

PHFA Recognizes State's Housing Counselors for Helping Consumers

11-14-18

Counselors provide people with knowledge to become successful homeowners and renters

HARRISBURG – PHFA recognized the work of the state's private sector housing counselors yesterday during an event at the Harrisburg Hilton. These counselors help PHFA achieve its housing mission by assisting state residents with questions about homeownership, home foreclosure, budgeting and their personal credit score so they can make better informed housing decisions. Most recently, some counseling agencies have also started providing money management education, as well.

"When families have stable housing, it gives them the chance to be successful in other areas of their life," said PHFA Executive Director and CEO Brian A. Hudson Sr. "By educating consumers to make smarter housing decisions, the counselors in our statewide network create successful homeowners and renters. Today's event gave us a chance to say thank you to these counselors for the work they do that too often goes unheralded."

Housing counselors from across the state attended the event, representing 72 counseling agencies. The audience of counselors was thanked in brief remarks by Hudson and Robin Wiessmann, secretary of the state Department of Banking and Securities.

The event began with the presentation of the Award of Excellence to John Taylor, president and founder of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition. Taylor's 40-year career has had a singular focus on community development with an emphasis on creating affordable housing and vibrant neighborhoods for lower-income families and those living in poverty. He is best known for starting and growing the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

Having himself grown up in public housing, Taylor has fought for greater investment in America's poorer communities because, as he explains, "insuring the success of the least privileged among us comes down to developing sustainable, healthy neighborhoods." He has shown a remarkable ability to leverage the Community Reinvestment Act to gain financial support from the private sector for making targeted investments in low- and moderate-income communities across the country. During the past three years alone, he has gained commitments totaling more than \$100 billion from banks for funding community revitalization efforts. He has also spearheaded the purchase of two buildings in Washington, DC, to provide the NCRC a base from which it can continue to thrive and produce positive change.

In addition to the award for Taylor, awards were presented to these individuals and counseling agencies exhibiting exemplary service to Pennsylvania residents:

Best Housing Counseling Specialist Award

- **Robert Ewing**, American Credit Counseling Institute, Norristown
- **Lorrie Graham**, Clarifi, Inc., Philadelphia
- **Sue Rosser**, Advantage Credit Counseling Service, Pittsburgh
- **Yvonne Zeiset**, Tabor Community Services, Inc., Lancaster
- **Kevin Campanaro**, Housing Opportunities of Beaver County, Inc., Beaver
- **Anita Bushee**, Advantage Credit Counseling Service, Pittsburgh

Best Agency Award

- **Bucks County Housing Group, Inc.**, Warminster
- **West Oak Lane Community Development Corporation**, Philadelphia
- **Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley, Inc.**, Bethlehem
- **Community Progress Council, Inc.**, York

Community Partnership Award

- **Diversified Community Services**, Philadelphia

Financial Education and Coaching Award

- **Tabor Community Services, Inc.**, Lancaster

Humanitarian Award

- **Maria Iannarelli**, Esperanza, Philadelphia

About PHFA

The Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency works to provide affordable homeownership and rental housing options for older adults, low- and moderate-income families, and people with special housing needs. Through its carefully managed mortgage programs and investments in multifamily housing developments, PHFA also promotes economic development across the state. Since its creation by the legislature in 1972, it has generated more than \$14 billion of funding for more than 174,150 single-family home mortgage loans, helped fund the construction of 134,507 rental units, and saved the homes of nearly 49,500 families from foreclosure. PHFA programs and operations are funded primarily by the sale of securities and from fees paid by program users, not by public tax dollars. The agency is governed by a 14-member board.

Media contact:

Scott Elliott

717-649-6522 (cell)