

## Nuestra's Kitchen Venture Aids Food-Service Entrepreneurs

When Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation of Roxbury, Massachusetts, launched Nuestra Culinary Ventures (NCV) as a shared-use commercial kitchen facility and commissary, it hoped that small-scale food entrepreneurs would use the space as an incubator to enliven the greater Boston food industry.

Today, more than 50 food-production businesses share the space, renting parts of the kitchen and its equipment by the hour as they need to. And its graduates have opened their own restaurants or accepted positions throughout the food-service sector.

NCV's 5,000 square feet, in part of the old Sam Adams brewery complex in Jamaica Plain, include three ranges, six ovens, a walk-in refrigerator, freezer, dry goods storage areas, a 30-quart mixer, and a gas grill. NCV also is licensed as a catering commissary by the city's health department.

One NCV graduate is Cornelia Hoskin, a former personal chef in California, who opened her own store, Well, Well, Well Inc., in a former bakery on Dartmouth Street in the South End. The store sells all-natural, gourmet, blast-frozen meals, prepared by French-born Chef Riad Karcouche.

"Between 5:30 and 8 p.m.," Hoskin says, "it's a parade of hungry people picking up something on their way home from work."

Even with her own store, however, Hoskin continues to rely upon NCV's services.

"I'm staying at NCV until the

capacity isn't there anymore," Hoskin says. "NCV obviously cut down on the capital investment and has been an invaluable tool for me and Well, Well, Well, Inc. We could not have started without the leg-up that a turn-key kitchen on an hourly basis has provided. I hope there can be more places like NCV. I hope it can be of use to a lot of people who don't know about it."

Well, Well, Well, also provides a venue for other small food producers to sell their wares, bypassing slotting fees typically charged by larger supermarket chains. For example, Hoskin also sells authentic Italian meals for Somerville-based Capone Foods and baked goods from the Haley House.

NCV's Director Cary Wheaton says, "Cornelia is an inspiration to the other small businesses using our kitchen. It has been so rewarding to see her dream blossom into a reality. She started with well-defined and researched goals, and with hard work, talent and perseverance, she is succeeding."

## 2006 Innovations Contest to Focus on Foreclosures

The 2006 Innovations in Homeownership Awards Contest, open to any 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, will focus on strategies and solutions in foreclosure prevention and homeownership preservation.

The annual contest, sponsored by MetLife Foundation, a longtime NeighborWorks® America partner, and coordinated by the NeighborWorks® Center for Homeownership Education and Counseling (NCHCEC) and the NeighborWorks® Campaign for Home Ownership, identifies and recognizes creative

and cost-effective strategies and approaches that nonprofit housing organizations can use to promote and preserve homeownership to underserved communities.

Four top winners will each receive cash prizes of \$2,000; eight runners-up will receive \$250 each. The winners will be announced in August at the NeighborWorks® Training Institute symposium, "Stemming the Tide: Foreclosure Prevention Strategies and Solutions," in Washington, D.C.

Contest details, including categories for submission and an online application, will be available this spring on the NeighborWorks® America Web site, [www.nw.org/foreclosuresolutions](http://www.nw.org/foreclosuresolutions).

The 2005 first-place winners, selected from 81 entries focusing on partnerships, were: Community HousingWorks, San Diego, California; Colorado Association of Realtors Housing Opportunity Foundation, Englewood, Colorado; Conexión Américas, Nashville, Tennessee; and McAllen Affordable Housing Program, McAllen, Texas.

## Foundation Communities Sees Doubling of Low-Income Tax Aid

Community Tax Centers, a program of Foundation Communities, a NeighborWorks® organization in Austin, Texas, expect to file free tax returns for about 14,000 low-income Central Texans this year, doubling the number the program served last tax season.

This will also double the amount of refunds and credits that tax center clients are expected to receive this year. About \$18 million in refunds will be returned to

the local economy.

Dignitaries from Congress to city council, plus program sponsors, funders, volunteers, and clients, helped launch the 2006 program in January, offering free tax preparation at six Community Tax Centers in Austin.

“We wanted working families to know,” said Elizabeth Colvin, director of Community Tax

Centers, “that they didn’t have to pay a commercial tax preparer to make sure they’re claiming the tax refunds and credits they are entitled to. Our IRS-trained volunteers provide the same service completely free of charge.”

In many cases, families don’t know whether they are eligible for tax benefits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, the largest antipoverty program in the nation.

In Texas’s Travis County alone, the IRS reported that about \$31.5 million in EITCs went unclaimed in 2004, Colvin said.

Major funding for Austin’s Community Tax Centers was provided the Silverton Foundation, with site sponsorships from JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.

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## New Office, New Sign



Tom Lay, executive director of the NHS Inc. in Boise, Idaho, shows off the NHS’s sign in front of its new office at 1401 Shoreline Drive. Photo Courtesy NHS Inc.