

Building families

published by **Interfaith Housing Alliance, Inc.**

Winter 2008

Patricia Motter Elected by Resolution



Patricia Motter succeeds Jim Upchurch as President and CEO.

“The Board of Directors is delighted with the decision of Tricia to accept the position of President and CEO of Interfaith Housing Alliance,” said Reverend Marilyn Washburn, board chair, in announcing the election by resolution of Patricia Motter. “She brings gifts of insight and energy to our mission of providing affordable housing. We welcome her and look forward to moving in new directions.”

Motter, most recently from Flint, Michigan, and now living in Frederick, comes to IHA with over 25 years of experience working in nonprofit management and 18 years in the affordable housing and shelter sector. She states, “Interfaith Housing is a wonderful organization, with a track record of excellence. I appreciate the opportunity to lead Interfaith in its next phase of growth and development.”

She was responsible for the start and implementation of a housing development

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HOPE VI Housing Purchased

Four newly constructed townhouses and one single-family home now have brand new homeowners in residence in Frederick, MD. Part of the overall HOPE VI federal, pass-through funding for Frederick went to support this workforce housing development, built by Interfaith Housing Alliance. Many other private donations and funds from special programs were cobbled together to keep mortgages affordable. Purchasers were counseled throughout the financing process to promote financial literacy and protect their long-term success as homeowners.

The single-family house is handicapped accessible and was purchased by a family with special needs. The layout of the house and its location, near public transportation, allows this family to lead fairly independent lives and to access steady employment. The urban in-fill development site sits just off Motter Avenue and adjacent to IHA’s Monocacy Woods Apartments, an affordable rental complex for families.

Ample off-street parking and open space was reserved within the complex, making it attractive to working families. A nearby gazebo and tot-lot are shared with the apartment complex. Six more families are working their way through the mortgage approval process.



Each family buying a home in IHA’s Monocacy Woods Townhouses came to their settlement with great anticipation and each received their keys with broad smiles. Gerrie McClarine exchanged flowers for her keys, recognizing the hard work of Barbara Hallowell, IHA’s home buyer education counselor, who also shepherded the purchasing agreements and mortgages.

“Ms. Hallowell treated me like I was her only client, she returned all my calls and email, took the time to explain every step of the process with me, and never made me feel like I was beneath her because I needed assistance with purchasing my first home. I thank God everyday for sending me an Angel here on earth,” said Gerrie in a letter to Interfaith.

Confusing Affordable Housing With Sub-prime Loans

by James Upchurch

Of the many reasons to be angry about the 2008 financial crisis...no sector has more purple hearts than those of us working in affordable housing programs. The affordable housing community was the victim of early mistakes by media personalities. They alleged that efforts to improve affordable housing opportunities for lower income families motivated Fannie Mae (the Federal National Mortgage Association) and Freddie Mac (the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation), both Government-Sponsored Enterprises, to quietly begin buying sub-prime mortgages which then led to our financial crisis. Now the blame-affordable-housing myth appears to be engraved into media teleprompters.

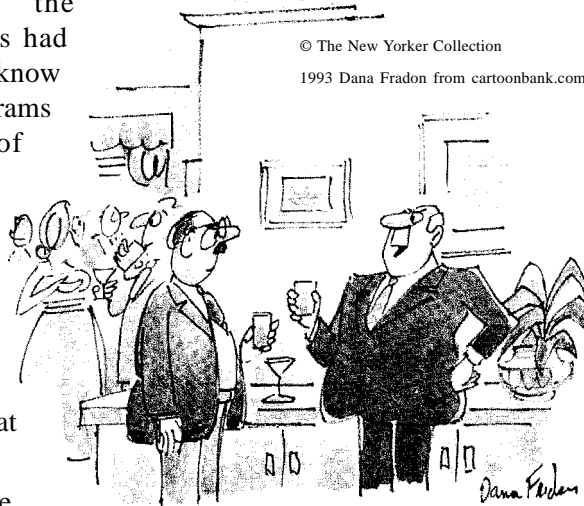
I am reminded what John Kennedy said of myths: "The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie, but the myth. Belief in myths allows for the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought." It would help if the phrase "sub-prime loans" was universally understood. In fact, it has many definitions.

Modern affordable housing programs feature homeownership counseling, budget training, and careful loan underwriting. If the misinformed commentators had fact checkers, they would know that affordable housing programs are in the business of developing long-term, successful outcomes for our beneficiaries. Compare this record with the sub-prime mortgage brokers who, motivated by the next bonus, encouraged buyers to take out loans on terms that were sure to fail.

What do real estate speculators, deceptive loan

underwriters, and greedy Wall Street firms have in common with our programs? Housing does come to mind. But associating our good works with them in the blaming phase is wrong. To do so would be like lumping a patient donating an organ to save a child and a drug dealer patient recovering from a shootout in the same class; they are both in a hospital, but for very different reasons.

Those who confuse affordable housing programs with sub-prime mortgages need to visit one of our communities and note the absence of foreclosure signs in communities that are not failing. The Interfaith Housing Alliance, my organization, is part of a national network called NeighborWorks America. Kenneth Wade, CEO of NeighborWorks America, reported that foreclosure data provided by the Mortgage Bankers Association shows that while NeighborWorks' loan portfolio had a foreclosure start rate of 0.21 percent in the second quarter of 2008, the overall market's foreclosure start rate was 1.08 percent, more than five times higher. Our local experience with our rural homeownership programs is even better.



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"Sure, we need affordable housing—just so long as it doesn't come at the expense of unaffordable housing."

So why should the average person care about legitimate affordable housing programs? For those of us who have invested our lives in the mission of helping others with housing problems, our fear is the same as George Orwell's, who said, "Myths which are believed in tend to become true."

For the nation, everyone can benefit if our leadership is smart enough to tap the thousands of community-based non-profit housing developers who are prepared to take surplus housing stock off the market, use it for affordable housing, and contribute to our financial recovery.

If truth is the first casualty of war, then clear and orderly thought seems to be the first casualty of standing at the edge of financial disaster. The financial crisis was about money, power, and greed. It had little to do with laudable goals to promote homeownership.



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Ten Families Move into Workforce Housing Homes They Built in Cascade, Maryland

They worked 30 hours per week of their “sweat equity” to build their home and each others homes. Together, in late summer, they shared moving day. Ten families, under the

supervision of Interfaith Housing Alliance’s qualified construction supervisor, spent nearly a year earning their homeownership through a Self-help Affordable Homeownership

Program offered in Cascade, Maryland. The development was named Vaughan Heights for a dedicated former employee.

IHA’s Self-help Program is for lower income families who meet the eligibility requirements. Families buy their home at-cost and, in lieu of a down-payment, contribute their labor. Moving day is an emotional end to the process and the ultimate beginning of a new life

The funding partners for the project were: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development; NeighborWorks America; Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta; First Data Western Union Foundation; Hagerstown Trust Company; Housing Assistance Council; Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development; and M & T Bank. Additional support was received from the Washington County Government through fee waivers.



Wendy Leggett and her daughter Tiffany move into the home that she and her neighbors co-built for her through the Mutual Self-Help Homeownership Program of Interfaith Housing Alliance.

Jim Upchurch Honored by Homebuilders

The Frederick County Homebuilders Association made their November luncheon a tribute to the years of hard work done by Jim Upchurch on behalf of affordable housing. Many marveled at how much was done with the available resources to develop projects and create opportunities for social justice in housing in Western Maryland, and now, in parts of Pennsylvania.

Emceed by State Delegate Rick Weldon, the event featured a presentation of the many projects built and rehabilitated through the work of Interfaith Housing Alliance under Jim’s leadership. “I learned from you what it means to build a community,” said Weldon, former city manager for Brunswick where IHA built its first project.

These builder and developer professionals understand the obstacles and complications in the field and wanted to hold their own special recognition. The Board of Directors of IHA is planning a community wide celebration of his work on January 13, 2009. For those interested in the event, please put this date on your calendar and call 301-662-4225 x201 for more details.

The County Commissioners declared November 20, 2008, as Jim Upchurch Day in Frederick County.



Jim Upchurch and State Delegate Rick Weldon.

Frostburg's Washington Ridge Thrives with Events

This past spring a School's Out Party became the latest in a series of special events held at Interfaith Housing Alliance's 28-unit family rental complex in Frostburg. Then in November, Complex Manager Patti Penn spoke to the parishioners of a long-time partner from the faith community, bringing thanks from Reverend Marilyn Washburn, board chair.

Washington Ridge Apartments enjoys a tradition of resident and staff cooperation and the long-time support of the First Congregational Church. Each Halloween the children in the complex (and adults, too) dress up for the usual costume party and at Easter there is the Great Egg Hunt. The church has offered special services to the complex over the years and continues with monthly support to IHA that began in 1998.

School's Out, with the warm weather, just beckoned for great water battles, a Tot Fishing Pond and a Bubble Station.

Complex manager Patti Penn calls him "Happy Aaron Marconi" because he stops by her office frequently just to ask if Miss Patti's having a good day, providing her with a big smile. Here he is supervising the Tot Fishing Pond for Griffin McKenzie, Kaleb Mullenax and Keyaira and Kaden Griffin.



Great water gun battles reigned throughout the day...Miss Patti had the biggest one. So, to even the score Dylan Smith wielded water by the bucket full to drench her. Just escaping to the right is Mary Ott, Dylan's mom. Michael Griffin caught the whole episode on film as one of the conspirators. The little guy to the left is Logan Sisler.



...Then Came the Mummy's Baby and the Wizard

Every year they just get more cleverly interesting. Even the children can't wait to see what Miss Patti, left, complex manager, and Robert Llewellyn, tenant, at Washington Ridge will come up with for costume designs. Another great Halloween party was held in late October for young and old alike, with more than 30 community, staff and resident sponsors.

Face Painting and Sumptuous Lunch Save the Day

Oh, how it rained and rained! But, the Monocacy Woods Community Day 2008 participants refused to let dampen their spirits. Residents, IHA board members and staff found refuge in a big tent where hearty appetites were met with a luncheon of turkey, ham and roast beef and countless side dishes.

The moon bounce proved to be too wet, but the office became a haven where IHA's Artist on Staff Debby Feeney did some of the most creative face painting ever seen. (Too bad we don't have a photo of Debby.) Some examples of her handiwork include butterflies, bats, spiders, flowers and animal characters seen here.



Board Chair, President, Residents and Staff Feast at Weinberg House

Just look at that plate at the end of the table and know that the residents at the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg House in Frederick had a plentiful Thanksgiving. Sandy Richardson and Linda Washington, property management staff, made sure that the menu was traditional and tasty. Also on hand to welcome the season and share time with the residents, opposite each other at the far end of the table, are Reverend Marilyn Washburn, board chair, and Jim Upchurch, retiring president of the organization. Rebecca Broussard, IHA's new asset manager was on hand, too.



USDA Volunteers Work With Families in Shippensburg

Volunteers from United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development joined homeowners-to-be and others at Interfaith Housing Alliance's Self Help project in Shippensburg, PA, in June to provide a day of "sweat equity", doing whatever work was scheduled to be done. On this particular day it was installing siding. This development is supported through a \$558,192 technical assistance grant from USDA.

"Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities and to helping as many people as possible achieve the American dream of homeownership," said Gary Groves, Pennsylvania state director. "Income eligible, rural families are assisted every day with affordable housing through our direct and guaranteed loans, as well as assistance from the self-help program."

The families must work together on each others homes and complete 65% of the work themselves. They also must take a course in financial literacy and homeownership responsibility.

(Above, right) Almost unseen, Andrea Berkstresser, housing specialist from the area US Department of Agriculture office, works along side of Rhonda Fernengel, in foreground and a new homeowner at Interfaith Housing Alliance's Middle Spring Estates, putting the siding on one of seven houses the team of homeowners were building. In the background there are other volunteers from USDA who came to give a day to boost the homeowners' progress.

(Below, right) Two volunteers from USDA's Rural Development Program are shown working at Middle Springs Estates near Shippensburg, PA, on one of the houses that are now complete and occupied by the seven families whose "sweat equity" earned them a chance to be homeowners. These families performed 65% of the labor together to build all of the houses and underwent financial counseling before and during the process.



Middle Spring Homeowners Get "Pounded"

Middle Spring Estates, Interfaith Housing Alliance's Self-Help Homeownership Development, sits next to the Middle Spring Presbyterian Church. The proximity just shouts partnership and indeed has fostered as much. One bit of evidence came through a "Pound You Party" that the church supported for the seven new homeowners.

An old-fashioned tradition had church members bringing pounds of staples, i.e., macaroni, flour, sugar, detergent, etc., to create welcoming

packages for the new families in their neighborhood. These were delivered one Sunday after church with each family receiving four large bags to help fill their pantries.

Throughout the building process, the church has provided space for childcare two nights a week, where the families can send their children for activities with a designated family member from the team. These families contribute 65% of the labor to build their own and each other homes,

working for a year at this "sweat equity."

In addition, the church hosted a pot-luck dinner for a family meeting and luncheon for settlement day. The Reverend Derek Wadlington, pastor at the church, was elected a member of the board of directors for IHA and one of the families in the next team of builders are members of the church. Social justice in housing wins this one on all sides.

**Patricia Motter Elected
President and CEO, cont.**

organization in 1998, as part of the Shelter of Flint's expanded operations, which developed 340 units of multi-family housing and the associated services. Motter is conversant with government programs and regulations and has negotiated contracted services with architects, general contractors, syndicators, investors and attorneys.

Her experience has included financial oversight, asset management and fund and staff development. She has a Masters Degree in Public Administration and BA in Clinical/Community Psychology from the University of Michigan. She received top honors from the State of Michigan for Affordable Housing and Program, including a cash award for the agency.

She replaces James Upchurch, retiring president, who has led IHA since 1992.

**Celebrating Support
for Affordable Housing**

To our donors, we share the success of our work within these pages. Thank you on behalf of families, formerly living in shelter poverty or substandard housing, and now under better circumstances. Yet, the need grows.

While all gifts, large and small, are important to the mission, several recent efforts deserve recognition. When the family of long-time housing advocate Patricia Heinaman directed memorial contributions to IHA this past year, over \$3600 accumulated.

Major faith partners in the last few months include: St. Timothy Roman Catholic Church's St. Vincent de Paul Society, Walkersville; St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church, Libertytown; St. Ann Catholic Church, Hagerstown; Frederick Presbyterian Church and the Baltimore Washington Conference of United Methodist Churches.

Recent corporate support has come from: Frederick County Bank, F&M Trust, Shippensburg; BB&T, Frederick; and Natelli Communities. And, major gifts from foundations include; PNC Foundation, the Doseff Family Foundation, the Ausherman Family Foundation, Fannie Mae Foundation and the William Randolph Hearst Foundation.

Critical stability comes from NeighborWorks America and USDA Rural Development. Board and staff thank one and all and encourage others to remember those less fortunate, as we go through a time of extreme financial strife for many.



During the cold winter months, it is especially important to me to fight shelter poverty and help my neighbors find or build safe, decent, affordable housing with a gift to Interfaith Housing Alliance, Inc.

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My/Our gift \$ _____

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Spiders are adorable

Well, this one is! Everyone who has seen this toddler, with or without the costume, agrees. Attending Monocacy Woods Community Day, which occurred close to Halloween, he came in costume, as did others. Food and face painting were the order of the day. In fact, much of this issue shows how residents of various complexes, owned and operated by Interfaith Housing Alliance, enjoy time together throughout the year.

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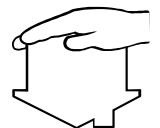
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