



with PATH-profiled technologies, the CDCB has completed two additional homes and began construction of two more in January.

Embracing a Fresh Approach

As an increasing number of builders are discovering, the use of advanced building technologies holds great promise in affordable housing. For those willing to learn about these technologies, the development of homes with improved quality, energy efficiency, and durability is a goal within reach.

“It’s all about awareness and confidence,” says Michael Drabczyk of MicroTherm. “Most builders do not want to

stick their necks out too far” on advanced building technologies. “They need to know that they are proven and available today.” ■

Kia McLeod is a communications associate with the energy and environmental consulting firm D&R International in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) is a public-private partnership dedicated to speeding the development and use of advanced building technologies to improve the quality and affordability of America’s homes. For more information, visit www.pathnet.org, or e-mail info@pathnet.org. For the TACDC report, see www.tacdc.org.

WINNING STRATEGIES

Sacramento MHA

Training Youth Leaders First in Starting Youth Financial Education

Sacramento Mutual Housing Association, in California, began a youth financial education program in summer 2003 to provide youth in its mutual housing communities with knowledge and guidance in financial topics.

Background

Sacramento Mutual Housing Association (SMHA) began in 1988 with a mission to develop and operate affordable housing, and foster stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. SMHA is a member of Neighborhood Reinvestment’s Multifamily Initiative and provides housing to more than 2,000 people in eight mutual housing communities (527 town homes and apartments). Through resident councils and committees, residents work together to solve community problems, help monitor properties and budgets, and identify programs that will benefit resident families.

Residents have brought a number of programs into mutual housing, including computer training, English as a Second Language classes, community watch patrols, after-school and education programs for youth, and a youth intern program that provides youth leaders with community organizing skills. SMHA also is a member of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Learning Center Consortium.

SMHA’s resident members have incomes below 60 percent of the area median upon initial occupancy, and the majority of SMHA’s residents have incomes below 40 percent of the area median. SMHA began an adult financial education program in 2001 with funding from Neighborhood Reinvestment and American Express Foundation.

Components

► **Start-Up.** SMHA applied for and received a \$15,000 grant from the Foundation for Financial Literacy to start the youth financial education program and a youth individual development account (IDA) program. This grant is being used to fund the first year of the program. Next year, SMHA will need to determine ongoing funding sources for each program.

► **Outline.** The outline for the youth financial education program is the same as SMHA’s adult Financial Fitness class, though staff adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of a younger audience. The youth financial education program concentrates more heavily on establishing credit, checking accounts, and savings accounts.

Six two-hour sessions cover topics such as building and sustaining assets, creating a financial plan as well as good spending and savings strategies, building and managing credit

and debt, investment options, identifying personal financial goals and creating an action plan. The class also goes over the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States and shows how asset development may be part of the solution to this problem. SMHA shows participants that they can take individual and collective action for personal and social change. The class is free for all participating youth.

- ▶ **Eligibility.** SMHA targets youth in and beyond its mutual housing communities. Participants must be 16 to 20 years old and be from lower-income households, with incomes no higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- ▶ **Youth IDA.** Youth participating in the financial education program are eligible and encouraged to participate in SMHA's youth IDA program or "YIDA." Through YIDA, participants' savings of up to \$500 are matched on a two-to-one basis. The total (\$1,500) may be used toward continuing education, business development, or purchasing a home. After attending the class, most youth felt that their IDA savings would be best applied toward continuing education.
- ▶ **Youth Interns.** Four SMHA youth interns were the first to participate in the youth financial education program. The interns are residents employed by SMHA who receive leadership training and organize other youth to participate in public life and community service activities. They were the first program participants and also helped SMHA to identify curriculum needs and topics of interest.
- ▶ **Outreach.** The first participants were purposely targeted, based on their role with the organization and their role as youth leaders in the MHA communities. After the first class, the interns were asked to recruit for the next round of classes, which started in January 2004. The interns agreed to reach out to their family, friends and neighbors in the appropriate age bracket and try to recruit approximately 15 participants. SMHA nonprofit partners also do outreach with youth on participating.
- ▶ **Staffing.** SMHA was able to work the program objectives into the role of its Valley Initiative for Developing Assets (VIDA) coordinator, who facilitates the youth financial education program, with support from other VIDA staff when needed. The VIDA coordinator spends approximately three to four hours a week facilitating this program, though more hours are required when class is in session.
- ▶ **Costs.** The primary cost is staffing. Additional expenses include outreach materials, curriculum development, printing costs, and refreshments. SMHA is currently funding the program with the Foundation for Financial Literacy grant, but will need to conduct specific fundraising activities for the program in the coming year.

Results

Each of the four initial participants graduated. They were enthusiastic about what they had learned and motivated to start saving. They also shared what they learned with their families and encouraged their parents to attend the Financial Fitness class for adults. The program is providing young adults, who are at the starting point of their financial futures, with a strong foundation.

Two of the Mutual interns from the first group later used their savings plus match funds toward the cost of books for courses at the local community college.

Each financial education class participant enrolled in the youth IDA program and has started saving. They each deposited the initial \$25 into the account and are on track to save \$50 a month, to be matched with \$100 from SMHA.

Lessons Learned

Starting the program with youth leaders in the community was an effective strategy for building a positive reputation for the program. SMHA interns are highly regarded by their peers and other residents in the mutual housing communities, and have passed the information along to their family, friends and neighbors. Recruiting youth in leadership roles is a great way to introduce a program to the rest of the community.

Be flexible. When developing a curriculum, start with materials that are already in existence. SMHA used its adult Financial Fitness outline and modified it to suit the needs of younger participants. Be sure to ask the participating youth for honest feedback, to determine the needs and concerns of young people. The class facilitator will need to be flexible and resourceful in order to meet their needs, and will need to use basic language. The instructor may also need to modify his or her teaching methods when addressing a younger audience.

Gear the class toward every youth, not just those who are employed. Many young people are not yet employed, but soon will be. It is also important to consider young people in other situations who would benefit greatly from financial management skills. One example is emancipated foster youth, who are not allowed to handle their money while in the foster care system and consequently lack financial management skills once emancipated.

Obtain stable funding. As with any ongoing program, stable funding is key to long-term success. ■

For more information: Amy Goldwitz, VIDA coordinator, Sacramento Mutual Housing Association, 3451 Fifth Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95817, (916) 923-2232 or (916) 453-8400, fax: (916) 453-8401, e-mail: amyg@mutualhousing.com.