

CONSUMER-CONTROLLED HOUSING NEWS

A quarterly publication of the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative

New quarterly newsletter highlights consumer-controlled housing activities throughout Texas



Welcome to *Consumer-Controlled Housing News*, a quarterly publication of the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative (CCHI)! Each issue will be packed with the latest information about consumer-controlled housing in Texas, including funding sources, educational events, success stories, and opportunities to get involved.

For readers unfamiliar with CCHI, an introduction is in order. CCHI is a three-year project designed to increase the availability of affordable, accessible, independent housing for people with disabilities across Texas.

The project is a result of a grant awarded to Diana McIver & Associates, Inc. (DMA), in 1994 by the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities. CCHI is staffed by DMA employees, and its actions are guided by a statewide task force of housing industry professionals, people with disabilities, service providers, and representatives of advocacy groups.

CCHI provides a range of services to individuals and organizations interested in pursuing and/or creating consumer-controlled housing: information and referral services; educational workshops; and technical assistance.

As the first quarter of 1996 dawned, CCHI staff members looked back at the events of

'95 and evaluated the project's success. Impressive progress was made on all fronts.

CCHI provided technical assistance that resulted in the funding of HOME applications submitted to the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs by United Cerebral Palsy and Austin/Travis County MHMR. United Cerebral Palsy received \$416,000 to use in its home barrier removal project; and Austin/Travis County MHMR netted \$406,500 to provide rental subsidies for 60 persons with mental illness.

In addition, CCHI assisted Junction 505, a Bryan-College Station nonprofit, with the preparation of a Capacity Building Grant to expand the organization's knowledge about the housing industry and to create a network for tackling the issue of housing for people with disabilities in Bryan. TDHCA awarded Junction 505 almost \$40,000.

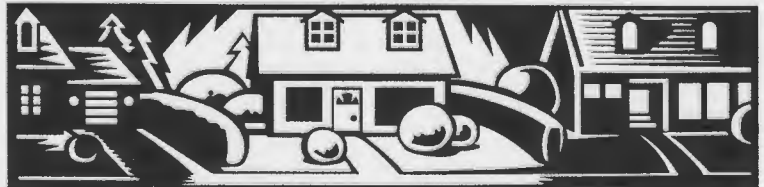
Educational activities sponsored by CCHI included the *Housing Choices in Texas* workshops held in Austin, Lubbock, Houston, El Paso, Laredo and Arlington. The workshops introduced attendees to the con-

cept of consumer-controlled housing, profiled innovative housing programs taking place elsewhere in the country, and provided information on resources available in each regional seminar location. The workshops drew a wide range of participants: realtors, lenders, builders, service providers, advocates and people with disabilities.

The *Housing Choices in Texas* workshops included presentations as well as group networking activities—allowing participants to get to know each other and CCHI.

As a result, CCHI has laid the foundation for the development of creative home loan programs; a number of organizations have been inspired to start new housing programs; and many individuals who want to pursue consumer-controlled housing opportunities have been connected with the resources required to do so.

For 1996, CCHI has shifted gears in its educational programs. Where the '95 workshops were designed for a wide audience, the '96 programs will be geared to specific
continued on page 4



Austinite Jim Wise — a housing success story



Jim Wise is a consumer-controlled housing success story. He holds a lease on his own apartment in North Austin, and shares his residence with his roommate, Michael, who also serves as his attendant. Other personal care attendants assist Jim when Michael is not on duty.

Jim communicates with a voice-output communication device, and uses a headset to operate his computer.

Jim is very happy living on his own, and wanted to share his story with other people in Texas. At the beginning of this year, Lisa Tips, project director of the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative, interviewed Jim, his mother Beatrice, and Michael about their consumer-controlled housing experience.

- L: Where did you live before you moved to this apartment?
 J: I lived in a group home for three years.
 L: Why did you want to leave the group home?

J: I did not like it there because there was always someone talking, and I did not have any privacy.

- L: Were you worried about what it would be like to move on your own?



- J: Yes. It was scary at first.
 B: It was a hard decision to make. It was very scary at first, but I realized that it was what Jim really wanted, so I supported him in his decision. It's worked out wonderfully!
 L: What was the process you went through to move from the group home?
 B: UCP Capitol Area and UCP Texas both helped a great deal. They helped us find the apartment and get furniture. Then they assisted with grant money through the Barrier Removal Program to widen doorways and put in a ramp. They also helped with information on getting assistance with attendant care. Without their help, I'm not sure the move would have happened.
 L: What do you like about living in your own home?
 J: I like my own private bedroom.
 B: Jim did not get along well with his roommate at the group home. He thought his roommate talked too much, and that he would speak for Jim...Jim didn't like that.
 L: Do you have problems living on your own?
 J: No problems.
 B: Every now and then an attendant calls in and can't come to work, and sometimes it takes awhile to re-hire if an attendant quits. But I am willing to help out as needed.
 L: Do you miss anything about the group home?
 J: Hell, no!
 L: How do you get around?
 J: Special Transit.
 L: What do you like to do for fun?

- J: I like to go out places; movies. I went on a vacation to Arizona with my Mom and roommate.
 L: Are you employed, Jim?
 J: Yes. I work for my sister on a computer.
 B: Jim does data entry for his sister. Jim's communication device hooks into his sister's computer to do data entry. Technology has really helped Jim.
 L: What advice would you give to a someone who wants to live in his own home?
 J: Go for it!
 B: It would be a good idea to have support services ready before moving. Our experience has been good and I recommend that anyone try it.
 L: I've heard that you are interested in buying your own home and that you'll be involved in the Home of Your Own pilot project.
 J: Yes. I want a yard. I like the outdoors and parks, and I want to be in my own yard.
 L: Beatrice, how do you feel about Jim buying his own home?
 B: I'll support whatever Jim wants.
 L: Michael, do you have anything to add?
 M: I think most people would be surprised at the availability of resources for someone with a disability wanting to live on their own.
 B: Yes. You just need to call everyone you can, ask questions and go to a lot of meetings. The answers are out there.

Many thanks to Jim, Beatrice and Michael for sharing their success story. What an inspiration!

A profile of consumer-controlled housing in present-day Texas



The May 1989 *Survey of Consumer Satisfaction with Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities in Texas* disclosed that only nine percent of people with developmental disabilities over the age of 15 owned their own home or leased their own apartment. Only 29 percent chose where they lived and 23 percent selected their own roommates. Thirty nine percent (twice the national average) of consumers responded affirmatively to the question: "During the past few weeks have you ever felt lonely or remote from other people?"

Seven years later, you may be wondering, where are we? Has anything changed? While persons with developmental disabilities have made great advances toward increased independence and productivity in recent years, a great number of consumers in Texas remain segregated and relegated to externally determined "appropriate" residential settings.

Although current statistics like those from the '89 survey are not available, many statewide groups have recognized the need for consumer-controlled housing in Texas, and are working to expand the housing opportunities of Texans with disabilities by changing Texas' systems of policy, support services, advocacy and consumer education.

One such organization is the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative. Others include Austin-Travis County MHMR; Junction 505 in Bryan; Advocacy Inc.; Mental Health Housing Development Corporation in Fort Worth; The University Affiliated Program; ADAPT of Texas; and



United Cerebral Palsy of Texas.

This article highlights two very different organizations — the Texas Home of Your Own (HOYO) Coalition and the Mental Health Housing Development Corporation. Both are working to promote housing that is controlled by consumers and separated from services.

The Texas HOYO Coalition is part of a national network of home ownership projects inspired by the New Hampshire Home of Your Own Project. From 1990-1994 the New Hampshire project facilitated home ownership for 25 people with disabilities in that state.

Representatives of a variety of organizations comprise the Texas HOYO, which is currently working with the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) to create a home mortgage product specifically for people with disabilities.

The concept behind Texas HOYO is to facilitate home ownership for Texans with disabilities through grass-roots level assistance and systems-level advocacy. At the grass-

roots level, HOYO is providing assistance to individuals interested in home ownership including home buyer counseling, explaining the loan process, organizing supports, shopping for a home, moving in, and following up after the move to make sure things are running smoothly.

At the systems level, Texas HOYO is working with lenders and housing counselors to help them understand the needs of people with disabilities and to develop loan packages that reflect those needs.

For example, many people with disabilities who receive SSI are not allowed to have more than \$2,000 in cash assets. This limit makes it virtually impossible for an individual to save enough money for a down payment on a home. Texas HOYO is working to develop mortgage programs that require either no down payment or a very small one. In the future, Texas HOYO may also offer down payment assistance to first-time home buyers who have disabilities.

continued on page 4

State groups working to improve housing opportunities for people with disabilities

FROM
PAGE 3

The Texas HOYO programs are currently in a pilot phase in central Texas, and the coalition hopes to offer its services across Texas within two years.

In a different vein, but an equally important one, Mental Health Housing Development Corporation (MH Housing) is expanding consumer-controlled housing opportunities for people with mental illness in the Fort Worth area.

MH Housing was formed in 1989 after the Mental Health Association of Tarrant County sponsored a study of homeless people with mental illness in Tarrant County. The study illustrated the need for housing and supports for people with mental illness, and set a goal for increasing the county's supply of affordable housing.

In 1992, MH Housing completed its first project, the rehabilitation of Hanratty Place — a 32-unit apartment complex in Fort Worth. The 98-unit Spanish Gate complex soon followed. Both are conventional, affordable apartment complexes that reserve a percentage of units for individuals who have a mental illness.

Unlike many complexes where people with disabilities are given priority, Hanratty Place and Spanish Gate are not segregated environments. The units reserved for people with mental illness are a numeric percentage of the total units — they are not clustered together or pre-assigned.

MH Housing provides an onsite services coordinator for the convenience of the residents, but receipt of services is not a requirement for residency. In addition, the services are offered to all residents and are focused on a variety of community issues — not just mental health issues. Those people with mental illness who do receive case management services may schedule home appointments with their case managers.

In addition to giving people with mental illness the opportunity to live independently, these complexes have paved the way for MH Housing to become self-sustaining.

Bonnie Siddons, Director of MH Housing, estimates that the budding corporation needs to develop only 200 more units to be fully self-supporting. And

at the end of the winter, MH Housing was well on its way to accomplishing this goal.

Planning has been completed for a new project in Fort Worth's South Side Medical District. The proposed housing is part of a comprehensive plan to revitalize this inner city area which is home to many of Fort Worth's major medical companies.

Working in conjunction with organizations and private companies, MH Housing will build a new multifamily complex that will provide much needed housing for both people with mental illness and medical district workers who require affordable housing.

Generally speaking, Texas is in a state of transition. While most people with disabilities and the organizations that assist them are aware of the consumer-controlled housing concept, nine mental hospitals and ten state schools still remain firmly established in Texas.

However, as the profiles above demonstrate, there are pockets of consumer-controlled housing across the state.

Although many Texans with disabilities are still living in segregated and unsatisfactory environments, there is a growing wave of people and organizations working hard to ensure that individuals who would like to live in the community are given the opportunity to do so. It is the goal of these organizations and the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative that all Texans be able to choose their own housing.

Welcome to CCH News

FROM
PAGE 1

groups. Already in the works are training programs targeted to school districts, state school community service divisions, banks, parent groups, and trade organizations for housing industry professionals. The programs address topics that apply to each audience and its involvement in consumer-controlled housing.

To follow its '95 success in providing technical assistance,

CCHI is already prepared to work with organizations interested in obtaining HOME funds which become available later this year.

If you are interested in learning about consumer-controlled housing, funding sources and information resources, don't hesitate to call CCHI at 512-328-3232. We're here to help!

Lisa Tips, Project Director

CCHI offers free technical assistance



To increase the number of housing units in Texas that are controlled by people with disabilities, the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative provides free technical assistance to organizations interested in developing consumer-controlled housing.

Who can receive technical assistance? Any organized group interested in creating or promoting consumer-controlled housing.

Some examples: non-profits that already provide housing; businesses that provide services to people with disabilities; and advocacy groups interested in promoting housing issues.

The technical assistance CCHI provides can take many forms, and is dependent upon the goals and desires of the organization involved.

First CCHI staff members work closely with the organization to determine the type of housing project to pursue. Strategic planning sessions are used to outline the organization's goals and objectives, then the housing possibilities that fit those goals and objectives are identified and discussed.

After the organization has decided which housing development opportunities to pursue, CCHI staff can provide any or all of the following services:

- ◆ General information — explaining housing language, and providing information on programs across Texas and the rest of the country.
- ◆ Identification of funding sources.
- ◆ Acting as a liaison with banks, housing authorities

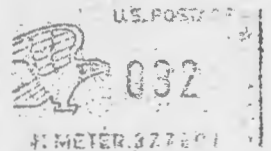
and other housing developers in the area.

- ◆ Working on policy issues with the organization.
 - ◆ Providing checklists and timelines for preparing funding applications.
 - ◆ Researching housing needs and providing housing statistics; supplying housing and population census data.
 - ◆ Sharing past experiences.
 - ◆ Answering technical questions about the application.
 - ◆ Calling the funding source with technical questions.
 - ◆ Reviewing applications and providing suggestions.
- If your organization is interested in receiving technical assistance, contact CCHI Technical Assistance Specialist Sarah André at 512-328-3232.



Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative
Diana McIver & Associates, Inc.
500 Loop 360 North, Suite 6100
Austin, TX 78746-3389

REGISTERED
FIRST CLASS



Consumer-Controlled Housing News is published quarterly by the Consumer-Controlled Housing Initiative. CCHI is a project of Diana McIver & Associates Inc., 500 Loop 360 N., Ste. 6100, Austin, TX 78746-3389, (512) 328-3232, fax (512) 328-4584, hearing impaired (800) RELAY-TX. Any portion of this newsletter may be photocopied if permission is obtained in advance from CCHI. CCHI is funded by the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities.

Adeline Brown
REACH of Dallas
3636 W. Redbud Ln. #1004
Dallas, TX 75237