

FSS NEWSLETTER

City & County of Honolulu • Department of Community Services • Section 8 Rental Assistance Branch •
Family Self-Sufficiency Program
<http://www.honolulu.gov/dcs/rentalassistance.htm>

2016
Volume 4



Former participant shares how FSS helped her

Aloha, my name is Marissa and I am a former FSS Participant and Section 8 Recipient. The FSS Program helped me to meet and obtain my educational and employment goals as a social worker. Once I obtained permanent employment and became financially stable, I made the decision to voluntarily give up my Section 8 voucher. I am now a permanent Social Worker IV with the State of Hawaii and wanted to share how the FSS Program helped me to achieve all my goals.

In early 2013, I was unemployed for almost a year and felt extremely discouraged about ever finding a job. I had sent out numerous resumes and applications and had been to countless interviews but had no success. My case manager and I spoke about my options and she suggested volunteering with the Hawaii State Judiciary in the Probation Office and that was the best thing I ever did! Volunteering opened up so many employment opportunities. I met wonderful people and gained so much experience. Within several months after volunteering, I obtained permanent employment. I would recommend volunteering to anyone who is looking for a job. Especially if you are having a hard time finding a job; the rewards are priceless!

Another benefit of the FSS Program was the financial education program, Money Smarts, and the related budget assignment. I was never educated about the future consequences of not



paying my bills on time and the effect it would have on my credit score. The FSS program brought to the forefront the importance of paying bills. The FSS program taught me how to budget my money and live within my means.

The knowledge that I acquired from FSS and the Money Smarts program has helped me to pay off bad debts, get into good standing with current debt and to significantly rebuild my credit score. I am also assisting my adult daughter and my new husband to do the same thing. With the knowledge I've gained from the FSS program my new goal is to own a home. Within the next few months I will begin Homeownership training that will help prepare my family and I to purchase our first home. Section 8 and the FSS program gave us the tools to build a self-sufficient life for my family. I am truly thankful that I made the decision to sign up with the FSS program and grateful to have met the FSS team. They are the best!

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The secret to getting ahead is getting started.

~Mark Twain

Family Self-Sufficiency

City and County of Honolulu
Section 8 Rental Assistance
51 Merchant Street, 2nd Fl.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
(808) 768-7090

U'ilani Silva, Coordinator
FSS/HOP Programs
(808) 768-7093
usilva@honolulu.gov

Vickie Punua-McGinnis
Case Manager/Trainer
FSS/HOP Programs
(808) 768-7089
vpunua@honolulu.gov

Brian Minatoya
Case Manager/Trainer
FSS/ Section 8 Programs
Brian.Minatoya@honolulu.gov



FSS Participants Become SUBSIDY FREE HOMEOWNERS



CONGRATULATIONS to three of our FSS/HOP families that became **SUBSIDY FREE HOMEOWNERS** this year with the Self Help Housing Program! Families participating in Self Help are builders as well as owners. They commit to contributing 32 hours per week of labor participating in the framing, roofing, window installation, siding, cabinets, countertops, baseboard, laying floor tiles and painting; everything from foundation to roof. A family's sweat equity saves them up to 50% of the cost. House prices started at mid \$200,000.



Section 8 homeowners are real people with real jobs employed as teachers, caregivers, clerks and maintenance workers etc., earning an average annual income of \$38,000. We're extremely excited for them and hope they remind you, like they do us, that **HOMEOWNERSHIP IS POSSIBLE**.

Here's what they had to share about their experience:



- *Homeownership gave me the freedom to paint my own walls and install my own walkway. I moved my parents in when their rent went up. No need to check with the landlord or my Examiner.*
- *The future is bright, there's something to leave behind for my children.*
- *Couldn't have done it without having Vickie on hand to guide us through. There's so much to know, it's overwhelming and having someone to talk it through with made the whole thing easier.*
- *Just do it! I never thought I would be able to buy a house in Hawaii. The hard work pays off, it beats renting!*
- *I know every board, nail and wire in this house. If it's broken, I can fix it. It's an awesome feeling!*
- *Homeownership changes the conversation I have with my kids.*
- *I really feel like we built a community. My neighbors are also my friends.*
- *FSS made me think of all the things I pushed aside like budgeting, saving, knowing how to balance a budget.*
- *Nothing comes for free. You have to really want it.*
- *Every time we talked it was budget, budget, budget...I felt like you were stalking me...and I can't thank you enough now for it, I love my home.*



Homeownership classes are a great place to start!



Hawaii Homeownership Center
www.hihomeownership.org
PH: (808) 523-9500

Hawaiian Community Assets
www.hawaiiancommunity.net
PH: (808) 587-7886

Nanakuli Housing Corporation
www.baseyard.com
PH: (808) 842-0770

FREE Tax Preparation through VITA

Thanks to certified volunteers working across the State of Hawaii, you can have your federal and state tax returns prepared for **FREE**. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites generally become available at the end of January and run through April. Sites accept clients by appointment only.

Please check their website - www.hawaiiataxhelp.org for more information, including tax site locations.

A Case Manager's Perspective...Why our homeowners have been successful...

Since 2005, the FSS/HOP Program has assisted thirty-two (32) Section 8 participants in becoming successful homeowners. Today twenty-three (23) of them no longer receive a subsidy from the Section 8 program. There haven't been any foreclosures. Considering that Hawaii has home prices among the highest in the nation this is a remarkable statistic!

What is it about these families that helped them transition from renters to successful homeowners? There are a lot of different factors (timing being a big one) but here are some things all our successful homeowners had in common:

- ***They were willing to ask for help.*** Homeownership has many pieces and several guides may be needed to help negotiate all the possible situations. A homeownership counselor, realtor, lender, FSS case manager and Section 8 examiner are all key people in this process.
- ***They were goal oriented.*** Everything was about planning and every decision weighed against the end goal of owning their own home and being able to maintain it on their own.
- ***They understood that employment, stable and regular income is an advantage.*** Lenders like regular and stable earned income in a borrower because it establishes a pattern of behavior and makes the income more dependable. If you've ever borrowed money from a bank, you know they won't loan you more than you can reasonably pay back. Borrowing for a mortgage isn't any different.
- ***They were budget oriented.*** They managed their debt, maintained a good credit score and learned how to save. If expenses exceeded their income, they created a plan to increase their income.
 - Along the way there will be rent increases. Families consulted with their Examiners so they could save money for the expected increase. Rent increases paid regularly and on time showed a lender families were able to pay more on a monthly basis. This allowed some lenders to increase their loan amounts.
 - Families were prepared for the fees that are incurred as part of the process (\$30 credit report, \$250 home inspection, \$900 for one year homeowner's insurance premium, \$1000 earnest money). Fees are costly but so is the overall purchase.
 - The HOP program requires participants to have 3% of the purchase price for a down payment and at least 1% of that has to come from participant's own resources. Lenders require down payment to secure the investment.
 - Homeownership expenses continue after the purchase. You're now the landlord and responsible for maintenance. If it's broken, you'll have to fix it or pay someone else to do it.
- ***They were able to adjust their expectations.*** Families worked with their homeownership counselor, realtor and lender to understand what was available in their price range and researched and compared their options before eliminating any.



Upcoming Events

JAN 2017

11 & 18 MONEY \$MARTS
Dillingham Plaza
9 am - 1:30 pm
(must attend both sessions)

21 & 28 MONEY \$MARTS
Kapolei Hale
9 am - 1:30 pm
(must attend both sessions)

FEB 2017

1 JOB FAIR
Neal Blaisdell Center
10 am - 3pm

For additional Info:
Call (808) 768-7090

POKAI BAY SELF-HELP HOUSING PROJECT

WANT TO OWN A HOUSE YOU CAN AFFORD?

THE SELF-HELP HOUSING CORPORATION IS SEEKING FAMILIES FOR THE
POKAI BAY SELF-HELP PROJECT

LEARN ALL THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO BUILD
YOUR HOME IN A TEAM PROJECT.

NO DOWN PAYMENT REQUIRED!

*BUILD ONE & TWO STORY, 3 & 4 BEDROOM HOUSES FOR
\$295,000 FEE SIMPLE!*



SHHCH ASSIST BUYERS TO OBTAIN THE FINANCING AND TEACH
YOU ALL THE SKILLS TO BECOME A HOMEOWNER
CALL 842-7111 FOR MORE INFORMATION

SELF-HELP HOUSING CORPORATION OF HAWAII
1427 DILLINGHAM BLVD., STE. 305 HONOLULU, HI 96817

SHHCH is an equal housing opportunity provider. Applicant must meet all HHFDC eligibility & household income requirements & are subject to Buyback and SAE Programs.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE – APPLY ONLINE

HAWAII COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Visit our website for details on how to apply: HawaiiCommunityFoundation.org
For assistance, contact HCF's Scholarship Department:
scholarships@hcf-hawaii.org or call toll free: 1-888-731-3863

DEADLINE TO APPLY: TUESDAY JAN 31, 2017 4PM HST



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Brian Minatoya is the newest member to join our Section 8 FSS staff this year. A former case manager with US Vets, he worked to connect veterans to services and resources they needed. While his heart will always be with the veterans, he's excited to continue his journey at FSS and Section 8.