles to homeownership such as lack of savings, poor credit scores, and student loan or other consumer debt. Furthermore, they overcame barriers such as limited English proficiency, rural residency, and other challenges.
- **BELIEF IN THE DREAM:** Successful homeowners held a common belief that the American Dream of homeownership was still possible. They all dared to own the dream!
- **CONFIDENCE & DEDICATION:** With a gained sense of confidence from housing counseling and dedication to the process, homeownership became a reality. Housing counseling also helped them to avoid scams, discrimination and unnecessary high costs that many would-be homeowners encounter.
- **RESPONSIBILITY HONORED:** Buyers that received housing counseling were more likely to make their payments and avoid foreclosure.

HUD PRESS CONTACT

Contact this individual for information on press releases and materials for the media.

HUD PRESS CONTACT

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HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and <http://espanol.hud.gov>.

You can also connect with HUD on social media and follow Secretary Castro on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) or sign up for news alerts on [HUD's Email List](#).

REAL PEOPLE WHO BEAT THE ODDS

These stories will captivate and inspire the media to share with their audiences. When communicating with the media, use individuals/families from your agency or contact the housing counseling agencies identified.

SHAUN

JEFFERSON, ME

Housing Counseling Agency: CEI (Coastal Enterprises, Inc.)

Considered a very low-income borrower in a rural Maine community identified as an area of greatest need by Neighborworks America, Shaun is an active member of the military – and now a 23-year-old first-time homeowner. Shaun and his wife participated in homebuyer education and pre-purchase counseling programs, and qualified for both a VA Guarantee loan and Maine Housing loan with down-payment assistance. Assisting them in achieving their dream was a counselor passionate about helping veterans and military personnel, having lost her son to suicide after serving in Afghanistan.

CHARMAINE

JAMAICA, NY

Housing Counseling Agency: Chhaya CDC

Charmaine is an immigrant from Trinidad who arrived in the United States at the age of 19 with \$100 in her pocket, no friends or relatives in the area, and limited education. During her first few years in New York, she bounced around from apartment to apartment, sometimes sleeping in people’s closets. After getting her GED, Charmaine worked various jobs until eventually becoming an office administrator. In 2013, Charmaine looked for a bigger apartment for herself and her then seven-year-old son. Finding few affordable rental options, she contemplated the idea of homeownership. As a single mother, she often felt that the odds were against her. But through tenacity and hard work, Charmaine was able to layer three grants to secure her home in 2015.

JOY

QUEENS, NY

Housing Counseling Agency: Neighborhood Housing Services of Jamaica

When Joy sought housing counseling in July 2013, she had very low credit scores and was heavily in debt – mostly student loans. She signed up for a First Home Club Matched Savings Plan with HSBC and, while saving, worked to rebuild her credit. Over the course of the next three years, Joy continued to improve her finances, with several follow-up meetings with a counselor to monitor her progress. In March 2016, she was approved for a SONYMA loan and purchased a co-op in Rosedale, Queens.

SHEENA

SALISBURY, MD

Housing Counseling Agency: Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services

A single mother of three, Sheena was 30 years old, dreaming of financial stability and future home ownership, when she decided to seek HUD-approved housing counseling. Together, she and her counselor mapped her goals: improving her credit score, managing her spending, and learning to save. Priorities – and strategies – were established to meet those goals. Today, Sheena is financially stable and secure, and searching for that dream home. “Financial stability is a freeing, liberating feeling” says Sheena. “I’m finding there is a whole new world awaiting me, and I can’t wait to explore it. Home ownership is just the beginning.”

KIBSAIM **WOODBIDGE, VA**

Housing Counseling Agency: Centro de Apoyo Familiar

Kibsaim is a pastor leading a small church in Woodbridge, in Prince Williams County, Virginia. He arrived in the United States five years ago with a family of four, earning a very low wage. Kibsaim connected to CAF through its network of faith-based organizations, hoping that he could achieve the dream of homeownership. His housing counselor helped him establish a savings and credit rebuilding plan, and in less than six months he was able to purchase his first home with an FHA loan and \$5,000 in down payment assistance. He has since inspired a great number of other families from his congregation and his community to do the same.

JADA **TEMPLE HILLS, MD**

Housing Counseling Agency: Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services

By the spring of 2014, Jada had become overwhelmed by the cost of living in the Washington DC metro area. Despite steady employment with the US Census bureau, she qualified as a very-low income household and did not think she could afford to buy a house. Even if she could take advantage of the generous assistance of the District's Home Purchase Assistance Program (HPAP), she was unable to afford a house or condo that could safely accommodate her and her two children. Unsure of what to do next, Jada sought the advice of the Housing Initiative Partnership counseling staff. HIP's staff worked with her to increase her credit score and savings, and during this period her purchase power increased nearly \$30,000, broadening the number of houses available to her. In April 2015, Jada and her children moved into their very first home, a foreclosure HIP purchased and significantly renovated.

ROCKEA **INDIANAPOLIS, IN**

Housing Counseling Agency: Indianapolis Neighborhood Housing Partnership

Rockea first came to INHP to purchase a home when she was just 21 years old. She did all the right things and succeeded. But after 14 years of hard work and sacrifice needed to maintain her home – including working two jobs – Rockea was ready for a financial break. She rented a room from a friend so that she could experience the things she wasn't able to do as a young homeowner. A new job as an Indianapolis Parks Department Manager came with it a new desire to re-purchase a home, and Rockea came back to INHP a second time. Today, Rockea is the owner of a newly-built home in an area of town that is undergoing transformational redevelopment.

ANDRE **CHICAGO, IL**

Housing Counseling Agency: Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of Chicago

Ask Andre if he ever thought he would own a home, and he'll tell you, "never in my wildest dreams." In 2007, Andre had been released from prison and was living in a halfway house in Chicago when he heard about the IMAN (Inner City Muslim Action Network) Project Restore for ex-offenders. He began working small construction jobs to earn money, then landed a job as a merchandiser for Coca-Cola. The program had taught him to save money toward a home and by 2014, now living on his own, he learned about NHS and the MMRP/NSP Purchase

Assistance Forgivable Loan Program. Andre took the 8-hour Home Buyer Education Class, then applied for purchase assistance from the Chicago Lawn Micro Market Recovery Program (MMRP). NHS was there for him throughout the home-buying process, helping him complete the paperwork, preparing him for his meeting with the loan officer. Today he proudly lives in the MMRP neighborhood – the first member of his family to ever own a home.

CIARA **CLEVELAND, OH**

Housing Counselling Agency: Empowering and Strengthening Ohio’s People (ESOP)

Ciara is a 24-year-old single female earning just under \$23,000 annually. She had little savings and even less knowledge of all that goes into purchasing and maintaining a home. After attending Homebuyer Education classes and pre-purchasing counseling at ESOP in 2015, Ciara spent the next nine months following all of the recommendations of her HUD housing counselor – sticking to her spending plan, increasing savings amount and frequency, and following the advice of her counselor to improve her credit score. Ciara purchased a newly renovated single family home, qualifying for \$10,500 from the Cuyahoga County Down Payment Assistance Program, which brought the loan amount down to a sustainable payment. Ciara feels ESOP prepared her for homeownership and provided her with the information to choose the best members of her home buying team (housing counselor, lender, realtor, home inspector, etc.) who worked together to help her obtain the dream of home ownership!

ROBERT **ST. LOUIS, MO**

Housing Counseling Agency: Beyond Housing

Robert became a client of Beyond Housing through Project Home, which helps ex-offenders transition to home ownership. Anxious to purchase a home, Robert had been considering entering into a lease-purchase option that was poorly structured and expensive. His housing counselor advised him to start slowly and enroll in Beyond Housing’s matched-savings program (IDA) so he could re-establish a bank account, start to rebuild his credit, and begin by saving. By 2015, his credit score was 735, and his savings and matching funds enabled him to come up with down-payment and closing costs. Robert worked with his program manager on the details of home ownership as several DPA programs became available, allowing him to use his savings and stack the additional DPA funding to pursue his dreams.

GERALD AND JOREEN **KAPOLEI, HI**

Housing Counseling Agency: Hawaiian Community Assets

Gerald and his wife, Joreen, waited over 35 years for their chance to secure the dream of homeownership. Poor credit, minimum savings, and Gerald’s felony record stood as barriers keeping the family from moving forward on their journey to become homeowners. In February 2015, Gerald and Joreen came to Hawaiian Community Assets (HCA), Hawaii’s largest HUD-approved housing counseling agency, to enroll in its Homebuyer Education Program. At intake the family reported that they were facing eviction from their rental. For the Paakaulas, homeownership was at the back of their mind and the fear of homelessness at the forefront. They gathered their financial documents and submitted their client intake packet to the HCA. Shortly thereafter, they enrolled in

and completed an 8-hour Homebuyer Education workshop that provided them with a certificate to qualify them for homeownership on Hawaiian Trust Lands and United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development mortgage financing. In December 2015, Gerald and Joreen did their final walkthrough of their beautiful 2-story, 4-bedroom home in Kapolei, where they live today with their children and grandchildren.

KYNDRA **LAS VEGAS, NV**

Housing Counseling Agencies: Nevada Partners

Kyndra decided to find out more about the Culinary and Bartenders Housing Program offered by Nevada Partners after hearing about it from the union. She works long hours as a Lounge Server at the MGM Grand, so she didn't have a lot of extra time on her hands. She decided to attend Housing Programs Orientation in July 2015, and after some thought, moved forward with the process. Kyndra attended the homebuyer education class in September, then found a loan officer she liked at iMortgage and was pre-approved. Though she could afford a higher purchase price with a higher payment due to receiving tips, she wanted to make sure that she could still make the mortgage payment if anything were to happen to her income. She met with the housing counselor in November, and was so prepared that she received her "greenlight" approval right then! It took her a little over 60 days to find the home of her dreams, and she closed on her cute 2-story southwestern style home at the beginning of March.

THE BRIDGE ARTICLE

The Bridge is a monthly online newsletter disseminated by HUD. The [June issue](#) included information on the happenings during Homeownership Month. Below is the front page section on Homeownership Month for you to use as a resource for talking points, media interviews, news releases, social media or outreach materials.

HUD CELEBRATES NATIONAL HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH

This Year's Theme ... Dare to Own the Dream!

June is in store for a sensational celebration of tweeting, blogging and sharing information. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is celebrating National Homeownership Month, inspiring people everywhere to **Dare to Own the Dream**.

To commemorate the month, HUD is hosting a Twitter Chat series that will debunk popular myths around homeownership regarding Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loans and HUD housing counseling services.

The American Dream is much more obtainable than most people realize. This year's theme acknowledges those who have "dared to own the dream," and encourages potential homebuyers to take that leap of faith and work with HUD approved housing counselors to make their own dreams come true.

Taking the Myth-Information out of Home Ownership

To kick off the conversation of homeownership, HUD will host a pair of Twitter chats and release a series of videos to discuss three important topics surrounding homeownership and FHA:

- Readiness – Are you ready for homeownership?
- Appropriate Resources – How to know if an FHA loan is right for you.
- Support – Debunking housing counseling misconceptions: Myth vs. Fact

Stay connected with the conversations using hashtag #OwnTheDream, and direct questions or comments to @FHA_PDAS, @FHAgov, and @HUDgov on Twitter.

Joining us on social media and rounding out the efforts will be dozens of HUD partners and HCAs who will encourage their networks to get involved in debunking the myths around homeownership. An online toolkit will be available to download the National Homeownership Month graphic identifier and other materials. Ultimately, everyone can play a role in educating and informing consumers about the real facts – and opportunities – around homeownership and home financing.

INFOGRAPHIC

Share the infographic with the media and use it to support talking points, media interviews, news releases, social media or outreach materials. It will help demonstrate how important housing counseling is to beating the odds and achieving homeownership.

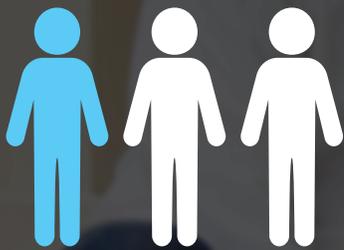
BEAT THE ODDS

WITH HOUSING COUNSELING

Homeowner's
net worth
36X
greater than renter's.

– Federal Reserve (2013)

AM I READY TO BUY A HOUSE?



Housing
Counseling
may be the
answer.

One-third of first-time
homebuyers underestimate
their total household debt.

HOUSING COUNSELING PROVIDES EXPERT ADVICE TO HELP YOU:

- Create Manageable Budgets
- Set Realistic Financial Goals
- Improve Your Credit Score
- Avoid Delinquency on Debt

DOES HOUSING COUNSELING WORK?

Borrowers who use HUD-Approved
Housing Counseling:



283%
more likely
to receive
loan modifications

IN 2015, HUD HOUSING COUNSELING HELPED:

Prevent **92,000+** Foreclosures

Improve **178,000+** Finances

Create **403,000+** Budgets

Counsel **over 1.3 million** Households

WHERE DO I START?

Call **1-800-569-4287** or visit
HUD.gov to find an agency in your
community

**Over 2,000 HUD
Approved Agencies**