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Mother-daughter team graduates from CHA's LevelUp wealth-building program, looks forward to their goal of homeownership

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Traceye Butler and her daughter Shannell walked into a Chicago Housing Authority office in 2019 and inquired about becoming homeowners. Five years later, they are not only on the road to accomplishing their goal – but their journey has allowed them to grow closer.

Both graduated last week from LevelUp, a Chicago Housing Authority wealth-building program that helps residents achieve their goals, whether it be improving credit, going back to school or – in the Butlers' case – becoming homeowners.

“We live together and she is a school teacher so we don't get a chance to do a lot together, but this program seems to have brought us closer,” Traceye Butler said. “It felt real good completing the program with her.”

The Butlers, who previously lived in Dearborn Homes before settling in Oakwood Shores, were two of the 73 residents who received their LevelUp certificates of completion at a ceremony at the Charles A. Hayes Family Investment Center.

LevelUp participants receive monetary payouts for successfully completing milestones, such as earning a degree or starting a new career. The savings are set aside in an escrow account and the money accrued is disbursed at the time of successful completion of the five-year program. The money can then be used for whatever the residents choose, including down payments on homes or paying off debt.

The total payout among the 73 graduates Saturday was \$501,096. Of those graduates:

- 8 became homeowners
- 7 increased their credit score
- 7 transitioned off housing subsidy
- 1 obtained a doctoral degree
- 2 obtained master's degrees

- 4 obtained bachelor's degrees
- 6 obtained associate degrees
- 20 completed a Training/Certificate/Certification Program
- All graduates maintained employment for at least 12 months

In her address, CHA CEO Tracey Scott encouraged the graduates to continue taking the time to achieve their potential.

"Real self-care is an assertion of power, claiming what's yours, setting your boundaries so that you can grow," CEO Scott said. "Remember that self-love is revolutionary and will change you, as Amanda Gorman said. So today Level Up! Claim your power, own it, keep growing for your children, your family and your community. But, most importantly, for yourself."

Shannell Butler thanked her CHA coach Tasia Drake, Financial Literacy Zoom Meeting Presenters Delores Allen and Barbara Martinez and all of the staff members of the LevelUp Program and CHA.

She said she and her mother are getting closer to homeownership, but that spending time together in navigating LevelUp has been an unexpected joy.

"We've always been close, but this program allowed us to do things together like we did before I was in high school," said Shannell. "It gave us a chance to learn together, to grow together. We're just like sisters. So it was comfortable to have each other as we were going through the program."

Tracey Butler said LevelUp is a chance to feel like you can do something to help yourself and your family.

"We've completed the first step. Now it's on to the next step of becoming a homeowner," Tracey said. "It's a wonderful program."

For more information, call the LevelUp infoline at [\(312\) 786-3188](tel:3127863188) or click [here](#).