



(Above) The project, located at 3001 San Diego Road, on Jacksonville's Southside, will be fast-tracked with plans for the housing units and programs to be available by December 2009.

Youth Aging Out of Foster Care: Successful Partnerships Create Housing and Program Opportunities



By Lydia Beltrán

The Florida Housing Coalition is pleased to announce the results of partnerships to serve foster youth in Florida. Children's Home Society of Florida, Buckner Division's group home held its groundbreaking on May 8, in Jacksonville. The CHSF Buckner

Division project is being financed through the City of Jacksonville's SHIP program, the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) Demonstration

The 10 unit, \$1.4 million project will provide four units for teen mothers and their babies in foster care, two units for expectant teen girls in foster care and the remaining four units for girls as they age out of foster care at 18. Each unit will feature a living room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette.

The program services will be funded through community based care services including Family Support Services of North Florida. Additionally, United Way of Northeast Florida will provide funds to help residents succeed through emphasizing

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Loan Program, which received technical assistance from Florida Housing, the Children's Home Society of Florida Foundation, as well as private donors.

independent living skills. Children's Home Society of Florida, Buckner Division will also provide services to ensure the residents are learning independent living skills, as well as continuing

Coverage at the groundbreaking ceremony

their education. Most of the residents will also have jobs, and Children's Home Society of Florida, Buckner Division staff will provide support to ensure residents' success.

Chartered in Jacksonville in 1902, Children's Home Society of Florida, Buckner Division is dedicated to embracing children and inspiring lives. They work to restore and strengthen families through various programs and services such as adoption, foster care and child abuse prevention programs.

For further project information, contact David Clark, director of Development at 904.493.7737 or David.Clark103@chsfl.org. HNN



City Councilman Don Redman, Nancy Drecier (District Administrator Department of Children & Families), Andry Sweet (CHS Vice President of Operations), Kymberly Cook (Executive Director, CHS Buckner Division), Brian Hall (Family Support Services of North Florida) and Charlie Cromer (CHS Chairman of the Board, Buckner Division).

2009 Legislative Wrap-Up:

Section 420.628, Florida Statutes, is created to read: Affordable housing for children and young adults leaving foster care; legislative findings and intent.—

- (1)(a) The Legislature finds that there are many young adults who, through no fault of their own, live in foster families, group homes, and institutions, and face numerous barriers to a successful transition to adulthood. Young adults who are leaving the child welfare system may enter adulthood lacking the knowledge, skills, attitudes, habits, and relationships that will enable them to become productive members of society.
- (b) The Legislature further finds that the main barriers to safe and affordable housing for such young adults are cost, lack of availability, the unwillingness of landlords to rent to such youth due to perceived regulatory barriers, and a lack of knowledge about how to be a good tenant. These barriers cause young adults to be at risk of becoming homeless.
- (c) The Legislature also finds that young adults who leave the child welfare system are disproportionately represented in the homeless population. Without the stability of safe and affordable housing, all other services, training, and

opportunities provided to such young adults may not be effective. Making affordable housing available will decrease the chance of homelessness and may increase the ability of such young adults to live independently.

- (d) The Legislature intends that the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, agencies within the State Housing Initiative Partnership Program, local housing finance agencies, public housing authorities, and their agents, and other providers of affordable housing coordinate with the Department of Children and Family Services, their agents, and community based care providers who provide services under s. 409.1671 to develop and implement strategies and procedures designed to make affordable housing available whenever and wherever possible to young adults who leave the child welfare system.
- (2) Young adults who leave the child welfare system meet the definition of eligible persons under ss. 420.503(7) and 420.907(10) for affordable housing, and are encouraged to participate in federal, state, and local affordable housing programs. Students deemed to be eligible occupants under 26 U.S.C. 2(i)(3)(d) shall be considered eligible persons for purposes of all projects funded under this chapter.