



DHCD

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

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Letter from the director



Bill Shelton
Director

Welcome to the first edition of the new Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Connection newsletter. Thank you for taking the time to look over our new publication, and to learn more about our agency.

Many of you may know DHCD through one of our many programs and projects. With this publication, we aim to provide readers with a broader view of our agency, and the diverse programs and activities that we use to in our mission to create safe, affordable, and prosperous communities in which to live, work, and do business in Virginia.

While DHCD has many different programs and services, they are all unified by the mission of our agency.

DHCD is a partner for better communities. We partner with communities across the Commonwealth to develop their economic potential, improve the quality and affordability of housing, provide for basic building safety, and increase their capacity to address community development and housing needs. Each year, we invest more than \$100 million into housing and community development projects throughout the state – the majority of which are designed to help low-to-moderate income citizens.

Through our varying programs and partnerships, we are able to more effectively collaborate to address the unique needs facing communities across Virginia.

In this issue, you will learn how programs and partnerships of DHCD are striving to create safer homes for our citizens through a

carbon monoxide detector grant program. You will see how DHCD is partnering with other agencies, and with community organizations to help low-income families reach their goal of homeownership. You will see how the agency is celebrating the achievements of downtown revitalization, and much more.

I encourage you to learn more about DHCD's programs and projects by visiting our Web site at: www.dhcd.virginia.gov. There, you can learn more about the agency, and sign-up to receive news by selecting the News Sign Up link on the bottom left of the page.

To all of our partners, we want to thank you for your continued support of our agency. Together, we can make a difference for those who call the Commonwealth home.

Bill Shelton, Director
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development



Housing and Community Development News

Carbon Monoxide Alarm Grant program aims to save lives, increase awareness

Every year, more than 480 people in the United States die from unintentional exposure to carbon monoxide, and more than 15,000 are sent to hospital emergency rooms for treatment.

In 2005 six of those deaths occurred in Virginia, according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Additionally, fire departments throughout the state responded to 635 carbon monoxide exposure-related incidents, according to the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS).

Carbon monoxide, known as the “invisible killer,” is an odorless, colorless gas created when fuels – such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane – burn incompletely. Carbon monoxide is also produced by motor vehicles.



To increase awareness about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, the Carbon Monoxide Alarm Grant Program has been developed to not only educate the public about the dangers, but to provide carbon monoxide alarms to those in at-risk groups.

The program has been developed as a collaboration between the Virginia Department of Housing and

Community Development (DHCD), Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFFP), State Fire Marshal’s Office (SFMO), and the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB).

The Carbon Monoxide Alarm Grant Program will make available a limited number of carbon monoxide alarms to fire departments, nonprofits, and community organizations charged with delivering fire and life safety related education and/or services in Virginia. At-risk groups, identified as unborn babies, infants, children, the elderly, and those with heart or lung problems,) are the targeted recipients of free alarms under this program.

Organizations such as fire departments, nonprofits and other

community organizations charged with delivering fire and life safety related education and/or services in Virginia are encouraged to apply for a portion of the grant. They will be able to apply for as few as 25 alarms up to a maximum of 200 alarms in increments of 25.

Fire departments applying for the grant must participate in the VFIRS program, nonprofits and community organizations applying for the grant will be required to partner with a VFIRS participating fire department.

Grantees will be required to provide free installation of the alarms, along with educational information, to homes of the targeted at-risk population.

Additionally, grantees will be required to develop an installation program plan, outlining how they will administer the grant, with special attention to the following aspects:

- Providing fire safety and carbon monoxide poisoning prevention and detection education to recipients;
- Continuing recordkeeping and reporting;
- Identifying at-risk households to receive alarms; and
- Providing marketing and public relations outreach to the target audience and surrounding community about the program and dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning.

More than \$100,000 has been allocated for the program, and approximately 3,500 alarms are expected to be available.

Grant application materials and information is expected to be available on April 16 on both the DHCD Web site: www.dhcd.virginia.gov, and the VDFP Web site: www.vafire.com. The application period will end on Friday, June 1. Grantees will have one year from the date of receipt of the alarms to complete installations.

Community development program *helps citizens invest in their future*

VIDA

For many low-income workers, the dream of homeownership, of a higher education, or of starting their own business may seem out of reach. But for those who enroll in the Virginia Individual Development Accounts (VIDA) program, that dream may become a reality.

The VIDA program is a special savings account program which provides a 2:1 match for its participants. Matching funds are limited to \$4,000 per participant, and can be used to for a down payment on a home, to start a business, or to save for post-secondary education.

Soon, the program will begin an expanded public relations and marketing campaign to raise awareness about the program and encourage participation. The campaign is set to begin in June – National Homeownership Month – and focus

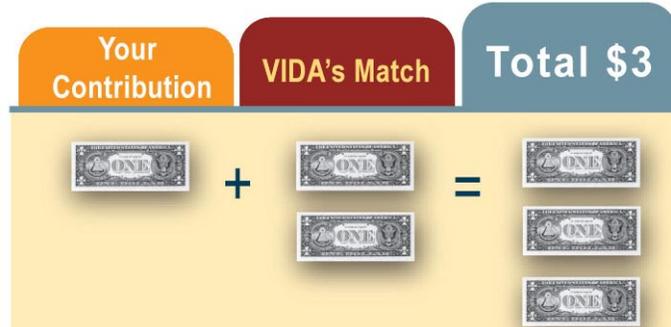
primarily on the homeownership goal. In 2006, the VIDA program was awarded a Federal Assets for Independence Grant, which was part of a collaborative effort between DHCD, VDSS, the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA), the Virginia Community Action Partnership and Virginia Tech.

These grant funds are dedicated solely to the goal of homeownership and allow for more savers to participate in the program's most popular goal.

Currently, the program has 106 savers enrolled.

In 2006 eight individuals graduated from the program, seven of which utilized the homeownership goal to move into their first home.

The VIDA program began in 1999 as a pilot program of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community



Development (DHCD) in partnership with the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). In 2006, the program underwent significant restructuring to improve program coverage and streamline the account management process.

While matching the savings of participants, the VIDA program also provides another important service – education. VIDA participants must participate in counseling and education on credit and budgeting, business and/or career planning, and on owning a home. This important function of the program allows savers to invest in their future goal, and beyond.

The program works through local service providers, called intermediaries, who recruit, support, and train the savers. Each intermediary will receive a VIDA marketing and public relations kit through the campaign to help them reach out to potential savers.

Additionally, radio public service announcements will be produced, in addition to print materials such as fliers, posters, brochures, and more.

If you are interested in receiving materials about the VIDA program to share with your clients, contact: Emily Gupton (804) 371-7066. For more information on the VIDA program, or to find an intermediary in your area, visit: www.dhcd.virginia.gov.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible participants must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or legal alien
- Be employed
- Have a dependent child under the age of 18 living with them, if saving for business or education
- Meet household income requirements:
 - A household of one earning a yearly income of no more than \$20,420
 - A household of two earning a yearly income of no more than \$27,380
 - A household of three earning a yearly income of no more than \$34,340
 - A household of four earning a yearly income of no more than \$41,300
 - For each additional person, add \$6,960 to the maximum yearly income
- Be able to save a minimum of \$25 per month

Housing Highlights

By guest writer Shea Hollifield
Deputy Director, Division of Housing

The past nine months have been a bustle of change and activity for DHCD's Housing Division. In August 2006 Shea Hollifield moved into the Deputy Director of Housing position. She had previously served as DHCD's deputy director for community development. In October 2006 Kathy Robertson was hired as the associate director for Homeless and Special Needs Housing. Violet Peyton came on board in January 2007 as the Homeless and Special Needs Housing program analyst, and Nicole Poulin joined the team in February 2007 as program manager. Two new program administrators will start this spring, joining veteran housing administrator Joe Speidel to round out this unit.

In addition to new staff, the Homeless and Special Needs Housing unit has been making other changes as well. The funding formula for the Commonwealth's shelter support grants has been revised to better target funds to areas of highest needs. Having a full complement of staff will allow for more direct, on-site interaction between Homeless and Special Needs Housing staff and local and regional clients.

For the first time, the Housing Division now includes a housing policy manager. Lyndsi Austin joined the division in January 2007. She has already prepared the draft Annual Action Plan; a requirement for DHCD's federally funded housing and community development programs. Austin will coordinate planning, needs assessment, evaluation and monitoring activities for the division. Later this spring she will be joined in these duties by an evaluation and compliance analyst.

The Housing Division is now starting to consolidate a number of other programs into one unit. Weatherization, lead hazard prevention, emergency home repair, down payment assistance, affordable housing production and special needs housing production will all be included within one unit – Housing Production and Preservation. Associate director Willie Fobbs is heading up this restructured unit.

While programs and people are shifting within the Housing Division, the division looks forward to these changes providing a better position from which to meet Virginia's housing needs more efficiently and effectively.





General Assembly encourages *energy efficiency* through tax legislation

By Paula Eubank

Associate Director, Technical Assistance Service Office

Division of Building and Fire Regulation

On March 13, the General Assembly enacted another motivator for considering energy efficient design and construction for real property in Virginia.

The amendment to the Code of Virginia permits a separate classification of certain energy efficient buildings, excluding the real estate or land on which they exist, in order that they may be taxed at a different rate than that levied on other property.

The amendment, found in Section 58.1-3221.2 of the Code, authorizes the governing body of any county, city, or town the ability, through an adopted ordinance, to tax energy efficient buildings at rate equal to or less than the rate for other general real property.

For the purpose of this amendment, energy efficient buildings are defined as any building that exceeds the energy efficiency standards prescribed in the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) by 30 percent.

The certification of such an energy efficient building shall be determined by any qualified licensed professional engineer or contractor, unrelated to the taxpayer, who must attest to the taxpayer that he/she indeed possesses those necessary qualifications to certify that the building meets or exceeds the requirements.

As a result of this legislative amendment, the localities may now be challenged to define what constitutes a 30 percent increase over existing energy efficiency standards as prescribed in the USBC.

The USBC permits progressive, innovative, and sustainable designs, techniques and materials. Compliance with the energy standards may be achieved through prescriptive-based (acceptable practice) or performance-based (individual component or total system) methods.

The design and construction industries may inquire about a simplified interpretation and application of the

energy standards which identifies a basic prescriptive approach to achieving a 30 percent superior energy efficient building.

The localities may also need to examine the particular requirements for and qualifications of the licensed professional contractors who may certify buildings as meeting the 30 percent greater energy efficiency standards.

While it is the contractor's responsibility to certify his/her qualifications to the taxpayer, the practical responsibility of accepting those certifications and verifying compliance with the energy efficiency standards may fall incumbent upon the localities.

Communities utilizing this option will likely seek confirmation of their financial investment – the tax incentives granted by the localities and the additional construction costs expended by the property owners.



Division of Building and Fire Regulation announces three new additions

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is pleased to announce three recent additions to the staff of the Division of Building and Fire Regulation. Two of the new personnel will be supporting the State Fire Marshal's Office and will be located in the Roanoke Regional Office, and the third will be supporting the Technical Assistance Service Office located in Richmond.

Within the Roanoke Regional Office of the State Fire Marshal's Office, DHCD welcomes Scott Branscome and Kenneth Kent.

Scott Branscome, P.E., regional engineer manager, arrives at DHCD with numerous years of experience in the fields of construction and fire protection. His primary responsibilities include the supervision of the Roanoke Regional Office which provides assistance to local building and fire code officials and private citizens, inspection of facilities and properties for fire and life safety measures, and review of construction documents regarding fire and life safety.

Most recently, Branscome contributed his expertise as a Fire Protection Engineer to the Capital Design and Construction Department at

Virginia Tech. Previously, he gained experience with the Roanoke City Fire Marshal's Office, a division of the Roanoke City Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department. A graduate of Old Dominion University and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Branscome is pursuing Master of Science degree in building construction.

Kenneth Kent, fire protection inspector, joins DHCD after his retirement as shift fire marshal, logistics coordinator with the Arlington County Fire Department. His new duties involve the provision of assistance to local building and fire code officials, as well as being respondent to concerns of private citizens, the inspection of facilities and properties for adherence to fire safety codes and regulations, including fire safety systems in state structures, and the review of construction documents for safety. Kenneth attended advanced technical training as a fire inspector and investigator at the Arlington County Fire Training Academy.

DHCD also welcomes Paula Eubank to the recently created Technical Assistance Service Office (TASO). Eubank, associate director of TASO, brings numerous years of

experience in the related disciplines of architectural design, construction administration, and code enforcement. TASO was created to serve the needs of the public clients and constituencies, as well as to partner with other governmental agencies and provide technical and administrative services relative to the building codes and fire regulations, and their associated programs.

Eubank's primary responsibilities include providing leadership and management of programs and policies relating to code development and regulatory processes, the promotion of uniformity in code enforcement and administration, and the development of training and certification of building officials and technical assistants.

Most recently, Eubank served as construction manager with Henrico County Public Schools, and previously she dedicated her service as a code enforcement official in several Virginia localities. Paula received a Bachelor of Architecture from Virginia Tech.

DHCD and the Division of Building and Fire Regulation welcome Scott, Kenneth, and Paula onto the team, and look forward to working together toward a healthy, safe, and affordably built community.

DHCD Developments



Application Period for 2007 HUD SuperNOFA Programs

On Tuesday, March 13, 2007, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the Notice of Funding Availability (SuperNOFA) for 2007 Discretionary Grant Programs. The notice included program requirements, the amount of funding available, and the application deadline. The deadlines range from May 2, 2007 to July 19, 2007.

For more information about this and other DHCD news, visit: <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov>.

Governor's Housing Conference has a new Web address

This year when you go to register for the 2007 Governor's Housing Conference, you can go directly to the conference Web site. The Governor's Housing Conference Web site can now be found at:

vagovernorshousingconference.com

The new site, which will be fully completed by June, will include news and updates as they happen, conference photographs, the conference schedule, online registration, lodging information, and presentation and handouts from this year's conference will be available in late November.

This year's conference will be held at the Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center in Roanoke, Virginia from November 14 through 16.

Sign up for DHCD news updates!

Interested in receiving updates on the Virginia Main Street program, capacity building, building and fire codes and regulations? You can sign-up to receive several DHCD newsletter publications, and electronic updates about the Governor's Housing Conference online at: www.dhcd.virginia.gov. On the home page, select the News Sign Up link on the bottom left. There, you can sign up for one or more of the following news items:

- Virginia Main Street Monitor newsletter;
- Code Connections;
- Virginia CAPACITY;
- General DHCD news and information; and
- Governor's Housing Conference updates.



Calendar & Observances

May 14

Commission on Local Government Regular Meeting

May 14 2007, 10 a.m.
Jackson Center, 501 North Second Street,
Richmond, VA
First Floor Boardroom

May 17

The Virginia Manufactured Housing Board Meeting

May 17, 2007, 10 a.m.
Jackson Center, 501 North Second Street,
Richmond, VA
First Floor Boardroom

Meeting will be to carry out administration of the Manufactured Housing Licensing Regulations and to hold a hearing on a claim to the Transaction Recovery Fund. Contact Curtis McIver, State Building Code Administrative Office (804) 371-7160.

May 6 – 12

Building Safety Week

May 6 – 12, 2007
You may not think about safe and proper construction when you enter a home or building. Fortunately staff in the Division of Building and Fire Regulation think about it everyday.

May 6 – 12 is national and Virginia Building Safety Week, a time to recognize the important professionals who ensure the buildings in our communities are safe.

Community Events

Governor Kaine visits Virginia Main Street community in South Boston

On a recent trip to Halifax County to visit the pre-k program at Scottsburg Elementary School, Governor Kaine also took time out to tour Destination Downtown South Boston, a designated Virginia Main Street community since 2004.

During his tour, Kaine stopped by Sacs So Bo Eclectique, a new business owned by entrepreneur Shelby Talbot selling original artwork, original clothing/accessory designs, vintage and new clothing, accessories, furniture, and more.

Additionally, Kaine visited The Vintner's Cellar, Inc., specializing in wine and gourmet foods in addition to a café and bookstore and Lantor's Store, a family business in its third generation, which recently celebrated 100 years of selling upscale women's clothing in the same location in South Boston.



Kaine concluded his tour with a visit to the Taylor Lofts, an adaptive reuse development which is planned to transform an underutilized tobacco processing building into 46 affordable housing units.

Taylor Lofts LLC has developed this \$7 million project using Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and Federal and State Historic Tax Credits. Apartment will range in size from 800 square foot one-bedroom units to 1,200 square foot three-bedroom units.

During his tour Kaine was presented with a basket of gifts from Main Street retailers, and met with many local officials and residents, including the four-legged variety.





Virginia Main Street Celebrates Milestone Achievement Awards

On Friday, March 16 more than 80 representatives from 19 communities across the state came together to celebrate the economic and community development taking place in Virginia's downtowns.

The Virginia Main Street (VMS) Milestone Achievement Awards ceremony celebrated achievements in volunteerism and private investments in Virginia's designated VMS localities.

Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade David Smith and Cate Magennis Wyatt, president of The Journey Through Hallowed Ground, joined Bill Shelton, director

The following localities received awards for volunteerism:

- Destination Downtown South Boston – 5,000 hours
- Waynesboro Downtown Development, Inc. – 10,000 hours
- Culpeper renaissance, Inc. – 15,000 hours
- Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association – 20,000 hours
- Winchester Old Town Development Board – 20,000 hours
- Downtown Franklin Association – 25,000 hours
- Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance – 25,000 hours
- Historic Manassas, Inc. – 25,000 hours
- Bedford Main Street, Inc. – 35,000 hours
- Lynch's Landing, Inc. – 55,000 hours

The following localities received awards for private investment:

- Destination Downtown South Boston and the Town of South Boston - \$5 million
- Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance and the City of Harrisonburg - \$10 million
- Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association and the City of Martinsville - \$10 million
- Historic Manassas, Inc. and the City of Manassas - \$35 million
- Winchester Old Town Development Board and the City of Winchester - \$40 million
- Staunton downtown Development Association and the City of Staunton - \$45 million
- Lynch's Landing, Inc. and the City of Lynchburg - \$55 million

of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and representatives of the Virginia Main Street program at the event held at the Jefferson Hotel.

"The revitalization of Virginia's downtown areas through the Virginia Main Street program and the hard work and dedication of local staff and volunteers is a key component of Virginia's overall economic growth and strength," said David Smith.

The milestone awards recognize designated Main Street communities for excellence in two categories; amount of private investment dollars and number of volunteer hours contributed toward improving downtowns.

Bill Shelton, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development took part in the awards presentation and praised the communities for their efforts to improve their downtowns.

"The Virginia Main Street program is designed to help localities reverse economic and physical decline in downtown and neighborhood business districts, and the award recipients here today exemplify the best of those efforts in Virginia," said Shelton.

Virginia Main Street uses the National Main Street model to help communities revitalize their downtowns, focusing on their unique heritage and attributes. The program provides assistance and training to help communities increase the economic vitality of their downtown commercial districts, and develop strategies that create economic growth and pride in their downtown areas.

Currently there are 19 designated Virginia Main Street communities throughout Virginia. This summer, up to three more localities will be selected to receive Virginia Main Street designation. For more information about VMS, visit: www.dhcd.virginia.gov/mainstreet.





DHCD staff hammer, glue, paint and more for a good cause

Staff at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) spend their days overseeing housing and rehabilitation projects, grants and community development programs. Some remain focused on the building and fire safety codes that regulate the construction of housing, and of housing rehabilitation projects.

But on Wednesday, March 28, DHCD staff took hammers and paint brushes in hand during a community service day with Habitat for Humanity. Each year, state staff are allotted 16 hours of community service time, and 32 DHCD staff chose to use their time this year toward helping to realize the American dream of homeownership for a worthy Habitat for Humanity recipient.

DHCD staff simultaneously worked on two homes just blocks apart on Rycliff Avenue and Senate Street in Richmond's south side. Staff at the Rycliff Avenue home installed molding and vinyl siding, and completed 670 square feet of sheet rock for the ceilings of the home, still in the beginning phases of construction. The Senate Street home, nearing completion, saw some of the finishing work completed by DHCD staff including painting, the installation of doorknobs, locks and electrical plates, and other miscellaneous finishing work.

"There is always a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment through volunteering your time to help others," said DHCD Director Bill Shelton in thanking staff for their volunteer time.

More than 175 work hours were donated through DHCD's community service day, and the homeowners who will soon be occupying the homes will surely value the time and efforts donated on March 28 for years to come.





**Virginia Department of Housing
and Community Development**

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