

# door to door

*Housing with compassion...Development with a vision*



## Hudson River Housing Confronts the Foreclosure Crisis



*Hudson River Housing, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that works to develop and sustain diverse housing options and provide support services to those who need them.*

## About Us

Hudson River Housing develops and manages affordable housing and neighborhood preservation efforts in our communities. The expertise of Hudson River Housing is increasingly relied upon to inform local planning related to housing, community development and homelessness.

## Our Services

### *Housing with Compassion*

#### Family & Adult Services

Emergency Housing

*After-Hours Emergency Placement*

*Dutchess County Coalition for the Homeless*

Transitional Housing

*Hudson River Lodging*

*Hillcrest House*

*LaGrange House*

Supported Permanent Housing

*Shelter Plus Care*

*COACH*

*Follow-Through*

*Maximize*

#### Youth Services

Emergency Housing

*River Haven Shelter*

Transitional Housing

*River Haven Transitional Living*

Supported Permanent Housing

*Home Base I & II*

Independent Living Skills Building

*River Haven Independent Living*

*Excel*

*Street Outreach*

### *Development with a Vision*

#### Real Estate Development

Property Rehabilitation & New Construction

*Multifamily Rental Housing*

*Single and Two-Family Homes*

Historic Preservation

Neighborhood Revitalization

#### Community Development

Community Relations

Organizational Development

Community Building & Organizing

#### Property & Asset Management

Workforce Rental Opportunities

*Harlow Row*

*Garden Street*

*Townhouses*

Senior Housing

*Cannon Street Senior Housing*

*Maybrook Gardens*

#### Homeownership & Education

NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center of

Dutchess County

*Homebuyer Education*

*Foreclosure Intervention*

*Inclusionary Housing*

*Credit Building*

*Financial Literacy Training*

*Landlord Training*

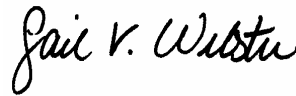
For more information on our programs and services, please contact (845) 454-5176.

## Greetings!

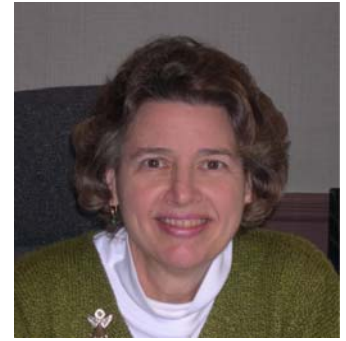
In this issue, we tackle a subject that has been at the forefront of our consciousness for several months now—the foreclosure crisis. Every day, we hear new stories of the impact it is having, but here at Hudson River Housing what reverberates most deeply are the stories we hear from people in our own communities. You will find some of them in this quarter's cover story.

True to our nature, we are not sitting back and waiting for things to settle down on their own. We have confronted the situation head on, and every day are searching for new solutions and remedies to help those who walk through our doors. Most recently, HRH has been competitively chosen by NeighborWorks America to participate in the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program, and we are actively seeking to identify other ways to support our efforts to provide quality, unbiased, and confidential counseling services to those facing foreclosure.

On a lighter note, I hope you have noticed our new look! This issue marks the unveiling of the redesign of our newsletter. You can also check it out online, in full color.



Gail Webster  
Executive Director



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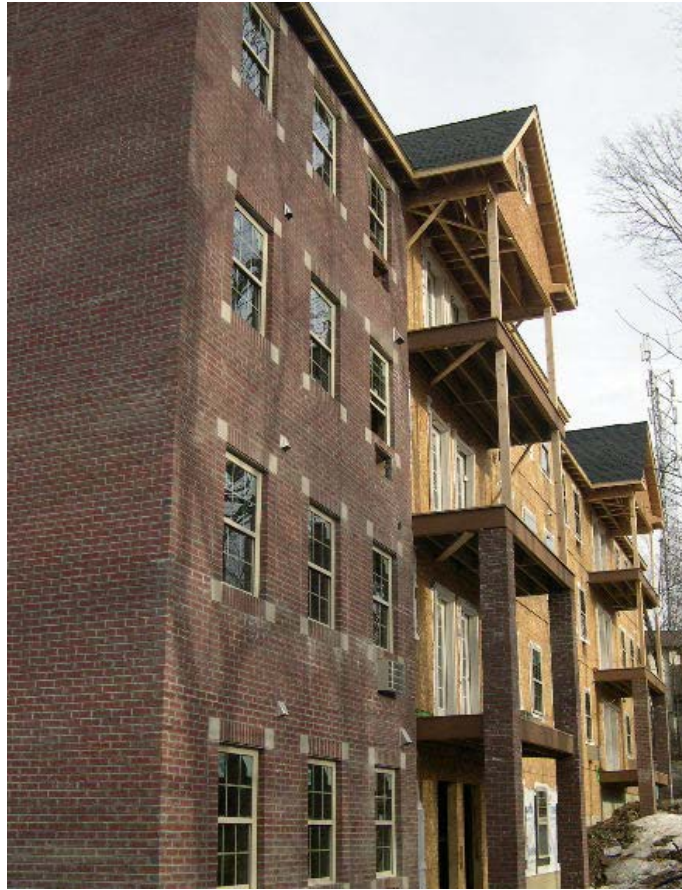
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Door to Door Editor  
Elizabeth Celaya

## Cannon Street Senior Housing

Brand-new high-quality, low-cost apartment complex for active adults almost ready to open its doors

Walk or drive down Cannon Street in Poughkeepsie these days, and it's hard to miss Cannon Street Senior Housing rapidly taking shape. What was once three vacant lots will soon be home to one state-of-the-art affordable apartment complex. Designed to meet the needs of seniors age 55 and older, Cannon Street Senior Housing consists of 39 one-bedroom apartments and a long list of amenities. Elevators, an indoor mailroom, large private storage, and on-site laundry facilities are all part of making life easier for seniors living in the complex. Private balconies, landscaped grounds with park-like seating, a community room, and a quiet study area are about making it better. Cannon Street Senior Housing also boasts additional touches, such as a different color scheme on each of the three floors that helps seniors find their way easier, and a live-in superintendent will help make sure operations at the complex run smoothly. All of the units are handicapped adaptable.



**Cannon Street Senior Housing under construction. HRH expects construction to be completed early this summer, with apartments ready for occupancy by August.**

The cost of housing in Dutchess County is rising rapidly, and seniors often find it particularly difficult to access affordable, quality housing that meets their needs. Median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Dutchess County is over \$900. Conventional wisdom states that a household should not pay more than 30% of its income towards housing costs—which means that a household needs to make over \$36,000 per year to afford the average one-bedroom apartment (Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development 2006 Rental Housing Survey).

**“Cannon Street Senior Housing will provide much needed housing...We know there are waiting lists of seniors in the Hudson Valley looking for decent affordable housing.”**

~ Gail Webster, HRH Executive Director

Rents at Cannon Street Senior Housing range from \$650 to \$761 a month, and include heat and hot water. The complex's downtown location puts it in close proximity to numerous community services and public transportation, which makes it especially convenient for seniors that have limited resources or a hard time getting around.

Cannon Street Senior Housing offers more than just affordable apartments, however. The complex is a community improvement project that will bring new residents to Poughkeepsie's downtown. Designed to fit into the neighborhood, Cannon Street Senior Housing will return vacant lots to productive use through an attractive building and landscaped grounds. Hopefully, the project will encourage more investment in Poughkeepsie's downtown. “The area has so much potential,” says Ed Murphy, HRH's Director of Real Estate Development. “This is definitely a step in the right direction.”

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

An applicant household can include a maximum of two (2) persons. All occupants (with the exception of approved live-in aides) must be 55 or older.

29 units are reserved for households at or below 50% of the Area Median Income. The 2008 rent for these units is \$650/mo, heat and hot water included.

- 1-person household—\$27,600 annual income
- 2-person household—\$31,550 annual income

10 units are reserved for households at or below 60% of the Area Median Income. The 2008 rent for these units is \$761/mo, heat and hot water included.

- 1-person household—\$33,120 annual income
- 2-person household—\$37,860 annual income

Priority on at least 51% of all units will be given to qualifying persons on Section 8 waiting lists.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

**Applications will be accepted beginning April 15, 2008.**

Applications are available at Hudson River Housing's Administrative Offices, located at 313 Mill Street, Poughkeepsie, NY, or you may request an application be sent to you by mail.

Applications must be submitted to Hudson River Housing in-person or by mail (no faxed application will be accepted). Units will be filled by a random selection process by tenants determined to be eligible based on age and income data certification, past and current landlord references, credit worthiness, and criminal background checks.

**Please do not go to the project site to obtain an application. The site is currently under construction and is not safe. No applications are available at the construction site.**

## Housing Market Crisis

As reverberations from an epic number of foreclosures rock our community, Hudson River Housing is working towards providing effective solutions, and preventing such a crisis from occurring again

Every day, new information bombards us from all sides regarding the troubles in the housing market. Downturn, crisis, crunch—call it what you may—the current turn of events has put enormous stress on families across our region. According to a recent study by the Empire Justice Center, Dutchess County is one of the top ten counties in the state with sub-prime foreclosures and one of the top twenty counties having sub-prime loans 30 or more days late.

So where can a family facing the possibility of foreclosure turn to find some answers? Hudson River Housing's NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center of Dutchess County (NHC-DC) offers programs and services that can help. Nonprofit housing counselors like NHC-DC offer personal, realistic solutions that have a family's best interest in mind. "Unfortunately, there are always people out there looking to take advantage of someone else's misfortune for their own benefit," said Gail Webster, Hudson River Housing's Executive Director. At the NHC-DC, families meet with counselors one-on-one, receive an assessment of their situation, and get recommendations as to the best course of action. "It isn't always going to be what they want – but we do our best to always be objective while remaining compassionate about the stress people are under," said Mary Linge, HRH's Director of HomeOwnership and Education. Ms. Linge oversees operations of the HomeOwnership Center.

The NHC-DC is committed to providing pre-purchase homebuyer education as the best antidote to the current housing crisis. Of the 482 customers who have purchased homes with assistance from HRH's homebuyer education services, not one has faced foreclosure. In contrast, of all the people HRH has worked with who are facing foreclosure, not one took advantage of pre-purchase education. "It's pretty clear what the solution is," says Ms. Linge. "Every day I hear individuals we are assisting with foreclosure counseling say they wished they had come to us before they purchased their home. If they had, many of them would not be in this situation."

But until HRH can convince every potential homebuyer to take advantage of the array of pre-purchase education offerings, counselors must deal with the overwhelming number of calls they receive everyday for foreclosure counseling. "We had been receiving one or two calls per week. Now we receive five or six per day," says Ms. Linge. There is no typical situation that a foreclosure counseling customer faces, and the assistance offered varies. However, the pressure put on lenders from the media and government attention has helped NHC-DC counselors be successful working with customers in lender negotiations. The

methods most commonly employed when assisting foreclosure counseling customers include stringent budget and credit repair plans, loan modifications, forbearance agreements and rate resets. In 2007, HRH was able to reach an equitable solution and thereby prevent foreclosure in 90% of cases.

Two recent cases highlight the various issues that can put a household in a precarious situation. A married couple with two young children purchased their home in the City of Poughkeepsie in 2006. Shortly thereafter, the husband learned of a child support obligation of \$1,100 a month. At the same time, his wife became pregnant, was put on bedrest, and was out of work for three and a half months. The family fell behind on their mortgage payments and had amassed \$8,755 in arrears when they contacted the NHC-DC, already in pre-foreclosure. After running the family's income and expenses, NHC-DC counselors determined that with the wife returning to work, the mort-

gage payment was affordable, but the arrears still needed to be addressed. NHC-DC counselors stepped in to advocate with the lender, showing them that the family could afford their mortgage payment, and convincing them to remove the family from pre-foreclosure. Counselors are now in the process of working with the lender to modify the loan and add the arrears to the principal.

In another situation, a woman in her sixties from Wappingers Falls contacted the NHC-DC for help in saving her family home. When her husband passed away, the mortgage became unaffordable, and she accumulated about \$10,000 in arrears. Although she held a full-time job, NHC-DC counselors determined that the only way to keep her home was to identify other sources of income. To solve the situation, the woman's daughter moved back to her family home and began paying monthly rent. She was also able to secure an overnight day-

*"Every day I hear individuals we are assisting with foreclosure counseling say they wished they had come to us before they purchased their home. If they had, many of them would not be in this situation."*



care job. The numbers now show a positive cash flow, which NHC-DC counselors were able to show to the lender as proof of the woman's effort and ability to maintain her home. As a result, the lender is now much more willing to work through the situation. "This woman showed she was willing to work hard and do whatever it takes. We are anticipating a positive outcome," says Francisca Castellanos, NHC-DC Housing Counselor.

HRH began offering post-purchase education and counseling, including foreclosure prevention, in 2005. Two full-time NHC-DC staff are certified foreclosure prevention and loss mitigation counselors. Initially, foreclosure prevention counseling consumed less than 5% of staff time, averaging 200 calls per year. In 2007 that figure leaped to 25% of staff time. By the end of 2007, HRH had delivered foreclosure prevention counseling services to over 160 households. Given current activity, it is projected that the NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center of Dutchess County will receive 1000 requests for foreclosure prevention services in 2008.

Hudson River Housing is one of only eighty-two non-profit agencies nationwide chosen through a competitive application process to participate in the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program. The purpose of this program, funded through the fiscal year 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act and administered by NeighborWorks America, is to meet an increase in demand for mortgage delinquency and foreclo-

sure prevention counseling sessions throughout the nation. HRH is one of nine non-profit agencies in New York State and the only agency in the entire Hudson Valley to be chosen and funded by this program.

The impact saving households from foreclosures can have on a community is well documented. Increased property values, consistent tax revenue and properly sheltered families are just a few of the substantial benefits. It is forecast that 3.5 million neighboring homes will be affected by foreclosure across the State; the need and potential impact is clearly enormous.

Hudson River Housing has no eligibility requirements for obtaining foreclosure prevention services, economic or otherwise. An enrollment form, income documents and an authorization to speak to the lender are required for the agency to properly counsel each household.



## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OF THE NHC-DC

### The Home Club

The Home Club is a nine-hour education program designed to assist first time homebuyers to overcome barriers to, and become prepared for, homeownership. The classes meet one night per month and feature local experts involved in the home buying process.

### Pre-Purchase Counseling

A Housing Counselor will help to prepare you to purchase a home through personal one-on-one counseling sessions. Your Housing Counselor will maintain a relationship with you throughout the entire home buying process.

### Pre-Purchase Fast Track

This program is a time-condensed version of The Home Club, and is only available to individuals and families that are currently in the mortgage process with a lender. Sessions are scheduled on an as needed basis.

### National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program

Under this Federally funded program, foreclosure intervention and loss mitigation counseling services are provided to households facing difficulty meeting their mortgage payment obligations.



The education room at the NHC-DC, where participants of various Center programs meet for group sessions.

### Credit Counseling

One-on-one credit counseling is offered for individuals and families in need of assistance in raising their credit score to pre-qualify for a mortgage.

### Budget Counseling

One-on-one budget counseling is offered to assist in identifying household income and expenses. Goals are set, with an action plan to meet them.

### Financial Literacy 101

This four-hour course is offered in a classroom setting over four sessions. It is designed to teach individuals and families how to use credit responsibly in order to raise their credit score to pre-qualify for a mortgage. Through budgeting and financial management, customers will work towards their goals to pay down debt and/or begin saving for a down payment on a home.

### The ABC's of Being a Landlord

This one-hour course is designed to assist home buyers decide if they want to pursue owning a multi-family home. The course is a basic overview of the rewards, risks and responsibilities of being a landlord.

### Landlord Training

This service is offered to anyone who is in the process of buying an owner-occupied multi-family home. The one-on-one session details the variables involved in becoming a landlord.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT (845)454-9288**

## Robin Evans, Senior Administrative Assistant, Celebrates 20 Years with Hudson River Housing



Robin Evans, Senior Administrative Assistant, celebrates her 20-year anniversary with HRH.

She certainly doesn't look like she could have been around for 20 years, but April 12th marked Robin Evans's 20th anniversary working for HRH. Robin is the agency's longest-standing employee. She joined HRH in 1988, only six years after the agency's official incorporation. Then, the Gannett House shelter on South Road was the agency's only project. Robin, along with the Executive Director, oversaw all of the administrative functions of the agency. At the time, the agency also employed a handful of staff to run the shelter. Gail Webster, HRH's current ED, joined Robin in 1991, at which point the agency began to grow in leaps and bounds. Robin was always ready to absorb the new flow of work heading her way. Now, she helps guide administrative functions for the agency's 117 employees and 20 programs and projects. Here are a few things that HRH staff had to say about her:

"Robin has a great sense of humor and sharp wit. It's like a breath of fresh air when I come in each morning." ~ Michael Cole, Associate Executive Director for Program Services

"I can always count on Robin to solve pretty much any problem. After years of struggling with Word documents, Excel documents, or database issues, I have finally learned—just send it to Robin! She'll zip it back in a matter of seconds, problem solved." ~ Mary Linge, Director of HomeOwnership & Education

"Robin has saved me many times! *Sometimes* I'm running a little late with things, and Robin is always there to pull me through." ~ Pat Kellett, Director of Youth Services

"I love working with Robin. I don't think I'd want to share the front office with anyone else!" ~ Amanda Sutton, Administrative Assistant

Congratulations on your 20 years Robin! We hope you stick around for 20 more.

## IN THE FIELD

### Hudson River Lodging Easter Celebration

By Sue Kimmerle

Easter was made more special this year for the families at Hudson River Lodging with an Easter party put on by Girl Scout Troop 143. Several girls, along with their leaders, Sandy Beal, Darlene Knauer, and our very own Kris Lee (as the Easter Bunny!), treated the Lodge guests to lots of sweet treats while they enjoyed Easter egg coloring, decorating bunny picture frames and an egg carrying contest. An Easter egg hunt, sack races and bean bag tossing contests were held outside. Everyone, including the Easter Bunny, had a wonderful time thanks to the generosity of Troop 143!



A member of Girl Scout Troop 143 helps a young Hudson River Lodging guest get ready for the sack race.



Kris Lee—er, the Easter Bunny—poses with members of Troop 143.

## HRH's 26th Annual Meeting

On February 21st, HRH held its 26th Annual Meeting. Over 50 public officials, community representatives, and HRH staff attended. The theme for the evening was Main Street revitalization, which played a role in HRH's choice of meeting location, honoree, and even the refreshments. HRH chose to hold the meeting at the recently completed City of Poughkeepsie Public Safety Building, located at 503 Main Street. The building is home to the Community Policing and Traffic Enforcement units of the City of Poughkeepsie Police Department, as well as part of the City's Fire Department. The Public Safety Building is helping to stabilize the blighted 500 block of Main Street, replacing a vacant lot with needed services for area residents. The building is beautifully designed, and offers a community room for public use. In keeping with the local, downtown theme, the evening's refreshments were provided by El Mariachi Loco, a small Mexican-themed restaurant owned by Poughkeepsie resident Virginia Pinelo. El Mariachi Loco is located on Delafield Street, with another location located on upper Main Street.

HRH presented the 2008 Community Builder Award to Marc and Moira Persico of Homestead Housing for the work they have done rehabilitating vacant, blighted buildings in the Main Street corridor. To honor Marc and Moira, HRH presented them with a custom painting by artist Jay Palefsky of the buildings located at 548 Main Street, 553 Main Street, 557 Main Street, 559 Main Street, and 4 North White Street. Homestead Housing undertook a complete renovation of these 5 city-owned buildings, restoring them to become quality affordable housing, and adding to the area's vitality through the renovation of first-floor commercial space. Homestead Housing continues to purchase and renovate an average of 4 two-family properties per year, renting primarily to Section 8 and DSS-assisted tenants.

HRH's NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center of Dutchess County was highlighted in the 2007 Project Spotlight. Mary Linge, HRH's Director of HomeOwnership & Education, gave an overview of the Center's remarkable accomplishments thus far, with an emphasis on the foreclosure crisis of recent months and its effect on homeowners.



It was standing room only at HRH's 26th Annual Meeting.



Marc Persico of Homestead Housing accepting the 2008 Community Builder Award.

## IN BRIEF ~ NOTES FROM THE PAST QUARTER



Hillcrest House/DCCH staff enjoy some much deserved down time at the 2nd Annual Wind Chill Dinner.

### 2nd Annual Wind Chill Dinner at CIA

On March 13th, HRH held its 2nd Annual Wind Chill Dinner to benefit the Dutchess County Coalition for the Homeless (DCCH). The dinner was held in the American Bounty Room at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. The evening included testimonials from former HRH clients Chris Canale and John Evans, both of whom are now employees of the agency. Remarks were also provided by Gail Webster, HRH Executive Director, Linda Malave, Hillcrest House/DCCH Project Manager, and Barbara Vitale, Hillcrest House/DCCH Operations Manager. Guests dined on a gourmet five-course dinner and perused silent auction offerings. 23 local businesses donated items. All in all, the evening was a great success, raising several thousand dollars to support operations of DCCH.

### Taking the Pain (and the Cost) Out of Tax Preparation

For most of us, April 15th is somewhat of a dreaded day—a reminder that we have to sort through a myriad of receipts, bills, and other paperwork to prepare our yearly taxes. The process doesn't have to be tortuous, though, and it doesn't have to cost you anything. The Hudson Valley CASH (Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope) Coalition, a group of volunteers from agencies across the region, help hundreds of area residents file their taxes painlessly every year, free of charge to those that meet income eligibility requirements. This year Francisca Castellanos, HRH's Housing Counselor, and Mary Linge, HRH's Director of HomeOwnership & Education, joined the ranks of volunteers.

Taking advantage of the services of the trained CASH Coalition volunteers can pay off. This year, Ms. Castellanos and Kathleen Langton, a volunteer from HSBC, helped one participant score a \$6,500 refund, which she put towards the down payment of a house she is buying through HRH's First Time Homebuyer program. HSBC also happens to be the bank that will finance her mortgage.



HRH Housing Counselor Francisca Castellanos (center) and Kathleen Langton of HSBC assist a local resident file her 2007 tax return.



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### SAVE THE DATE!

Hudson River Housing celebrates NeighborWorks Week *June 7th—June 14th*  
16th Annual Rooftop Volleyball Tournament *July 19th and 20th*  
15th Annual Evening by the Hudson *September 18th*

### Help Support Hudson River Housing by Becoming a Member

Join the growing group of supporters that is working to help HRH continue its commitment to providing affordable housing in our communities. Becoming a member will ensure you have access to the latest news about HRH by continuing to receive our quarterly newsletter; invitations to open houses and other events; and the opportunity to help HRH make a difference in our communities.

Membership Levels:

- Student \$15
- Basic \$25
- Sustaining \$50
- Sponsor \$100
- Business \$200
- Lifetime \$1,000
- Other: Please accept my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in support of HRH's programs and services.

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*Thank You!*