

PLANNED SUCCESS

A FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY
PUBLICATION

FIRST QUARTER 2004 JAN-MAR

WELCOME NEW YEAR, NEW CHOICES

We're looking for a few good stories!

How would you like to be the star of our next newsletter?

What wonderful thing is going on in your life that you'd like to share with other FSS participants?

We want to hear from you.

Please contact
Joanna Rodriguez-Mendez or Anissa Albert at (925) 957-7005.

Every New Year we are encouraged to make resolutions to eat less, exercise more, save money, and spend more time with our kids. These are all positive behaviors, but rarely are they achieved without a plan of action, determination and most importantly consideration of the choices we make every day.

Personally, I don't believe in New Year's resolutions. I do believe in goals, plans and dreams. I believe that goals, plans and dreams begin with everyday choices.

Here at Contra Costa County Housing Authority we have started our New Year by reviewing our past ones. We have been busy auditing your case management files. We audited your files to make sure they were accurate, current, and complete. We also wanted information to help us determine the direction we should take as a program. The question before us is how best as an agency can we serve you? We know that our goal is to help you succeed. As we review your files we seek to determine the best way to accomplish that.

This audit has been time-consuming

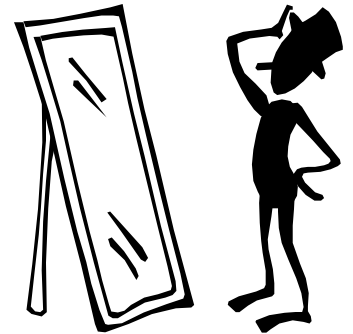
and at times frustrating, but as we come to the end of the task one thought comes through with clarity. It is important to review our actions to make sure that what we do actually helps us to reach our goals.

So what about you? When is the last time you reviewed your activities. Are your actions helping you to meet your goals? Are you participating in the same behaviors yet expecting different results? When is the last time you checked your own progress?

Some of our choices seem harmless. Living in a state of denial can become an art form. We say in the great scheme of things the little things we do really do not matter. But it does. For example, I am trying to make better choices about what I eat. For some people this is probably not such a big deal, but did I mention I am addicted to Reese's Peanut Butter Cups? One candy bar a day may seem a small matter. I am good at dismissing it as no big deal, but at 230 calories and 13g of fat, it matters. It is the difference between a size 8 and well, a bigger

size.

With this newsletter we will continue to update you about new policies and remind you of old ones. We have information about new opportunities to help you and your family move towards your dreams and goals. Most importantly we want to challenge you to make new choices. New choices lead to new behaviors which lead to new results that offer new opportunities. Each 24-hour day we are given a chance to make these new choices. Make good ones. Good choices matter.



This publication is brought to you by the Housing Services Team.

Anissa Albert, Joanna Rodriguez-Mendez, Lori Sanders, and Regina Davis

Special thanks to Rosemary Russo and Jalyce Fairley

EARN IT! KEEP IT! SAVE IT! CONTRA COSTA



You may be able to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a tax benefit for people who work. If you qualify, the EITC will reduce your taxes and could give you back up to \$4,200. Even if you don't owe income tax, you can get the EITC.

You may qualify for the EITC if:

- You were raising two or more children and earned less than \$33,692 (\$34,692 if married).
- You were raising one child and earned less than \$29,666 (\$30,666 if married).
- You had no children in your home in 2003, earned less than \$11,230 (\$12,230 if married) and were between 25 and 64 years old.

(SEE Earn it! Keep it! Save it!

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ARE YOU READY FOR GRADUATION?

How do I graduate from the FSS program?

You are ready to graduate from the program

- when you have fulfilled all obligations under the contract before the expiration of the contract term or extension,
- or 30% of the family's monthly adjusted income equals or exceeds the FMR for the size unit

for which the family qualifies, and

- the head of household certifies that no household member is receiving federal, state or local welfare assistance.

Remember that the FSS program is a Jobs program. Part of the contract you sign states that you must seek and maintain employment in order to successfully

graduate. It is possible to complete your contract before the five-year term and graduate early.

You do not have to be free of housing assistance in order to graduate.

If your term is expiring you will be contacted by a housing counselor who will walk you through the graduation process.



UPDATES ON TOOLS FOR CHANGE SEMINARS

We announced in our last newsletter that we would offer 10 seminars a year called Tools for Change Seminars. These seminars are designed to assist you in meeting your goals. After hosting several seminars with low attendance we have re-evaluated the TFC seminars and their place in our program.

Our most popular seminars centered on Money Management and Job Hunting. Because of this, the FSS program at Contra Costa County will host a Money Manage-

ment and a Job Hunting club.

The Money Management club will focus on budgeting, saving, debt reduction and credit repair. The Jobs club will focus on locating and maintaining a full-time living wage job.

These clubs will be open to any FSS participant. You may receive an invitation from your Housing Counselor to join one or both of these clubs. If you are identified as an FSS Participant who has zero income and or zero earned income, you will need

to attend the Jobs club. If you are interested in any one of these clubs please contact your Housing Counselors, Anissa Albert at 925-957-7081 or Joanna Rodriguez-Mendez at 925-957-7084.

The FSS program will still host seminars on topics ranging from Home Buyers Education to video seminars on Child Support. We will also keep you up to date on resources in the community that will assist you in earning more money and spending it wisely.

"Success seems to be connected with action. Successful men keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit."
-Conrad Hilton

WARDROBE FOR OPPORTUNITY

Wardrobe for Opportunity is a community-based non-profit organization founded in 1996. It provides professional clothing, image enhancement, and career development support to low-income women in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties to enable them to secure employment and become economically self-sufficient.

Wardrobe for Opportunity invites you to attend **Pathways for Opportunity**

Career Development Program

East Bay Works One-Stop Career Center

1875 Willow Pass Road Concord, Ca 94521

This program will offer: communication skills, individual job coaching, goal setting, peer support, conflict resolution skills.

Call Dorothy Amiri for an application (925) 935-2146 x.13 Damiri@wardrobe.org

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

The phrase “Dress for Success” involves possessing the frame of mind that you are ready to perform the job the first day you walk through the doors of the company. This means that when you plan to drop off applications, resumes, or employment information, you should dress as if you have been invited to a formal interview. This gives the impression that you are prepared for an immediate interview if the opportunity presents itself. It also alerts potential employers to the fact that you are serious about getting the job and it creates a marketable impression on the company.



JOB SEARCH HINTS

Create a cover letter for your resume or a letter of interest for the position you are applying for. If, when responding to a newspaper ad, you are given the option to mail, fax, or deliver the application in person, you should always choose to deliver it in person. You can then be sure that your application arrived on time and that your information is correct. It is also a good idea to research the company you are applying at.

Most companies have information on the internet, or you may be able to observe their business when delivering your resume. Once you have submitted your application materials you should call in one week in order to follow up. If you have heard nothing at the end of two weeks write a letter to the company, stating that you are following up on an application you submitted. If you didn't get the job, find out when they will be

hiring again or how long they will keep your application on file. If you do have a strong desire to work for this particular company, check in from time to time to see if new positions have opened up and try applying for those. It takes a lot of hard work and determination, but you can be successful!

Does the way you dress affect other people's perception of you? Definitely!

THE CAREER OF A WELDER

Have you ever found yourself wanting to go into a vocational trade, but are not sure of which one? If you answered yes to this question then it is more than likely that our career series on vocational training will give some insight on what is available to you. Even though welding is not as popular as it was back in the 50's, jobs are still available in today's economy.

Welders in America are trained from the basics to the most advanced welding techniques, and are known

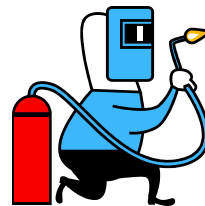
for mastering their craft. Many welding contracts are given to companies in the Bay Area.

Along with private industry, there are many local unions that hire for jobs in the public sector such as electric power plants, bridges, highways, waterfront piers, structure steel for sky scrapers, BART, and the aviation industry. The salary of a welder depends on where you get hired but it ranges anywhere between \$9-\$45 per hour.

Originally a field dominated

by men, more women are deciding to enter this field.

For more information call The Housing Services Team at (925) 957-7005.



“Don't let life discourage you; everyone who got where he is had to begin where he was.”
- Richard L. Evans

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

As you know, the Family Self-Sufficiency program is a marvelous opportunity for you and your family to become economically independent. This cannot be achieved without careful planning and forethought. For this reason, some modifications have been made to the program in order for the Housing Services Team to better serve you.

Appointments

We want to see you! You will meet with your counselor during the re-certification process and once each quarter to review your progress.

If you need to see your Housing Counselor at any time please call and let us know. We will be happy to make an appointment for you.

Interim Rent Decreases

Requests for rent decreases are acceptable when loss of income within the household is anticipated to last more than 30 days. Only written requests for rent decreases will be accepted. Keep in mind that until verification of your documentation is obtained your rent decrease cannot be processed.

PLEASE NOTE: rent decreases affect your escrow.

Escrow Update

Expect your escrow statements to come in the mail in April of 2004. The statements will include the amount of escrow earned plus any interest that has been accrued.

Get Help with Legal Issues

The **Family Law Facilitator** helps people who do not have attorneys with questions about child or spousal support, paternity, and health insurance coverage. The **Family Law Facilitator** also provides referrals to legal and community resources for help with other family law issues.

Where: Dept. of Child Support Services

50 Douglas Drive Martinez, CA 94553

Hours: 3:00pm to 4:30pm

Every Monday, except holidays

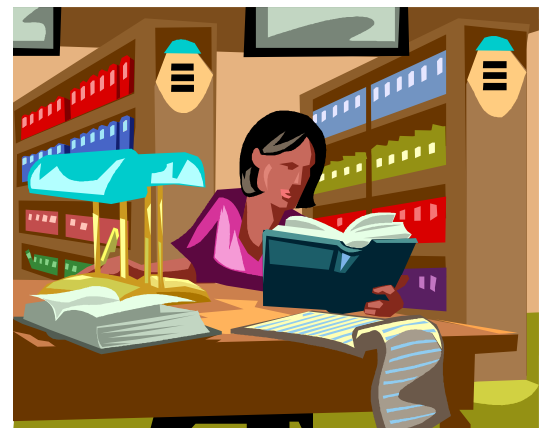
Are you interested in community service?

The FSS Program Coordinating Committee invites two FSS participants to join the committee. Please call Regina Davis at 925-957-7080 to learn more about this opportunity.

CHECK IT OUT

Have you visited your local library lately?

Libraries are a terrific resource for a variety of information. They provide access to the internet, books, magazines, newspapers, and phone books. There are libraries throughout Contra Costa County. For locations and hours of operation go to www.ccclib.org or call 1-800-984-INFO. The website will provide information on library programs and services, the Adult Literacy Project, catalog searches for books, videos, and a section for teens and kids.



FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY OPEN HOUSE

In August, 2003 the HST staff hosted two open houses for all Family Self-Sufficiency participants. The purpose of these events was to give FSS participants a chance to meet the new staff, find out about changes in the program and voice their concerns. Everyone enjoyed the ice-breaker "What we have in common" which allowed FSS participants and staff to get to know each other. Finger foods and beverages were provided and 7 clients won door prizes ranging from a Santa Cruz Beach and Boardwalk prize package to Target gift cards.

We would like to thank the following businesses for their donations to our FSS Open House:

- Berry's Pastries of Antioch
- Costco of Concord
- Santa Cruz Boardwalk
- Raley's of Antioch
- Raley's of Brentwood
- Yard Birds of Martinez
- Ace Hardware of Antioch
- Party America of Pleasant Hill
- Safeway of Martinez
- Starbucks Coffee of Martinez

WELCOME NEW FSS PARTICIPANTS

Welcome new FSS participants! We're here to help you on your journey.

- Lisa White
- Betty Shankle
- Felicia Harris
- Larnise Mcgee
- Stoney Mouton
- Latanya Taylor
- Veronica Vale
- LaCola Miles
- Debbie Duke
- Martha Raygoza
- Nicole Rochin

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

EARN IT! KEEP IT! SAVE IT! CONTRA COSTA (CONT.)

You may be able to get your taxes done for free. From January 31st until April 15th, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

Centers across Contra Costa County will be providing free tax assistance to help you file your taxes.

For more information and to find a location near you call 1-800-358-8832 or the HST staff at 925-957-7005.



We Are On The Web!
Contracostahousing.org



**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE
COUNTY OF CONTRA COSTA**

1805 Arnold Drive
Martinez, Ca 94553
Phone: 925-957-7550
Fax: 925-957-1280
Email: rdavis@contracostahousing.org

A C H I E V E T O S U C C E E D !

**“THE GREATEST DISCOVERY OF MY
GENERATION IS THAT HUMAN BEINGS CAN
ALTER THEIR LIVES BY ALTERING THEIR
ATTITUDES OF MIND.”**

-WILLIAM JAMES

Thank You

TO

Brent vonKrakau,
Dynamic Office and
Accounting

Jalyn Lang,
personal style con-
sultant

Dorothy Amiri,
Wardrobe for
Opportunity

**for conducting our
job seeking
seminar in
November.**

Ha Escuchado sobre el programa de family Self Sufficiency, tambien conocido como FSS? Este programa le ayuda a independisarse de la asistencia publica. Para mas informacion por favor llame a Joanna Rodriguez-Mendez al (925) 957-7084.

The purpose of the Family Self-Sufficiency program for the Housing Authority of the County of Contra Costa is to provide Housing Choice Voucher recipients with an extensive approach to building individuals, guiding families, and developing goals to achieve self-sufficiency.

The Family Self-Sufficiency program is committed to the celebration of accomplishments and the promotion of economic independence.