

DSHA's Financial Coaching and Strong Neighborhoods Programs Win National Awards

DOVER, DE – Two of Delaware's programs benefitting potential homebuyers received national recognition October 15 when they were honored with a 2018 Annual Award for Program Excellence during the National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) annual conference.

The awards recognized the success of DSHA's partnership with Stand By Me, which offers Pre-Purchase Financial Coaching for potential homebuyers, and the agency's Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund, a community development program designed to assist potential homebuyers living in blighted communities throughout the state.

"We are honored to receive these awards on behalf of our partners and the many Delawareans who have benefitted from these programs, and we are proud to be recognized for the innovative work we are doing," said Delaware State Housing Authority Director Anas Ben Addi. "Both the financial coaching program and the Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund are helping individuals and families throughout the state realize their dreams of becoming homeowners."

DSHA was one of 40 housing finance agencies across the country to submit entries in the 2018 awards program. NCSHA judges evaluate each entry for its level of innovation, replicability, measurable benefit to housing agency customers, effective use of resources and achievement of strategic objectives, among other criteria. The judges are affordable housing industry leaders and subject matter experts selected for their relevant expertise, experience, and impartiality.

"These award-winning initiatives reflect the creativity and

commitment that state housing finance agencies across the country are bringing to solve their states' and the nation's affordable housing challenges," said Stockton Williams, executive director of NCSHA. "They demonstrate that progress is possible through pragmatic approaches focused on results."

Potential homebuyers who participate in DSHA's Pre-Purchase Financial Coaching program with \$tand By Me are offered support to address topics like improving their credit, reducing debt, and building savings to better prepare them for purchasing a home. Since its creation in early 2016, the financial coaching program has served more than 1,100 clients, and more than 30 percent of those clients have either purchased a home, are under contract for a home or have been pre-approved thanks to the financial coaching they have received through DSHA. Before this program was created, clients would often be charged a significant amount of money for similar financial coaching programs, and many would get discouraged and give up before purchasing a home.

"We are very excited about this recognition for DSHA, because it validates a great partnership that enables \$tand By Me to support aspiring homeowners as they work diligently, for months or even years, towards their dream of home ownership," said Mary Dupont, director of financial empowerment at \$tand By Me. "Through this work, we have learned first-hand that becoming a home owner is a powerful motivating force that makes the impossible possible, especially when paired with financial coaching."

DSHA's Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund puts money directly into neighborhoods experiencing high crime, low homeownership rates, and large numbers of vacant, abandoned or foreclosed properties. Through the program, properties are removed, renovated or replaced and sold to low-income residents who then become homeowners and stakeholders in their communities. This locally-driven, block-by-block approach to community development and new home production is taking place in

communities throughout Delaware including in Wilmington, New Castle County, Dover, Milford and Laurel.

DSHA's partner organization, Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity, is using the program to improve neighborhoods throughout Kent County.

"The Strong Neighborhood Housing Fund has allowed Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity to partner with NCALL in a focused strategy to improve home-ownership rates. Over a two year period, our collective efforts will place more than 30 families into affordable homes in Kent County," said Dan Simpson, executive director of Central Delaware Habitat for Humanity. "The support we receive from DSHA has allowed our organization to expand its impact and to provide strength, stability and self-reliance through affordable home-ownership."

The Strong Neighborhoods Housing Fund was initially funded using one-time bank settlement dollars and is now funded with a \$3 million allocation in the FY 2019 state bond bill. This funding has provided resources to remove, renovate, or replace at least 200 blighted properties throughout the state.

About the National Council of State Housing Agencies

The National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created by the nation's state housing finance agencies. The NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence were established in 1984 to identify and elevate industry best practices and encourage continued HFA innovation.

About the Delaware State Housing Authority

The Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA), formed in 1968, is dedicated to providing quality, affordable housing opportunities and appropriate supportive services to low- and moderate-income Delawareans. In addition to its role as the State's Housing Finance Agency, DSHA is unique in that it is

also serves as a Public Housing Authority and acts as a Community Development and Planning Agency. As a Public Housing Authority, DSHA receives funding from HUD to build, own and operate public housing in Kent and Sussex counties, two of Delaware's three counties. For more information about the Delaware State Housing Authority, please call (302) 739-4263 or visit DEStateHousing.com.