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**Family Self-Sufficiency Graduation Begins Financial Independence,  
Stability for CHA Voucher Holders**  
*Residents Achieve Short and Long-Term Goals in Five-Year Program*

CHICAGO (October 25, 2006) – Today, twelve Chicago Housing Authority voucher holders celebrated a milestone on their road to economic independence when they ‘graduated’ from the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. They joined more than 390 CHA residents and Housing Choice Voucher holders who have completed the five-year program.

FSS is an award winning initiative, designed to help voucher program participants obtain good jobs and build assets to purchase a home or eliminate the need for public assistance. Today’s graduates have found stable jobs, most with health benefits as security officers, traffic management aides, legal assistants, customer service representatives and certified nursing assistants. They worked hard to overcome the obstacles of poor credit, lack of skills and personal hardship. Aside from job placement and home ownership, goals completed include computer training, driver’s license training and clearer financial literacy.

“Today’s graduates have succeeded in their financial goals and now have the tools to secure a stable life for their families,” CHA CEO Sharon Gist Gilliam said. “The efforts of these residents should be applauded for taking advantage of the opportunities created under the Plan for Transformation.”

When former and current CHA residents and voucher holders enroll in the FSS program, they create five-year economic self-sufficiency goals catered to their personal needs. The participants are given the support needed to obtain those goals by providing further education as needed, financial management counseling, child care or transportation assistance. As participants reach their goals and their earned income and rent payments increase, savings accounts are established for them. The savings the CHA realizes from its income-based rent increases is placed into the savings account for each resident. At the end of the program, the savings can be used for down payments on a home or other purposes.

During the graduation ceremony at CHAC’s offices, residents were also presented with a check representing money they saved throughout the five-year program.

Since the program began in 1996, over 390 graduates have earned more than \$3.7 million in savings. While the average return to each family is \$9,367, some graduates have received nearly \$20,000 in savings, all of which is tax-free.

“It is my pleasure to congratulate all of you on behalf of everyone at CHAC on your success and wish you and your families the best in the future,” said William Riley, executive director of CHAC. “As voucher holders continue to enroll in our award-winning program, CHAC staff members will be poised to assist families in realizing their goals.”

For more information on Family Self-Sufficiency, please contact the Chicago Housing Choice Voucher Program at (312) 986-9400 or visit [www.chacinc.com](http://www.chacinc.com).

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**Note For Editors: Information on specific graduates and interviews are available by contacting Wick Swanton at [wswanton@mkepr.com](mailto:wswanton@mkepr.com) or (312) 822-0505.**

**Photos of the event are available at the following web addresses:**

**Photo #1: <http://www.mkepr.com/filebin/fssgroup10.25.06.JPG>**

**Suggested Caption: “Graduates of the Family Self-Sufficiency celebrated their achievement on Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> with their representatives, CHA CEO Sharon Gist Gilliam and CHAC Executive Director William Riley.”**

**Photo #2: <http://www.mkepr.com/filebin/fssgistgilliam10.25.06.JPG>**

**Suggested Caption: “New CHA CEO Sharon Gist Gilliam addresses the graduates of the five-year Family Self-Sufficiency program while praising their steps toward financial independence at a ceremony held Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.”**

**Photo #3: <http://www.mkepr.com/filebin/fssriley10.25.06.JPG>**

**Suggested Caption: “CHAC, Inc. Executive Director William Riley highlights the achievements and obstacles overcome by the graduates of the Family Self-Sufficiency program, during a ceremony held Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.”**