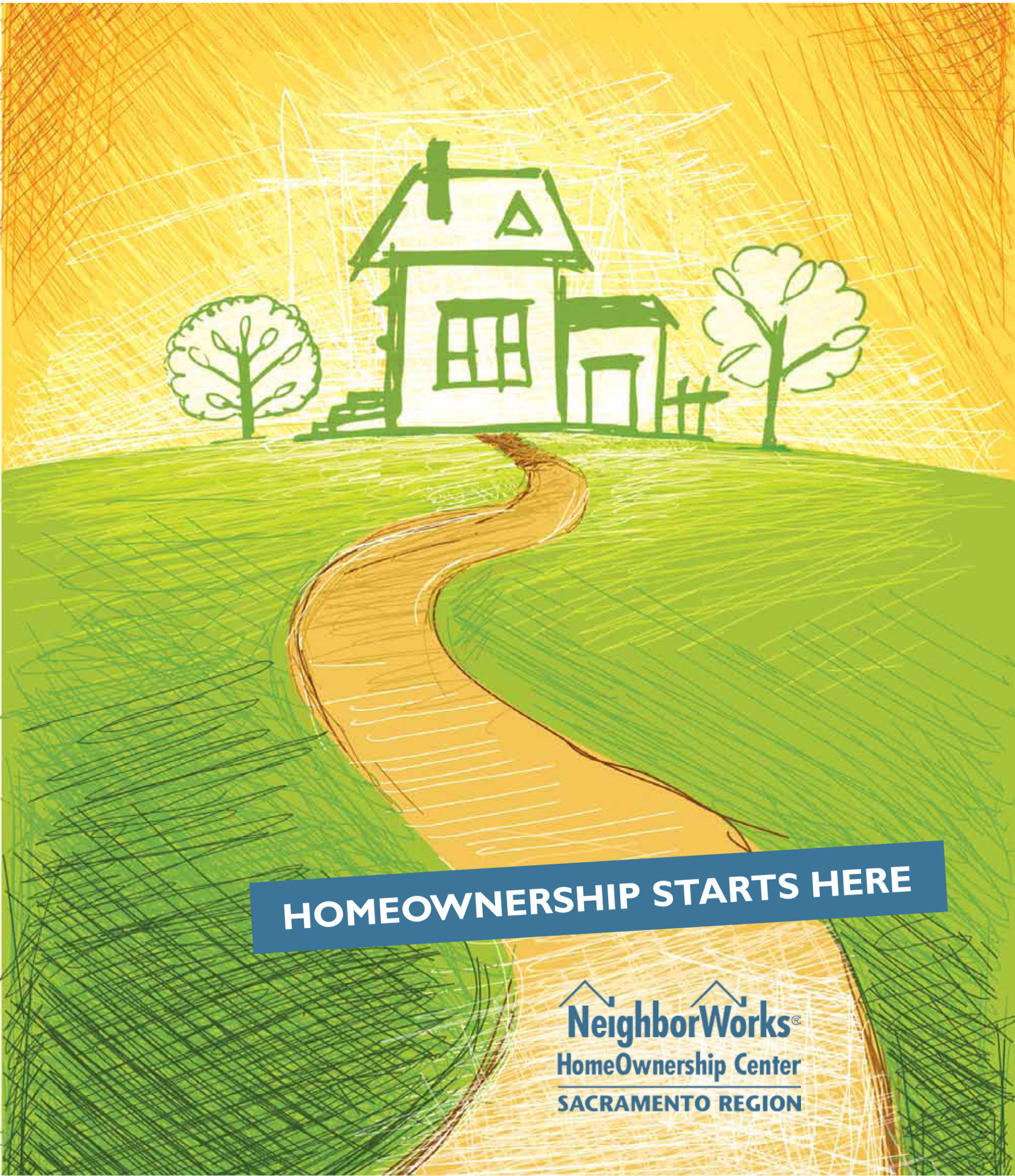




HOMEOWNERSHIP STARTS HERE

NeighborWorks[®]
HomeOwnership Center
SACRAMENTO REGION

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT TO SACRAMENTO NEWS & REVIEW

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES FOR 25 YEARS

by Jeff Chinn

Founded by a small group of residents who wanted to improve their distressed neighborhood, Sacramento Neighborhood Housing Services was created in 1987. Now called NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center Sacramento Region, the organization has changed and

grown, but the heart of its mission remains the same.

Initially, Neighborhood Housing Services served just four neighborhoods in Sacramento. Today, NeighborWorks serves an 11-county region from three offices, and its program offerings include a full range of services to assist potential and current homeowners.

The underlying goal of the activities NeighborWorks holds is to support the long-term financial success of local homeowners. In turn, this creates a stronger

community that benefits everybody, regardless of their income level.

Many nonprofit organizations and local government agencies that helped homeowners have shrunk during the recent economic downturn. However, the gap left by the disappearance of their services has been filled by NeighborWorks. In the last 18 months NeighborWorks has grown dramatically to meet the needs of the community, adapting with the market changes and to meet issues faced by community members.

Aside from more than doubling its staff in the past two years, NeighborWorks has grown in other ways. In 2010, NeighborWorks accomplished its longstanding goal of opening a branch office in Stockton. And in 2011,

NeighborWorks acquired the single-family housing programs and staff from Mercy Housing California, which were slated for elimination. Preserving these programs saved jobs, as well as saving the critical homeownership services offered to many rural communities.

Also in 2011, NeighborWorks opened a Mortgage Help Center in partnership with Fannie Mae to provide direct assistance to borrowers seeking alternatives to foreclosure. Before 2006, barely anybody called in asking for help with avoiding foreclosure and such assistance wasn't in demand. Just a few short years later in 2008, NeighborWorks provided foreclosure counseling to 1,123 households and, today, serves more than 4,000 concerned borrowers per year with free counseling.

By the numbers

2,400 new homeowners created since NeighborWorks launched its home purchase programs in 1996

65 abandoned, blighted homes renovated and sold to new homeowners since 2010

\$7.5 million invested into the renovation of blighted properties in the past 3 years

\$19.7 million provided to area homebuyers in purchase assistance loans since 1996

3 NeighborWorks staff in 1987

41 NeighborWorks staff in 2012

NeighborWorks has seen an increased interest in home purchase as the economy rebounds and home affordability is better than ever. NeighborWorks is continuing to expand its home purchase services to help clients take advantage of this unprecedented opportunity to buy.

And while changing economic times may lead clients to seek issue-specific assistance, NeighborWorks still stays true to its roots as a neighborhood organization looking to elevate its community through numerous services for local residents. In addition to its popular Oak Park Famers Market, Crop Swap and Paint the Town events, Neighborworks also provides leadership training and supports resident-led improvement strategies. By combining individual and community services, NeighborWorks plans to continue building healthy communities for at least another 25 years.



Volunteers prepare a house for repainting, while others redo landscaping at NeighborWorks' annual Paint the Town event.



Adelynn Garcia stands with her daughter on the porch of the home she acquired through the homeownership program at NeighborWorks.

DREAM MADE REAL

by Barry
Wisdom

Even before the exploding home prices of the early 2000s woke many from their respective American Dreams, many Sacramentans found home-buying a sometimes frustrating and often-mysterious process.

Since 1987, the Sacramento-based NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center has been dedicated to clarifying and streamlining that process, and creating “opportunities for successful homeownership.”

From buying and renovating foreclosures to developing new mortgage sources, the nonprofit offers a wealth of services under a single roof, where knowledgeable and empathetic staff members help guide buyers of all economic levels along “the path to homeownership.”

“We’re keeping the American Dream alive,” said NeighborWorks Vice President for Realty Services Mike Himes. “The real excitement of what we do is helping those who never thought homeownership was a possibility.”

“There’s nothing more satisfying than handing keys to a first-time homebuyer and seeing that broad smile on their face.”

- LINDA BENNETT, NEIGHBORWORKS REALTOR

According to NeighborWorks Real Estate Projects and Business Development Director Emilee Ford, the nonprofit has provided almost 22,000 River City dream-chasers step-by-step pathways to picket fences.

“Our agents will work with clients in that process — they don’t have to buy from us,” said Ford, who added that while other local nonprofit agencies tend to focus on rentals, the HUD-certified NeighborWorks “is Sacramento’s only one-stop homeownership center.”

“Our mission is to create a successful homeowner, and we measure our success in terms of creating a homebuyer who’ll be able to stay in their home for a long time.”

Ford said that with falling interest rates and purchase prices, NeighborWorks is seeing an upward trend in homebuying.

“There is a silver lining in this economic crisis,” Ford said. “Prices are back in line to what they should have been in relation to what people in this area are earning. The costs involved with buying are now often lower than renting.

“The cost of a 30-year mortgage is the lowest it’s been in decades and that makes such a difference. Though home

prices are higher than they were 20 years ago, payments are lower today because interest rates are lower.”

NeighborWorks client Mister Lee is among those who have recently realized their dream.

While some parents might be preoccupied with arguments over music volume, Lee and his children — 11-year-old Tycory, 10-year-old Tyvonna and 7-year-old Lacoria — are currently enjoying a running debate of a more festive variety: Where exactly is the Christmas tree going to go?

It’s just one of many happy challenges now facing single-dad Lee and his family since April, when they moved into their remodeled Oak Park property.

“I never thought it was possible to own my own home,” said the 34-year-old Lee, a landscaper who became disabled in the wake of a belated cocci meningitis diagnosis.

Discouraged at his first attempt to buy a home two years earlier (“The market was crazy, and I didn’t have the cash.”), Lee was happily surprised on his initial visit to NeighborWorks in October 2011. Lee purchased a home that NeighborWorks had completely renovated after he attended a homeownership class.

“I was elated at how easy they made it,” Lee said. “Everyone’s genuine, everyone cares, and everyone made sure I obtained my goal.”

NeighborWorks’ realtor Linda Bennett, a Sacramento Association of Realtors Life Member, is full of praise for Lee as well.

“He had been saving before he came to us,” said Bennett, a three-year NeighborWorks veteran and one of two real estate agents on staff.

“He did everything right — asked all the right questions.”

As stress-free as Bennett and her fellow NeighborWorks employees made the process, Lee admitted to getting discouraged as multiple offers were rejected on third-party homes.

“But Linda was so reassuring. She said, ‘Don’t give up, kiddo. It will work out — you’ll have a home.’”



Mister Lee and his family smile proudly after receiving the keys to their new home that was renovated by NeighborWorks.

Himes said Lee began the process like many NeighborWorks clients — with a 45-minute overview of “who we are, what is expected of a homebuyer, and what they need to contribute for a mortgage.”

“And when the orientation is complete, we have them sit down with a home purchase planner and review their credit, income and savings, try to assess what their goals are, and set an action plan,” Himes said.

“I like the sense of responsibility that comes with owning a home. My kids love the yard, having their own rooms, their own space.”

- MISTER LEE, FIRST-TIME HOMEOWNER

“I like the sense of responsibility that comes with owning a home,” Lee said, noting that his children fueled his passion to buy. “My kids love the yard, having their own rooms, their own space.”

“I think homeownership is critically important in light of all that Americans have been through,” said Bennett. “There are advantages to being a homeowner — advantages that are intrinsic, and not just financial. There’s nothing more satisfying than handing keys to a first-time homebuyer and seeing that broad smile on their face.”

THE PATH TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

by Corrie Pelc

Buying a home — especially a first home — can be both the scariest and most exciting purchase a person makes in a lifetime. This can make the path to homeownership a rocky road full of questions and uncertainties as homebuyers try to make sense of it all.

That's where NeighborWorks HomeOwnership Center Sacramento Region comes in, according to Real Estate Projects and Business Development Director Emilee Ford.

"The idea is to help build stronger, more vibrant communities through homeownership and that includes helping people become homeowners, helping people remain homeowners, and then helping the community to build those homes up through our community leadership and community impact programs," she explained.

It's important for potential homebuyers to arm themselves with the education they need, said CEO Pam Canada. "The best way to do that is to come in to NeighborWorks, get the information you need, (and) inform yourself about the homebuying process. There's a lot of different pieces around buying a home and people need to navigate those pieces with some knowledge."

The first step on the path toward homeownership may be the most difficult one, but Ford urged those thinking of purchasing a home to not be afraid and just take the first step.

"There's no cost, there's no harm to take that first step," she said. "It can be a really intimidating process, but that's why we break it down as a path. It's just one step at a time."

Start on a Path

On the path to homeownership through NeighborWorks, the first step is to attend a free 40-minute orientation session, called "Homeownership Starts Here," held every Wednesday at 4pm at the Sacramento office.

After the session, each participant has the opportunity to sit down with a NeighborWorks

Home Purchase Planner to discuss their individual situation. Participants are shown their credit report and FICO score, and the Planner helps them determine if they qualify for a loan and the price of the home they can afford. For homebuyers with credit obstacles, NeighborWorks helps them create a plan to improve their financial profile with ongoing support to help them implement that plan.

Find the Right Home

Once a homebuyer can qualify for a loan, the fun part starts — looking for a home to purchase.

NeighborWorks offers two services when it comes to helping potential homebuyers find the right home for them. In the Property Development program, NeighborWorks buys foreclosed and abandoned homes, fixes them up, and sells them to homeowners.

NeighborWorks won't sell homes to investors, which helps customers find the home that is right for them in this competitive market.

Through NeighborWorks' Realty Services, potential homebuyers can work with licensed realtors. "Not only will (the staff realtors) look out for them and explain the whole process, but they're also giving them access to whatever inventory is on the market in any neighborhood," Ford said. "So that could be a home that I've been working on, it could be a home that someone is selling, (or) it could be a home that's being sold by the bank. That way we don't have to limit our customers' choices with just whatever we have in inventory."

Lock in the Loan

While shopping for the right home can be the most fun, shopping for the right loan is often the

most intimidating step on the path to homeownership. NeighborWorks offers guidance at this stage as well, helping the potential homebuyer understand the loan approval process and connecting them to reputable first mortgage lenders. The NeighborWorks lending team also offers mortgage assistance and helps homebuyers survey the field for other assistance programs that are available and right for them. Both the Sacramento and Stockton offices offer a one-day workshop called "Preparing for HomeOwnership" which follows specific curriculum certified by HUD. The workshop, which is often required by lenders and loan programs, provides the buyer with in-depth knowledge about the home purchase process and some of the key aspects of owning and maintaining a home.

“I followed the path...” by Mike Blount

Q&A with a homeowner

It was only a few years ago that Linda Woods, 37, filed for bankruptcy after losing her job and became financially overwhelmed. To her, the dream of homeownership was still a very distant, if not an impossible, one. But through the NeighborWorks Homeownership Center in Sacramento, Woods was able to fully realize that dream in May 2011 thanks to the program's expert guidance that led her through the sometimes-rigorous process of buying a home.



told me, “No, we’re sorry. You don’t meet the qualifications.” It was very frustrating because I had been with them for so long. They didn’t give me any sort of avenues or alternatives to come back. They just said, “No.”

Q. What were some of those obstacles you had to overcome and how did that make you feel?

A. Declaring bankruptcy in 2008 was a huge hindrance to me buying a home. I was being judged solely for my credit, not for the type of person that I am or how long I’ve had a job or anything like that. Also, the fact that I was a single mom did play a role because I didn’t have a dual income. It was very frustrating because I was trying but not getting anywhere.

Q. Where did you go from there?

A. I went through several different programs. I actually utilized assistance from the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency. I was on Section 8 at that point in my life, and I decided to willingly give that up. But then it became challenging nonetheless to try to find something to meet my needs and also work with my financial situation. I found out about NeighborWorks through SHRA.

Q. How quickly did things start to happen after you contacted them?

A. The thing that I really liked about them is even though I declared bankruptcy in the past, they didn’t judge me for it. They gave me a personal counselor to work with, and they helped me figure out what goals I needed to reach in order to make home ownership a reality. I stuck with it.

Q. And how do you feel now that you finally reached those goals?

A. I feel ecstatic. I love coming to my home. I feel like it’s surreal at times like, “I finally did this.” The family was excited too. No more having to share rooms. It’s been really great.

Q. Four years ago, you were a single mother of three living in an apartment. What was life like for you and your family?

A. My life prior to purchasing this house was a little complex. We were in a crowded space. We were living in a two-bedroom duplex with my children and my grandchildren, and I knew that I needed more. I wanted more, and I took the steps to try to achieve that.

“I love coming to my home. I feel like it’s surreal at times like, ‘I finally did this.’”

Q. What steps did you take to make that happen?

A. Several years ago, I went to a local bank and I asked them for assistance because I had an account with them for several years. They

After You Buy

NeighborWorks is still there to offer assistance after the purchase is complete. New homebuyers are invited to come back right after they close on the home so a Planner can help them review all the paperwork they signed and ensure they understand everything. “There are a lot of things that happen right away when you close on a home,” Ford said. “We do invite people to come in and go over again with them specifically what’s going to happen next.”

And if a new homeowner finds themselves stumbling on that homeownership path, NeighborWorks is there to assist as well. Whether it’s a few months or several years after they moved in, owners can return to NeighborWorks to ask questions and help stay on track. For owners who are struggling to make their mortgage payments, NeighborWorks offers free foreclosure counseling to help them understand the options to stay in their home.



Foreclosure: The Dos and Don'ts

Since the start of the foreclosure crisis, NeighborWorks Sacramento has provided free foreclosure mitigation counseling to thousands of distressed homeowners. If you are concerned about defaulting on your mortgage or losing your home, consider these Dos and Don'ts:

DO take action as soon as you may be at risk of defaulting on your loan. Contact your lender to discuss options or schedule an appointment with NeighborWorks so the staff can help explain your rights and your options.

DON'T ignore the problem. The sooner you take action, the more options you may have to avoid foreclosure.

DO read all your mail from your lender as it may contain important information about the status of your loan, the actions your lender is taking or assistance options you may have.

DON'T pay a foreclosure prevention company that charges for services. These companies can't guarantee you results and they provide the same service that you and NeighborWorks can do for free.

DO educate yourself about common foreclosure scams by visiting www.loanscamalert.org.

DON'T dig yourself into a deeper hole by cashing out your savings, retirement, running up credit cards or borrowing from friends or family to make payments. Look for a long-term, sustainable resolution by talking to your lender and to NeighborWorks.

OAK PARK FARMERS MARKET

by Kendall Fields

The Oak Park Farmers Market is bringing new life and fresh food to the area. Since it started in May 2010, the farmers market has been key in increasing accessibility to fresh, local produce for residents. NeighborWorks founded the market after brainstorming with area residents in hopes of not only promoting food access, but also fostering a vibrant community. NeighborWorks continues to operate and fund the market, creating a family-friendly event that is becoming a tradition.

"We educate people every weekend to eat healthier, be healthier and live healthier," said Market Manager Joany

Titherington. Titherington, who was one of the original residents pushing for the creation of the market, said she saw the need for the market and this increased access to fresh, local food when she went to grocery stores in her community and was disappointed by poor food quality and the high amount of processed food being sold.

The farmers market works with Rabobank, a farm-friendly lending institution, to double EBT customers' token purchases. The acceptance of EBT and doubling program is crucial in providing a means for low-income families to access fresh, local food.

In addition to working as a preventative measure to reduce obesity and diabetes in the area with this increased healthy food access, Titherington said the farmers market supports local farmers and has grown over the past three years from seven vendors to 20, providing an economic microcosm of



success. In addition to fresh fruits and vegetables, customers also have access to locally-made, organic olive oils, cheeses and breads. "What we are really doing here is leveling the playing field when it comes to food access."

And this farmers market provides so much more than food. With weekly musical performances, face painting for kids and occasional free massages for attendees, the farmers market also promotes a vibrant community in a traditionally undeserved area. Titherington has lived in Oak Park for 17 years and has noticed tremendous changes in her community, which she credited in part to the weekly market. This revitalization of the community has not only empowered residents and marketgoers to eat healthier and fresher foods, but also restored a sense of pride in a neighborhood rich with cultural diversity and deep-rooted history.

The Oak Park Farmers Market is underway and runs until October 27 EVERY SATURDAY FROM 9AM - 1PM at McClatchy Park on 35th Street and Fifth Avenue.

PAINT THE TOWN

by Kendall Fields

When Paint the Town started 23 years ago, volunteers literally painted the town, revamping the homes of low-income seniors and disabled persons all over Sacramento. Now, NeighborWorks Community Impact Manager Sharon Eghigian said the annual Paint the Town focuses on one block each year in order to have a bigger impact in one area. Volunteers not only paint houses but also build fences, landscape yards and make small repairs.

"A few hours of hard work can mean a lot for people in that neighborhood," Eghigian said. "This event not only improves the appearance of a neighborhood but also builds community through having volunteers work together."

"Paint the Town is an opportunity for volunteers and corporations to give back in a different kind of way," Eghigian said.

In 2011, NeighborWorks Sacramento won \$25,000 from the Home Depot "Aprons in Action" campaign, which provided a big boost to Paint the Town.

NeighborWorks relies on community partners as volunteers for this event, with past partners including Holt of California, Bank of America and US Bank.

Paint the Town will take place on **SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, FROM 8 AM TO 3 PM.**

For more information contact Sharon Eghigian at 916-452-5356 ext. 217 or email sharon@nwsac.org.

NOW IS THE TIME

Top 3 reasons why it's a great time to buy a home



1. YOU CAN OWN FOR LESS THAN YOU PAY FOR RENT

With today's combination of low home prices and low interest rates, the monthly cost of owning a home may actually be less than renting. In fact, the cost of owning the typical NeighborWorks home is \$370 less per month than the cost of renting that same house.

2. INTEREST RATES ARE THE LOWEST THEY HAVE EVER BEEN

Low interest rates mean lower payments. In fact, with interest rates this low, the monthly payment on the typical Sacramento home is the lowest it's been since 1997 — the monthly payment on a \$150,000 loan is \$270 less today than it would have been just five years ago.

3. HOMEOWNERSHIP IS AN INVESTMENT IN YOUR FUTURE

As a homeowner, your monthly costs are locked in place, and part of each payment goes to build your own equity. Even better, there's no landlord to raise your rent, say you can't have a dog, or keep you from painting your bedroom any color you want!



VACANT HOMES REVAMPED

by Jeff Chinn

The recent foreclosure crisis has left many abandoned homes in our neighborhoods, but NeighborWorks isn't letting them turn in to run-down hovels. NeighborWorks has stepped up its property development program and has been combining its own funds with federal resources to acquire and renovate bank-owned and vacant houses.

Since 2010, NeighborWorks has successfully renovated 65 homes throughout the region, with the lion's share located in Sacramento. NeighborWorks plans on renovating at least 40 more homes in the next year and a half in Sacramento, West Sacramento and Stockton.

One of the partners helping NeighborWorks with this commitment is Wells Fargo, which provided investment capital of \$750,000 to help fund the project. NeighborWorks has been able to leverage that \$750,000 into \$6.2 million of project spending in Sacramento County alone. And they will continue to recycle that initial investment into even more homes, supporting local jobs and giving the economy a boost.

Homeownership is key to the commitment of NeighborWorks on this project. The homes they renovate are not being made into rental properties or sold to investors. Renovations

are intended to give individuals and families the chance to own their own home and live in a community where they feel invested.

One such homeowner is Rebecca Hahn, who purchased a renovated home from NeighborWorks in February 2012. Hahn said her monthly payment is \$51 less than her previous rent, but she is enjoying more than just financial perks of being a homeowner, like gardening and having her own space. "[I'm] able to plant what I want to plant!" she said. "And it's ours!"



TAKE THE FIRST STEP

GET STARTED

IF YOU WANT TO BUY A HOME:

- Take the first step by attending our free weekly HomeOwnership Starts Here orientation, and meet with a home purchase planner individually.
- Or call our office and schedule an individual appointment to learn how NeighborWorks can help you achieve homeownership.

IF YOU ALREADY OWN YOUR HOME:

- If you are concerned about possible foreclosure, visit our website and click on "Keep Your Home." NeighborWorks offers foreclosure mitigation counseling appointments to help you understand your options and your rights.
- Could you benefit from a post-purchase checkup? Even if you aren't worried about foreclosure, NeighborWorks can help answer other questions about homeownership to help keep you on track!



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www.nwsac.org • "like us" on Facebook!

GET INVOLVED

NeighborWorks Sacramento strives to build healthy, stable neighborhoods throughout the Sacramento region. You can join that effort in a variety of ways.

DONATE

Donate to our 25th anniversary campaign and help us raise \$25,000 for 25 years! Donate online, in person or by mail.

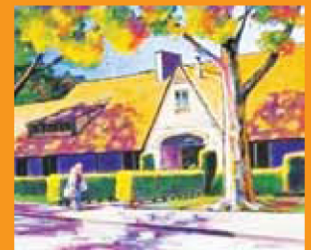
VOLUNTEER

Join us for our annual Paint the Town event or call our office to learn about other ways to volunteer your time and talents.

Art Wine & Food Tasting Classic

August 25

Enjoy offerings from local restaurants, wineries and breweries while supporting our homeownership programs.



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