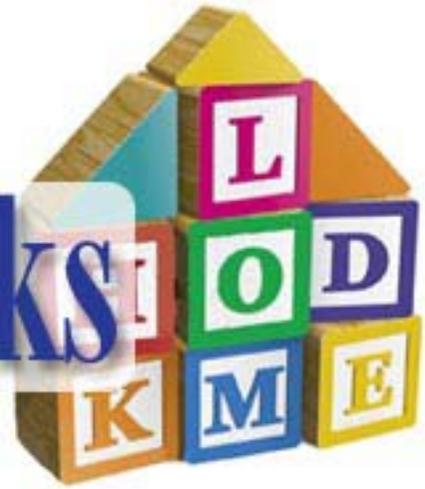


# building blocks



February 2007

The online newsletter of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority

Vol. 3, Issue 1

## Ninth Annual Michigan Conference on Affordable Housing Adds Advocacy Day

The Michigan Conference on Affordable Housing will be held this spring from April 30 through May 2. The conference is dedicated to providing housing opportunities for all in need and has earned a strong reputation as a salient opportunity to learn about new trends in affordable housing and homelessness. It is also a way to share experiences with others in the field. As a result, it has become the largest conference of its kind in the nation, both in size and substance.

Many of the popular educational tracks, media roundtables and information exchange sessions will be returning by popular demand. But this year, the planning committee has added a new exciting feature to the agenda.

Advocacy can be an extremely effective means of creating change. Seeing the need to educate and increase awareness about this powerful alternative, the committee has decided not only to add an educational session on political advocacy, but to also add an Advocacy Day to the schedule.

Committee member Keeli Baker said, "Hosting a housing Advocacy Day will jumpstart our effort to educate elected officials, many of them new to Lansing, on the importance of affordable housing." The first-ever Advocacy Day will take place on Wednesday, May 2, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the Capitol Lawn. All people, whether registered

for the conference or not, are encouraged to participate.

The addition of Advocacy Day is not the only exciting feature on the agenda. The committee has selected an outstanding keynote speaker, which is always one of the highlights of the conference. Past speakers have included

Christopher Gardner, whose life inspired the blockbuster hit movie, "The Pursuit of Happiness."

This year's keynote, Jeanette Walls, authored the critically acclaimed book,



"The Glass Castle." In this family memoir, Walls recounts her troubled childhood, in which her parents' actions consistently put their children at risk and left the family homeless on multiple occasions. Walls' hopeful tale of overcoming hardship and starting anew is a true inspiration and will indeed set the tone for the rest of the conference.

The development of moving new programs in addition to the return of existing sessions will

prove valuable for both the veteran conference attendee and the novice. With this year's Advocacy Day, attendees are given the chance to turn word to deed by taking on the active role of an advocate. "Our grassroots turnout is an important step in establishing an ongoing discussion with our state's leaders," Baker said. "This is sure to largely impact the future of affordable housing in the state of Michigan for years to come."

For questions regarding programming or registration, visit the conference Web site at [www.housingconference.org](http://www.housingconference.org) or call Jess Sobel at (517) 241-0453.

---

**"This is sure to largely impact the future of affordable housing in the state of Michigan for years to come"**

---

# Investing in People is the Answer

In her State of the State address, Governor Granholm discussed what our industry has been working on and striving to achieve for Michigan residents for many years — giving every citizen the opportunity to build a great life. It was an insightful observation and one with which all of you are very familiar. I hope you take the Governor's words as a personal acknowledgement of the work that you do every day.

Your contributions have made a difference. We at MSHDA know the difference you make and Governor Granholm knows too, as evidenced by her wholehearted recognition of the Authority not once, but twice in her address. By the virtue of that recognition, she is acknowledging the work of our entire industry. Her theme of revitalization and investment in



cities, towns, villages AND in PEOPLE is our number one priority as well. This is a very exciting time for all of us—a time of opportunity and challenge.

In order to transform the economy in Michigan and to create vibrant cities, towns, and villages; we must continue investing our industry-combined efforts toward the goals defined in our recently completed Five-Year Action Plan for Affordable Housing, Community Development and Homelessness.

Right now, Michigan is ranked 48th among the 50 states for its investment in housing. What vibrant communities have in common is that people choose to live and work there. Obviously this is not currently the case in Michigan, but that is changing and will continue to change as we move forward with our five-year plan.

I also urge you to plan on participating in all aspects of the Michigan Conference on Affordable Housing scheduled April 30 to May 2 this year. We will be planning our next steps in implementing the five-year plan.

The conference this year is one of the most significant and important conferences we have ever had. We have a noble cause to advance and one that will return Michigan to a vibrant and growing state — right where it belongs!

See you all there!

## DeVos Accepts Award for Governor Granholm

MSHDA Executive Director Michael R. DeVos accepted the “Every American Deserves A Home” award on behalf of Governor Jennifer M. Granholm from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) at its Second Annual National Summit for Jurisdictional Leaders March 8 in Washington D.C. The award recognized her for her encouragement and leadership for Michigan's statewide Campaign to End Homelessness, including the support of dozens of complex strategies designed to eliminate barriers, streamline services and create solutions that will end homelessness as a costly social problem.

Via satellite, Gov. Granholm said, “We must continue to fan the flames of compassion and come together in pursuing a comprehensive strategy to

end homelessness—because no person should have to suffer on the streets through a cold Michigan winter and no child's future should be threatened by missing school because he or she has no home.” She also thanked the Interagency Council on Homelessness for recognizing Michigan's efforts to end this tragic reality.

**We must continue to fan the flames of compassion and come together in pursuing a comprehensive strategy to end homelessness**

When accepting the award, DeVos expressed gratitude to Gov. Granholm for creating a culture in Michigan where her cabinet members are encouraged to take risks and select challenging goals.

USICH Executive Director Philip F. Mangano rallied the attendees throughout the Summit with motivating messages.

“Our work is to hasten the day when every American will have a home,” said Mangano. “To bring remedy to the pain and misery of those experiencing homelessness is what we are about.”

The theme of the Summit, *the Pursuit of Solutions*, was inspired by the recent hit movie “*The Pursuit of Happyness*” starring Will Smith portraying the true-life story of Chris Gardner.

Gardner, who experienced homelessness as young man, was faced with overcoming a personal financial crisis while juggling an unpaid internship and the needs of his child. Gardner and his son regularly slept in a subway bathroom and other public spaces.

To open the Summit on Wednesday evening, those attending were able to visit with Gardner via a satellite feed, asking questions about what is next. Many wanted to know when and if Gardner could come to their city to inspire their communities for change.

In 2005, before the movie was in production, Michigan invited Chris Gardner to address the Michigan Conference on Affordable Housing. His spirited and personal presentation was an inspiration to the 1500 attendees, many who were front line homeless service workers.

# MSHDA Programs

## The G.P.A. That Really Hits Home

Traditionally, the acronym G.P.A. has always stood for “Grade Point Average.” — a measure of student achievement in school. So when the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) created a brand new loan program designed specifically for college graduates, “G.P.A.” (short for: Graduate Purchase Assistance) seemed like the perfect acronym to bestow upon it.

---

**The purpose of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority’s GPA program is to encourage homeownership by college graduates in the Cities of Promise**

---

MSHDA’s new Graduate Purchase Assistance program offers a 30-year fixed rate conventional loan to college graduates with an associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree at approximately two percent below market rate. Individuals must have graduated from an accredited institution within three years prior to the loan application date and meet MSHDA’s sale price and income limit eligibility guidelines. The eligible college grad’s

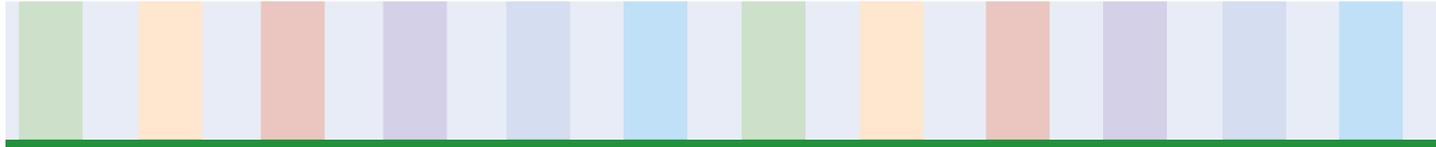
home purchase must be located within the city limits of one of the *Cities of Promise* which are Benton Harbor, Detroit, Flint, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Muskegon Heights, Pontiac and Saginaw. Other terms and restrictions apply.

The purpose of MSHDA’s G.P.A. program is to encourage homeownership by college graduates in the Cities of Promise, and college grads should find many excellent real estate opportunities in these areas. Eligible properties include new single-family homes or builders’ models; existing single-family homes or condominiums that have been previously occupied; new condominiums approved by FNMA, FHLMC or insurer FHA, VA or RD; new condominiums approved by MSHDA and new or existing manufactured homes (but only if maximum LTV doesn’t exceed 95 percent). Co-op properties are not eligible for the Graduate Purchase Assistance program. Borrowers must



occupy the property as a primary residence within 60 days of loan closing.

Earning an associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s or doctoral degree is a great accomplishment, and now, thanks to the MSHDA Graduate Purchase Assistance program, the successful college grad can accomplish even more — homeownership. To learn more about Graduate Purchase Assistance, go to [www.michigan.gov/mshda](http://www.michigan.gov/mshda).



## The Road to Prosperity— Building Partnerships and Communities

**T**he Road to Prosperity is a partnership with MSHDA, Michigan IDA Partnership and, now participating faith-based organizations, which will provide free financial management and asset planning to low- and moderate-income families who are interested in building and maintaining financial assets to become financially independent.

Through the program, participants learn how to open accounts called Individual Development Accounts (IDA). An IDA is a savings account established at a local financial institution under a qualified individual's name. That individual must meet IDA program acceptance criteria (under 200% poverty, earned income, etc.), complete a financial management course and training related to their asset goal, and save money toward their future dream over a period of between six-to-36 months. Once an individual has completed the program, their savings of up to \$1,000 is matched at a ratio of 3:1

for a home purchase and 2:1 for post-secondary education/job training or to start or expand a small business.

The Road to Prosperity will be piloted in the Cities Of Promise, which is part of a larger urban agenda designed to help reduce urban poverty and redevelop and revitalize Michigan's cities. Cities of Promise, an interagency initiative, was created to focus funding and resources in eight Michigan cities. These eight cities are Detroit, Muskegon Heights, Hamtramck, Saginaw, Pontiac, Benton Harbor, Flint and Highland Park. These cities are experiencing devastating conditions due to declines in population, extreme poverty, loss of industry and jobs, crumbling infrastructure and

blighted neighborhoods.

The Road to Prosperity is designed to help individuals and families acquire the assets and skills necessary to move out of poverty and into long-term economic stability. Each program partner is key to making sure participants have a good chance at success. This includes the banks that are helping manage the accounts, agencies that are helping families develop savings plans and any other organizations that may be involved on behalf of the program participants. As low-income families build assets, they also stabilize neighborhoods and schools and build a feeling of community ownership.

---

**The program is designed to help individuals and families acquire the assets and skills necessary to move out of poverty and into long-term economic stability**

---

## Downtown Revitalization Workshops a Success

**M**SHDA CATeam has completed five Downtown Revitalization Workshops across the state, with more than 450 community representatives in attendance. The workshops were held in Howell, Grand Rapids, Boyne City, Houghton and Adrian.

Each of the workshops focused on the various programs and tools communities can use to revitalize their traditional downtowns and commercial

districts. CATeam specialists were on hand to answer questions, while communities who have successfully used these programs in the past presented their case studies.

All of the Downtown Revitalization Workshop materials can be found on the MSHDA Web site at [www.michigan.gov/mshda](http://www.michigan.gov/mshda) in the spotlight section titled 2007 Downtown Revitalization Workshop Materials.

In addition, the CATeam has

announced a new round of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for Facade and Signature Building projects. Communities that are interested in receiving a MainStreet or Blueprint award this year must submit letters of intent to the CATeam office by March 2, 2007. Please contact a CATeam representative for more information at (517) 241-1737.



## Michigan Shelters — Stopping Domestic Violence

**K**aren, a woman with a long history of domestic violence by her husband, gives encouragement to other victims of abuse. When Karen decided that she was no longer willing to be a victim herself, she and her two sons entered Green Gables Haven Community Center, a Mid-Michigan domestic violence and abuse shelter. Through her story, she gives hope to others that change is possible.

Not only did Karen and her sons receive a safe place to stay in the shelter, she was able to accomplish many things which had a positive impact on their lives. She filed for, and was granted, a Personal Protection Order. She also received free legal representation and obtained a divorce.

Most importantly, she was able to develop a support system through the Victim's Advocates Organization. She received counseling and education pertaining to domestic violence and learned to recognize the personality traits of an abuser. Karen checks in with the shelter about once a month for encouragement and words of advice. "I am starting a new chapter in my life and saying goodbye to the last one," said Karen after leaving the shelter. "There are people out there to help. What I was living with was not acceptable." Financially, Karen increased her income

and enrolled in college which was funded through financial aid. She is pursuing her educational goals at the local community college with help from Michigan Works' Displaced Homemaker Program.

Karen has established a stable home while managing her budget and finances. This has allowed her boys to maintain some stability while remaining in

the same school as they begin to adjust to their new lives. Ultimately she has improved her parenting skills and her relationship with her sons by creating a safe and calm space for them to live.

---

**"I am starting a new chapter in my life and saying goodbye to the last one"**

---

## Michigan Housing Locator has the Numbers

**A**fter a strong kickoff in December, MSHDA's Michigan Housing Locator Web site has the numbers to support their targeted goals.

The Michigan Housing Locator is devoted exclusively to putting residents in touch with property owners who specialize in affordable housing. Since December, the number of property owners and managers throughout Michigan that have come to depend on the Michigan Housing Locator as a valuable resource for marketing their

available properties have nearly doubled.

When the Housing Locator was launched in December, there were 1,095 properties listed on the Web site and today there are over 2,024 properties listed. Within the same time period, the number of units on the Web site has grown from 74,336 to over 102,855.

The Michigan Housing Locator gives renters a full picture of the properties available in their price range and will become the main source for Section 8 Voucher holders to find out which landlords will accept their vouchers.

---

**The Michigan Housing Locator gives renters a full picture of the properties available in their price range**

---

To help ensure the Michigan Housing Locator's success, on February 12, MSHDA launched a radio campaign to promote the site in the following cities: Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint, Saginaw, Lansing and Kalamazoo. Twelve radio stations will run approximately 570 ads during the two week period ending March 4. The radio campaign will focus on both senior housing and adults 18 to 34 years old.

MSHDA has partnered with such industry leaders as the Michigan Housing Council (MHC) and the Property Managers Association of Michigan (PMAM) in this endeavor to make affordable housing options available to everyone in Michigan.

## Partner Profile

# CDAD — 10 Years of Advocacy and Still Going Strong

Reflections by Regina Strong, Executive Director

It's hard to believe 10 years have gone by since Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD) first became an advocate for community development in Detroit. Since then, the community development industry has made a profound impact on many of the city's neighborhoods.

Back in the late 80s and early 90s, when the neighborhood improvement movement was first taking root in Detroit, there were all sorts of different organizations in different parts of the city doing different things in different ways to make a positive difference. We were all in the same boat and had our well-intentioned oars in the water, but something was needed to get folks rowing in the same direction.

Eventually, everybody started talking, comparing notes and realized that there was strength in numbers — we could make a bigger impact together than trying to make an impact separately. It was this philosophy that stirred the beginning of CDAD.

Before I became the Executive Director of CDAD a little more than a year ago, I spent several years with one of Detroit's many not-for-profit Community

Development Corporations (CDCs). In this time I have grown to truly appreciate the critical role CDCs play in the development of their communities. It still never ceases to amaze me just how effective organizations like these can be when everyone works together toward a common goal. Now there is a lot more interest by for-profit developers in developing in the city of Detroit. A lot of that interest was stirred by the work of many of the CDCs we are affiliated with.

CDAD was started in 1997 as a trade association for many of the city's Community Development Corporations. Today, CDAD consists of about 97 members — 70% of which are CDCs. Other members are affiliates who are in related industries such as: financial institutions, construction companies, architectural firms and universities.

CDAD works to represent the community development industry by providing a unified voice for public policy, capacity building training and by offering the chance for its members to



Regina Strong, Executive Director CDAD

network and share experiences and opportunity. CDAD chairs member-meetings every other month, publishes a weekly and quarterly newsletter and partners with many groups and organization to better serve its members. Every year our organization sponsors the Community Development Awards, honoring Detroit CDCs for innovation,

individual achievement and neighborhood impact. It's an annual celebration of the industry.

In light of all the economic challenges the state is having, affordable housing is more important than ever before. And over the last 10 years, CDAD and its members have made an impact because of our ability to take large tracts of vacant lots and replace those with new housing, rehabilitated homes, parks and revitalized strips of commercial properties. Community Development Advocates of Detroit will continue to enhance the effectiveness of its community development organizations in their efforts to revitalize and rebuild Detroit's communities by providing a vehicle for information sharing and common action on issues affecting the industry. It's truly amazing what an organization can do when everyone works together toward a common goal. This is the essence of what Community Development Advocates of Detroit CDAD is all about.

## New Director to Lead Combined Units



Patty Gamin

**A**s MSHDA rolls into 2007, the choice to merge three separate units into one was made to continue efficiency and teamwork at the Authority. Human Resources, Office Services and Information Technology units have all been combined into one, Administrative Office Services (AOS). The new AOS unit will be led by Patty Gamin. She brings to MSHDA more than 36 years of experience in state government.

Patty says she is “looking forward to tackling the challenges presented

to her as a new member of the MSHDA team.”

When she is not at MSHDA, Patty enjoys spending time with her grandkids, Jayden 4 and Isabella 5. She enjoys working with them on crafts in her newly setup craft room which has plenty of space and supplies for all of them. She also spends time with her grandchildren in the backyard tree-house that her husband recently built for the kids — when the weather permits of course!

Welcome to MSHDA, Patty!

## MSHDA Employee’s Appetite for Desserts Raised \$800 Dollars for Two Michigan Homeless Shelters

**T**he *Valuing MSHDA Employees* workgroup hosted an all staff fundraiser and new employee recognition event on February 14th. The “Greet and Sweet” event was held in both Detroit and Lansing offices using video conferencing to connect the two staffs. All new employees within the last year were presented with a rose and recognized by MSHDA’s executive director Michael DeVos.

The event, held on Valentine’s Day, was also a dessert auction to raise money for two randomly selected homeless shelters in Michigan. MSHDA employees brought in all kinds of baked goods including German chocolate cake, key lime pie, sweet potato pie and even some sugar cookies with the MSHDA logo on them!

The event was a huge success and the dessert auction raised \$800 thanks to all the generous employees who had a sweet tooth! Half of the money raised



MSHDA executive director Michael DeVos draws homeless shelter to receive money.

will go toward other MSHDA events that the *Valuing MSHDA Employees* workgroup is heading up. The other half of the money will be divided among two domestic violence shelters, Turning

Point in Detroit and Every Woman’s Place in Muskegon. The event was a fun way to meet new employees and raise money for truly deserving people in the state of Michigan.



Volume 3, Issue 1

A bi-monthly publication of the  
Michigan State Housing  
Development Authority

Michael R. DeVos,  
Executive Director

Reagan Davis,  
Editor

Contributors:

Mary Lou Keenon

Jeff Bickert

Jourdan Clandening

Katie Donovan

Stephanie Murray-Killips

Rick Steele

Laura Kassenbrock

LANSING OFFICE

735 East Michigan Avenue

Lansing, Michigan 48913

(517) 373-8370 • (517) 335-4797 (fax)

TTY (800) 382-4568

DETROIT OFFICE

3028 West Grand Boulevard,

Suites 4-600

Detroit, Michigan 48202

(313) 456-3540 • (313) 456-3571 (fax)



Equal Opportunity Lender



## Affordable Housing Conference Reminder:

The Michigan Conference  
on Affordable Housing  
is April 30 to May 2, 2007  
at the Lansing Center

## Contractors Assistance Program

The Contractors Assistance Program (CAP) was founded by MSHDA in 1992 and provides opportunities for small, minority and/or female contractors to achieve success and independence.

The program operates and offers 40-hour training from three strategic locations within the state, twice per year, fall and winter. The three locations are: CAP West in Grand Rapids, CAP Central in Flint/Saginaw, and CAP East in the Detroit area. Through a partnership with one of the Cities of Promise, Benton Harbor, a CAP class was recently held for Benton Harbor local contractors.

This program is free to qualifying participants. To qualify, applicants must own their own construction-related business or have been involved in their trade for at least two years. They must have a current annual sales volume of less than \$2.5 million and have a current net worth of less than \$1 million.

This program offers the opportunity to grow their business to anyone who meets the program guidelines. The program has attracted more than 1,000 participants since its creation.

One Michigan resident who has taken advantage of the CAP program is Monica Starks of Star Construction and Development, LLC. in Detroit. Through her involvement in the CAP program Starks was able to create a successful business specializing in lead abatement.



Monica Starks, Star Construction Development, LLC

“I know it (lead abatement) sounds out of the ordinary,” said Starks. “A lot of the information I received in the CAP classes helped point me in that direction. Our business is all about caring for people.”

Lead abatement remains a serious issue in inner cities like Detroit where older houses are full of lead paint, which can be harmful to children who ingest paint chips.

Along with Starks, more than 500 women have started businesses in southeast Michigan since 1992 when the program began.

CAP students get a crash course in everything from insurance/bonding, bookkeeping, bidding and estimating, scheduling, lien laws, prevailing wages, marketing their business and financial planning.

This program is a great way for those interested in contracting trades to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in their business as well as create great entrepreneurial opportunities for Michigan residents.

**“Our business is  
all about caring  
for people”**

Sign up to receive Building Blocks via e-mail!

For more information, visit

[www.housingconference.org](http://www.housingconference.org)