

HOMEOWNERSHIP CAN BE A REALITY

by: Nora Earnest, Director of Advocacy & Support Activities

Across the State of Colorado, individuals with developmental disabilities are exploring the possibility of homeownership. Through the assistance of dedicated state and non-profit organizations, individuals with developmental disabilities may learn the steps to homeownership, obtain financial assistance, and achieve their dreams of purchasing a home.

A relatively new program available to individuals with developmental disabilities is the Section 8 Homeownership Program, administered through participating Public Housing Authorities. The Section 8 Homeownership Program allows eligible individuals and families to use their Section 8 Rental Voucher toward the purchase of a home. If an individual is not eligible for this program, other homeownership resources exist, such as low-interest rate loan programs and down payment assistance programs.

The first step for anyone interested in purchasing a home should be to attend a "First-time Homebuyer's Education" class. Free classes are offered throughout the state and are typically required for the Section 8 Homeownership Program, low-interest rate loan programs, and down payment assistance programs. The class is offered to individuals with and without disabilities and explains the steps to homeownership with great detail. It also addresses the importance of budgeting, credit issues, homeowner's insurance, home maintenance, and future costs. To learn more about the First-Time Homebuyer's Education class, contact The Colorado Housing and Finance Authority at 1-800-877-CHFA, ext. 374 or visit their website at www.colohfa.org.

The Arc of Colorado has developed a resource consisting of informative reading materials, organizational brochures, and statewide housing resources encompassing a wide range of housing issues. The Arc of Colorado has also been participating in monthly HERO (Homeownership Education and Resource Opportunities) Alliance meetings. The HERO Alliance is a collaborative effort comprised of non-profit organizations, lenders, and state and federal agencies dedicated to making homeownership a reality for individuals with disabilities. The HERO Alliance actively discusses ways to raise awareness, increase education, provide additional financial resources, and develop additional programs to assist individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals. To learn more about housing programs that assist individuals with developmental disabilities or the HERO Alliance, contact Nora Earnest at (303) 864-9334.

Governor Orders Budget Cuts

In June, 2002, Governor Bill Owens ordered a 4% across the board budget cut of the State's general fund and a freeze on rate increases for the provision of adult services. THE GOOD NEWS! We now know that Developmental Disability Services budget will not be affected. This means that no budget cuts will affect adult services, however, the freeze on the 1% rate increase will be in effect. THE BAD NEWS! As of this publication we don't know what the BAD NEWS will be. But we know that there will be BAD NEWS. Keep in touch with your local Arc chapter or The Arc of Colorado for the current effects of the Governor's budget cuts and what necessary action by you may be necessary to change the Governor's decision.