

Working from Strength: Non-Profits Coordinate to Leverage NSP

Two Memphis-based non-profits have combined efforts, leveraging their strengths to serve a special clientele and redevelop blighted neighborhoods.

Background

During 2008, Congress enacted the Housing and Economic Recovery Act (HERA). One component of this legislation was the establishment and funding of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP 1). The main intent of NSP is to stabilize neighborhoods through the acquisition and rehabilitation of abandoned and foreclosed properties.

The State of Tennessee was allocated \$49.5 million dollars of NSP funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Tennessee Housing Development Agency (THDA) was selected to administer the program in Tennessee.

THDA's Board of Directors elected to solicit competitive grant applications from non-profit agencies and local governments. Applicants submitted proposals addressing housing foreclosure issues in HUD-defined "areas of highest need".

It became apparent early on that several areas of highest need were concentrated in Memphis, the largest city in Tennessee. Since the City of Memphis received NSP funding directly from HUD, THDA solicited applications for the state funds from local housing non-profits. THDA funded over \$12 million of state NSP funds to Memphis non-profits to carry out the program.

Creation of Partnership to Facilitate Special Needs Housing

Two of the non-profits that were funded, United Housing, Inc. and Shelby Residential and Vocational Services, known as SRVS, created a unique partnership that has benefitted not only special needs clients but also many neighborhoods affected by foreclosures and the agencies themselves.

SRVS was awarded \$1 million in NSP 1 funds. United Housing identified seven homes from the foreclosure rolls and rehabilitated them for disability access. UHI used its housing production expertise to identify the properties, arrange for purchase, assess rehabilitation needs, hire and manage the subcontractors, confirming that all requirements were met.

SRVS maintains a waiting list and selected compatible clients for each home. Three clients live in each of the seven homes and are provided on-going care.

Partnership Background – United Housing, Inc.

United Housing, Inc. (UHI) has over 18 years of successful and increasingly broad affordable housing experience, including single family development, housing counseling and lending. Founded in 1994, as an affiliate of the United Way of the Mid-South and initially funded through federal grants from HUD, UHI has continued to leverage grant funds with private financing.

In January 2000, UHI incorporated as an independent organization and soon after became a part of NeighborWorks® Network. Through NeighborWorks®, UHI is linked to a national network of over 230 local nonprofit organizations working to revitalize America's declining

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neighborhoods by supporting homeownership and preserving housing affordable to low and moderate income families.

As a NeighborWorks® organization member in Tennessee, for every dollar received, UHI has created \$85 worth of impact in the community through bank activity, construction work, and real estate sales and created over 500 jobs in the service area.

Since their inception, UHI has provided homebuyer education and counseling to over 6,000 first-time homebuyers, facilitated the sale of over 2,000 homes and provided over \$7 million in down payment assistance and rehabilitation loans in Memphis and Shelby County. In total, UHI has had a \$174 million impact on the service area and built a remarkable network in the affordable housing field.

Partnership Background – SRVS

SRVS has been providing services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Memphis and Shelby County for 50 years. SRVS currently provides various services to over 800 people with disabilities and also provides a large economic impact to the area by employing approximately 900 staff members.

One component of the services is affordable housing. SRVS provides residential services to over 200 individuals through their Community Living Program. Under the partnership program, SRVS provides permanent supportive housing. The residents are able to live in these homes as long as they want to stay. SRVS provides case management and life skills training to the residents as well as job training and transportation options where appropriate.

Each home has a site or area manager and a residential support manager overseeing a set of homes. Each individual is assigned a case manager. Department Techs also help the individuals make medical appointments and other services. Direct support professionals obtain assistance and other benefits through social service programs and provide day- to-day living and healthcare needs for the individuals.

One very important piece of the neighborhood concept was the acceptance and reputation of SRVS. SRVS is a good neighbor for the communities where the homes are located. They maintain a high level of maintenance on the homes and are a very active and visible nonprofit citizen in Memphis.

Partnership Agreement- United Housing, Inc. and SRVS

Because of the unique expertise of each nonprofit agency, one with affordable housing development experience and one with supportive housing experience for persons with special needs, the partnership has fashioned a successful program.

The UHI role is to provide and oversee the acquisition and construction/rehabilitation management of the homes. Additionally, UHI will provide HUD-certified counseling to all renters and credit counseling to clients where appropriate.

UHI identified NSP-eligible properties in high need census tracts, met HUD required cross-cutting requirements, handled the real estate closing process, processed all construction bids and permits, conducted the construction inspections, and all other required paperwork.

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At the end of the day, this provided a seamless delivery of the completed housing to SRVS. The SRVS' mission revolves around providing as much independence as possible for the individuals and families supported. SRVS seeks every opportunity to foster an independent environment. Housing helps provide that independence.

As a result of the success of the NSP 1 partnership, UHI and SRVS were granted additional funds under HUD's NSP 3 program.

Supporting documentation: two news clippings



UW Day of Caring and FedEx Cares Day Volunteer Coordinators Holly Swogger from HomeVestors (left), Cynthia Matthews, Carol Dubose and Marilyn Sartain from FedEx, and Tim Bolding from United Housing receive stepping stones as thank-you gifts. The stones were made by SRVS individuals.

United Way volunteers Sabrina Moody (left) and Kimberly Ores renovate the inside of a home for a SRVS individual during United Way Day of Caring.

A torrential rain was no match for the ambitious volunteers who braved the weather for Shelby Residential and Vocational Services on two consecutive weekends for United Way of the Mid-South's Day of Caring and FedEx Cares Day. The group of volunteers from FedEx, United Housing, United Way and Home Vestors managed to plant trees, bushes and flowers, and build fences for three supported living homes acquired by SRVS for people with disabilities before they ventured inside for drier working conditions.



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"Thank you all for your time and dedication to this project," said SRVS executive director Jeffrie Bruton. "Your care and concern for our individuals and their wellbeing is greatly appreciated. They will be so excited to see their new homes and how nice they look thanks to your hard work."

The foreclosed homes were purchased by SRVS through a \$1.1 million grant from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency and Neighborhood Stabilization Program, a federally funded grant program administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and authorized by the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008.

In addition to landscaping and fencing the properties, the volunteers removed carpeting in the homes and demolished doorways to create bigger ones in preparation for the new occupants who are in wheelchairs.

SRVS supports more than 850 people with disabilities through a wide range of programs and services including a community living program that supports more than 210 individuals who live in 85 homes in the community. Five more group homes are expected to be built through the grant. For more information about SRVS and the community living program, visit srvs.org.

Diana Fedinec is the public relations manager for Shelby Residential and Vocational Services.

Foreclosure houses answer special needs for disabled



PHOTO BY MARK WEBER // BUY THIS PHOTO

State Rep. Johnnie Turner (middle) looks over Larry Williams' (left) new bedroom with house manager Keith Lowe during a home opening and ribbon cutting celebration this week.

Larry Williams, a 59-year-old man with an intellectual disability, said his dream is to get married and buy a house of his own Downtown. But for now, he's happy in his nearly 2,000-square-foot home in Whitehaven.

Williams is one of three men with intellectual disabilities selected to move into the three-bedroom, two-bath home with 24-hour in-home care on Oakwood Drive, sponsored by United Housing and Shelby Residential and Vocational Services.

The organizations received a \$1.3 million grant from the federal Troubled Asset Relief Program, which they've used to renovate seven formerly foreclosed homes for people with disabilities and low incomes.

Williams and his two housemates pay 30 percent of their monthly income as rent, much cheaper than the nearly \$1,000 they were paying for a smaller house last month.

"Having affordable housing allows them to save money so they can do and have things they really enjoy," said Felicia Robinson, a director of Community Living with SRVS.

Foreclosure houses answer special needs for disabled

Williams used the extra cash he was able to save over the past four months to purchase a flat-screen television. He grinned as he showed the way to his room and asked, "Want to see my new TV? I got it at Sears."

Robinson said SRVS supports more than 900 people with disabilities and has at least 70 other homes in addition to the seven recently acquired.

People chosen to live in the seven homes were matched for compatibility and selected based on their financial needs and their physical needs for a more accessible home.

SRVS and United Housing hosted a grand-opening ceremony Wednesday for the Whitehaven house on Oakwood that Williams now calls home. Rails, wider doors and handrails in the bathrooms were added to the home to make it easier for residents to get around.

Volunteers from United Way, a volunteer-driven community service organization, helped clean the home that neighbors say was once an eyesore in the community.

"It's turned from a house into a home, and that means a lot," said Jeffrie Bruton, SRVS executive director.

Tennessee Housing Development Agency executive director Ted Fellman announced at the Wednesday event that the government will grant another \$5 million to United Housing and three other Memphis-based companies to continue renovating between 50 and 100 more homes.

The other companies are Frayser Community Development Center, North Memphis Community Development Center and Habitat for Greater Memphis.

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