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## **Oakland Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency Program Continues to Graduate Successful Clients**

### ***Once Unemployed, Section 8 Tenants Hoping to Buy Homes, Build Better Lives***

OAKLAND, Calif., April 17, 2007 - The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) is proud to add two more Section 8 tenants to the list of successful Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program graduates, with escrow accounts of more than \$25,000 each.

A 33-year old unemployed Oakland resident joined the program in March 2002, and established goals to finish her education and find a decent job. Today, she is a proud FSS graduate, with a high school diploma and a good paying job, and an escrow account valued at more than \$25,300.

“Our client has worked to improve her credit and has now signed up with OHA’s Section 8 Homeownership Program,” said Linda Muller, FSS coordinator. “She worked hard to accomplish her educational and professional goals and her next goal could be becoming a homeowner.”

OHA’s most successful FSS client is a 37-year old single mother of three. She too was unemployed when she joined the program in March 2002. One of her program-required goals was to find a good-paying job in a field that interested her. After five years of working, and receiving promotions, she is graduating with an escrow account valued at more than \$37,500. She tells OHA that she now has the opportunity to “do something with her life, and to be somebody for her children.”

“This is a wonderful success story for the program,” added Muller. “Our client took the initiative to join FSS, to stay employed, and now she is considering a home purchase.”

The Section 8 Family Self-Sufficiency Program offers eligible participants the ability to build a savings account over a five-year period. Because rent in the Housing Choice Voucher (or Section 8) Program is income-based, as a tenant’s income increases, so does the rent. But participating in the FSS Program allows OHA to match a portion of that rent increase into an escrow account, building what can amount to a substantial

amount of money. Participants must set and meet several interim goals during the 5-year contract (perhaps work to clean up a credit score), and complete one final work-related goal.

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program, started in 1994 by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), has seen 677 OHA tenants enroll with 111 successful graduates.

The Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) is the City of Oakland's state-chartered and federally funded agency to promote the availability of quality housing for low-income persons. OHA works to promote the civic involvement and economic self-sufficiency of its residents and to further the expansion of affordable housing within Oakland. The Authority is currently helping to house 14,000 of the city's lowest income families. ([www.oakha.org](http://www.oakha.org))

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