

Virginia Housing Development Authority *Homeownership Education TV Show*

“The current foreclosure crisis makes it more important than ever for first-time homebuyers to be educated about the homebuying process. This TV show is a great first step towards helping first-time homebuyers prepare for the responsibilities of sustainable homeownership.”

Kelly Gill-Gordon, VHDA Homeownership Education Program Manager

Brief Description

One of VHDA’s priorities is providing free homeownership education classes to first-time homebuyers. In fact, completing this class to learn about the responsibilities of homeownership is a requirement before our customers can receive a VHDA home loan.

To support this goal, VHDA’s Homeownership Education and Marketing departments worked in partnership to produce a public television show called *How to Buy a Home – The Right Way*. The half-hour show was filmed in a talk show format, using professional hosts to interview two VHDA associates about the five key elements of homeownership education: personal finance and credit, working with a lender, the role of the real estate agent, the home inspection and the loan closing. The show was taped at Fairfax Public Access, the flagship public TV station in Northern Virginia.

Due to the high cost of commercial TV air, the show was created for Virginia’s public TV stations, which offer airtime at no cost. Most of these stations agreed to air the show on a continuous basis. Additional viewers will also be reached because most cable and satellite TV providers include public access programming in their subscriber packages.

VHDA produced both an English and Spanish version of the show and burned them onto DVDs (see attachments), which are being provided to Realtors®, lenders, chambers of commerce, local government access stations and for showings at various housing events. By re-purposing footage from the Spanish show, we also were able to create six short, educational TV and radio “vignettes” to be used in our outreach efforts to the Hispanic community in Northern Virginia. Each 60-second spot focused on one topic, such as the importance of credit or avoiding scams. The TV vignettes are currently running on Telemundo and Univision in the Northern Virginia market; radio vignettes are running on local Spanish radio stations.

To increase the number of times that public TV stations air the program, VHDA is making personal presentations to station managers, including minority focused stations, and offering them the show in the production format of their choosing: Beta SP, Digibeta, DVD or electronic delivery via FastChannel.

In addition, both shows have been posted on YouTube and plans are underway to link the show to VHDA’s website.

Why It Was Undertaken

The housing crisis continues to take its toll on homeowners across all social and economic lines. In fact, RealtyTrac reported that one in every 605 U.S. homes received a foreclosure filing in May 2011. And according to Michael Calhoun, president of the Center for Responsible Lending, he recently estimated that 20 percent of African-American and Hispanic homeowners will lose their homes as a result of the housing crisis.

Now more than ever, VHDA knows that consumers need to be better educated so that they can keep their homes. One of VHDA’s goals is to educate first-time homebuyers so they understand the homebuying process and the responsibilities of homeownership — as well as the importance of being financially prepared for the long-term commitment of monthly mortgage payments.

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In support of this knowledge, VHDA produced our educational TV show to provide valuable information to homebuyers throughout Virginia, and to raise awareness and registrations for our free homebuyer class — and to do so in a cost-effective manner.

What It Has Accomplished

Both the English and Spanish shows are currently available on YouTube. They can be watched at <http://www.youtube.com/vhdavideos>. So far, copies of the show have been distributed to 18 public TV stations across Virginia. Also, the Virginia Association of Realtors has agreed to use a DVD of the show during their annual conference.

In addition, segments of the Spanish show have been customized into six smaller (60-second) educational TV and radio vignettes that are playing on Spanish-language stations in the Northern Virginia market.

Why It Is Meritorious and Meets NCSHA Judging Criteria

Innovative

The *How to Buy a Home* TV show is innovative for a number of reasons. First, it is a direct response to the housing crisis by promoting classes that help prevent foreclosures in Virginia. Second, it may be the first homeownership educational TV show produced by a state housing finance agency – VHDA is not aware of any similar productions. Third, it steps outside traditional media outlets by using social media (YouTube) as an additional opportunity to promote our homeownership classes.

Several aspects of the production gave the show a unique look. Virtual sets were used to save the costs of building an actual set — the host and guests sat in an empty “green room” and the “background” and “furniture” were digitally generated. VHDA’s own “Happy Community” branding illustration (depicting urban, rural, and suburban housing scenes) was incorporated into the virtual set as a backdrop. The artwork, which is also prominent on VHDA’s Website, brightened the show and gave it a warm, optimistic feel. The illustration also served as the basis for an opening animation we created to help capture viewers’ attention and draw them into the show. A cheerful music track with a hint of Latin flavor was also composed for the show. VHDA’s own “commercials” were also inserted into the show, featuring a strong call to action to register for our free homebuyer classes.

Replicable

Any HFA can easily replicate this show by contacting the public TV stations in their states, filming it on site, and being willing to spend a nominal amount to produce a 30-minute TV show. (These costs can be lowered by not using professional hosts and not animating illustrations.)

Reach target audiences

First-time homebuyers in Virginia are the show’s target audience, and they are effectively reached through: multiple airings of the show on public TV stations, the popular YouTube environment, and through vignettes played on Hispanic radio and TV stations in Northern Virginia.

Achieve measurable results

While hard to quantify, VHDA’s Homeownership Education TV Show is airing in the most populous areas of the state, giving it the potential to reach the majority of the state’s population. An example is Fairfax Public Access, Northern Virginia’s flagship public TV station, which airs VHDA’s TV show on a regular basis. The station reaches over 250,000 households in Northern Virginia, which translates to close to a million potential viewers.

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Provide benefits that outweigh costs

The cost to produce the two 30-minute shows is relatively small compared to commercial TV production standards. Costs were contained by taping at a public TV station; using in-house staff as guests; airing the show for free on public TV; conducting initial editing at the station; and using in-house Spanish translators and our creative marketing staff to write, art direct, and produce the show.

Demonstrate effective use of resources

VHDA staff members effectively used existing resources to keep production costs low. For example, an illustration that was previously commissioned as part of VHDA's branding was used as a background at no cost, and served as a basis for the opening animation. Also, we negotiated a custom music license that allowed us the flexibility to re-use the music in various media over a two-year period, as opposed to paying a license fee for library music for every additional usage.

Achieve strategic objectives

The show is a key factor in achieving two of VHDA's most important organizational objectives: creating more informed first-time homebuyers through the homeownership education program, and increasing home purchase lending to households with one or more Hispanic borrowers. In addition, the show supports VHDA's goal of foreclosure prevention by ensuring that first-time homebuyers are not only prepared to buy a house, but also able to handle the long-term responsibilities of owning one as well.

Conclusion

According to CoreLogic, the national foreclosure rate was 3.47 percent of all outstanding mortgages in April 2011, compared with 3.05 percent in April 2010. And, minorities are more likely to fall into foreclosure than non-minority borrowers. The housing crisis created a critical need for potential first-time homebuyers to become better educated.

In response, VHDA produced the *How to Buy a Home – The Right Way* TV show, in English and Spanish, as a creative and cost-effective way to effectively promote sustainable homeownership education to its primary audience – first-time homebuyers. In part as a result of these TV shows and VHDA's dedicated homeownership education efforts, our foreclosure rate in 2011 is significantly lower than those of both the state and the nation (1.11% vs. 2.03% and 4.52%, respectively).

The Spanish version of the show was also customized into six smaller (60-second) TV and radio educational vignettes. These focus on individual elements of homeownership education and encourage audiences to visit the website, call the VHDA Customer Contact Center for information, or sign up for the free classes.

Energetic and informative, *How to Buy a Home – The Right Way* provides VHDA customers with the information they need from a source they can trust.

Attachments: How to Buy a Home – The Right Way DVDs (English and Spanish versions)