

serious: "When this nation fulfills its promise in the Housing Act of 1949 to provide 'a decent home and suitable living environment' for all Americans. I may not see that in my lifetime, but I'll keep working and fighting for that for as long as I can."

Just a week before her passing, Cushing delivered a moving speech before the National Council of State Housing Agencies in which she quoted from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1933 inaugural address that described one-third of the nation as "ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-clothed." "Today," Cushing said, "only the statement about housing remains true." She went on, "If we were willing and able – and we are able – to provide the same level of support that we provide for homeownership to low- and moderate-income households, we could solve our affordable housing problem in 10 years."

True to her promise, Cushing kept working and fighting to the very end. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the nation, someday, kept its promise of "a decent home and suitable living environment" for all Americans?

Cushing leaves a real legacy – and a void, for so many of us that will be very hard to fill.

Cushing, on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who are living in better housing today because of your tireless efforts, I say, "Thank You."

From now on, each time I think of Cushing, it will cause me to renew my own commitment, expressed in an old song often quoted by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "If I can help somebody as I pass along ... then my living will not be in vain." ■

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PS: For those who didn't know Cushing and are interested in learning more about this extraordinary woman, I would encourage you to simply do a "Google™" search on the Internet.

ATLANTA MHA MAINTAINS LEGACY OF PRIDE

10 years ago in
facts, figures and
bright ideas



BY CHARLOTTE UNDERWOOD

In the summer of 1995, *facts, figures and bright ideas* (Vol. 14, No. 4 July/August 1995) reported that then HUD Assistant Secretary Nicolas Retsinas presented the Atlanta Mutual Housing Association with a "Federal Housing Commissioner's Certificate of Recognition" for its DeFours Ferry Manor multifamily property.

According to the certificate, "The mutual housing concept of 'ownership' instills a sense of pride and responsibility in all residents. Likewise, by including the residents of DeFours Ferry Manor in the renovation work and in decision-making roles, you help to ensure long-term quality housing and responsive management."

Before leaving, Retsinas also visited residents George and Clara Dipp in their apartment.

Today, if you listen to MHA Executive Director Ron Walker describe the DeFours Ferry Manor complex, the sense of pride still resonates. Since Retsinas' visit, DeFours Ferry Manor has undergone significant renovations and established



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on-site programs made possible through various partnerships to provide residents with much-needed services.

Some of those services include a homeownership program, a social services program, a youth program, a technology bus (an instructor teaches and remains on property three weeks at a time), an after-school program, and a daycare program.

The original MHA model served as a means for residents to become responsible renters and prepare for homeownership. In fact, George and Clara Dipp bought a single-family home for themselves in 2002, Walker said, "so the plan worked!"

However, as affordable housing stock continues to diminish, Walker explained that some residents become long-term renters because there is no housing available at the same rate found at DeFours Ferry Manor. Walker added that Atlanta has an affordable housing shortage of 60,000 units.

Therefore, Walker stated that Atlanta's current challenge is to:

- ▶ Increase the supply of affordable housing as well as stimulate the supply;
- ▶ Create an industry through the Georgia State Trade Association of Nonprofit Developers (G-STAND) that supports affordable housing; and
- ▶ Work in collaboration with other groups such as the Chamber of Commerce.

In spite of the noted challenges, 67 percent of families who transitioned from DeFours Ferry Manor bought homes. The legacy continues. ■

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