

## 2008 NAHRO AWARDS

### AGENCY AWARDS OF MERIT IN HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

#### PROGRAM INNOVATION: RESIDENT AND CLIENT SERVICES

#### SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

#### GIFTS IN KIND

##### 1. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM

Many expenses accumulate during the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) home buying process. Purchasers have to pay for appraisals, inspections, and closing costs. This can leave families little money left to buy household items. Recognizing this dilemma, the Fort Worth Housing Authority (FWHA) sought a solution and partnered with the City of Fort Worth (COFW) to participate in the Gifts In Kind program. This program connects non-profit agencies in need of particular goods with businesses willing to donate those goods. FWHA was matched with a local Bed, Bath and Beyond store that donated many household items to HCV home owners.

##### 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Many families on the HCV Homeownership program spend months or even years preparing to purchase their home. This preparation process includes paying off old debt, keeping good debt current, and saving money for homeownership costs. These families have demonstrated a desire to overcome the challenges they face. They have diligently accomplished every request given to them by the various organizations responsible to help them accomplish their homeownership dream. Watching them sacrifice to accomplish their dream inspired FWHA to seek opportunities to help them on their journey. This desire to help those families led the FWHA to partner with the COFW and provide the Homeownership participants with household goods from Bed, Bath and Beyond. Through the unique Gifts In Kind program, the two agencies were able to provide the families with items for their homes. Receiving these needed items allowed the homeowners to save their money for other home expenses.

The objective of the program is to negate some of the expenses the families incur in the Homeownership program during their first year(s) of becoming new homeowners. The program provides the family the opportunity to spend money ordinarily used to purchase household items such as small furniture, bedding, kitchen supplies, bathroom accessories, etc., on other important homeownership expenses.

Eligible clients are those who have purchased a home through the HCV Homeownership program. FWHA initiated the implementation of the Gifts In Kind program and asked its homeownership partner, the COFW, to sponsor the \$450.00 fee.

After meeting all eligibility requirements for the Gifts In Kind program, FWHA was connected with a local Bed, Bath and Beyond in April 2007. This program will continue on a regular basis. FWHA picks up weekly donations, then allows the homeownership participants to choose wanted items.

### **3. THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM**

The program has been highly successful. FWHA has received numerous donations from Bed, Bath and Beyond. These donations have been received with gratitude from the homebuyers. The families are excited about the opportunity to purchase a home through the HCV program, so to receive the Gift In Kind items truly expresses to them the support of FWHA. FWHA has received over \$8,000 of donated goods and has supported over 85% of its homeownership families.

FWHA plans to continue the Gifts In Kind program. This opportunity is available to any nonprofit agency. More information on the Gifts In Kind program and registration details can be found at their website [www.giftsinkind.org](http://www.giftsinkind.org).

### **4. THE COST/FINANCING OF THE PROGRAM**

In order to participate in the Gifts In Kind program, a nonprofit agency must pay registration fees. These fees vary, depending on the business that the agency wishes to receive donations from. The FWHA used its existing partnership with the COFW to pay for the registration fee. The only cost incurred by FWHA was the time and gas spent picking up the donated items.

### **5. INNOVATION**

The Gifts In Kind program is innovative to FWHA because it is the first of its kind at the housing authority. It is an innovative idea for a large housing authority to seek ways to provide services beyond just subsidized housing. FWHA proved that its concern is not just to provide rental or mortgage assistance, but help its homebuyers in other ways. By receiving household items, the participants are able to save money which increases their ability to maintain homeownership.