



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

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Blagojevich Administration celebrates the first resident to use homeownership initiatives to buy a home

Former nursing home resident in Astoria now has “A New Home; A New Life”

ASTORIA, IL – On behalf of Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, representatives from the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) today joined State Senator John Sullivan (D-47th District), Mayor Barry Beck, and Advocates for Access Executive Director Melody Reynolds to celebrate former nursing home resident Raymond Parks’ move to his new home in Astoria. At an open house ceremony, “A New Home; A New Life,” Parks was recognized as the first resident in Astoria to receive \$9,350 in down payment assistance through the Governor’s HOME American Dream Downpayment Initiative (ADDI) to purchase his home. Parks, who became a quadriplegic after a car accident, also utilized a \$5,000 grant from the State Affordable Housing Trust Fund to make his dream of affordable homeownership a reality.

“The State Affordable Housing Trust Fund and the HOME American Dream Downpayment Initiative provide added financial benefit toward helping first-time homeowners and their families take that much needed step to purchase a home,” said Governor Blagojevich.

“After my accident, losing my mother and being placed in a rehabilitation center, I never thought I would enjoy life. Now, owning a home gives me hope for the future. Everyday presents a challenge...one which I look forward to overcoming and accomplishing with vigor,” said Parks, who recently moved from a nursing home.

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund has been a critical resource to help finance the creation and preservation of safe, decent and affordable housing for low-income families and individuals. Non-profit organizations use the flexible Affordable Housing Trust Fund to assist income-eligible families in a variety of ways-- including home modifications and rehabilitation, down payment and closing cost assistance for home purchase.

The Governor’s HOME American Dream Downpayment Initiative was created in 2003 as an incentive to help low-income, first-time homebuyers and their families own safe, affordable homes and achieve the social and financial benefits of homeownership.

Advocates for Access have targeted the ADDI resources to assist persons with special needs in Peoria, Fulton, Tazewell and Woodford counties. The initiative offers a five-year forgivable loan of up to \$10,000 to low-income first-time homebuyers with disabilities and their families who purchase a home in these counties. Applicants must be a first-time homebuyer or have not owned a home within the past 3 years. They are required to contribute at least \$500 of their own money towards the purchase and earn less than 80% of the area median income for their county. For a family of four living in Fulton County, the maximum income is \$41,750, and for an individual, the maximum income is \$29,250. Homebuyers are also required to enroll in a six-week homebuyer educational class and receive counseling on the loan application process.

“Under Governor Rod R. Blagojevich’s leadership, the Illinois Housing Development Authority is committed to providing safe, affordable housing options for people with disabilities. The \$14,350 investment we are making through the HOME American Dream Downpayment Initiative and the State Affordable Housing Trust Fund is helping Raymond achieve his dream of affordable homeownership and greater independence,” said IHDA Executive Director DeShana L. Forney. “I want to thank Advocates for Access for their continued dedication to the Governor’s plan to increase affordable housing for low-income individuals with disabilities.”

Recently, the Illinois Housing Development Authority allocated \$200,000 to Advocates for Access to help 10 low-income families and individuals with special needs buy their first homes in their communities.

“Advocates for Access is proud to help those with disabilities live independently in the community and strive for decent and affordable way of living,” said Advocates for Access Executive Director Melody Reynolds, whose non-profit organization has helped people with disabilities and their families achieve greater levels of independence through home ownership.

Parks is also part of the Department of Human Services (DHS) initiative called the Community Reintegration Program which is funded by DHS and IHDA. The program helps people transition from nursing homes into the community. The funding for Parks is provided to Advocates for Access allowing for the purchase of furniture, household items, groceries and some assistive technology for his new home.

“The Community Reintegration Program not only enables our customers to enjoy the freedoms of independent living, it also saves the state millions of dollars in nursing home costs,” said Robert Kilbury, director of the Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services. “More than 1,100 people have transitioned from nursing homes into the community through this program.”

Illinois’ efforts to increase affordable housing options for its residents is guided by the Governor’s annual Comprehensive Housing Plans, which provide a road map for how to leverage housing dollars. The 2008 Housing Plan: *Prime Solutions for Affordable Housing* identifies \$709 million in spending earmarked for affordable housing at six different state agencies that will help approximately 7,932 Illinois residents.

For more information about the Governor’s HOME American Dream Downpayment Initiative, contact the Illinois Housing Development Authority at 312-836-5200 or visit www.ihda.org. To learn more about Advocates for Access, call Michelle Sanders at 309-682-3500 (voice), (309) 682-3567 (Direct TTY), 877-501-9808 (Toll Free) or visit www.advocatesforaccess.com.

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