



# HomeOwnership Center

Dedicated To The Revitalization and Growth of Neighborhoods



## Your Catalyst for Change

# 2006 Annual Report



# The HomeOwnership Center

## 2006 Board Officers

**President**  
Kelly Walters  
*Resident*

**Vice President**  
Willard Iman  
*Business / Community*

**Treasurer**  
Cynthia Grabeldinger  
*Business/Community*

**Secretary**  
Lucretia Hunt  
*Resident*

## 2006 Board Members

Lynn Ames  
*Business / Community*

Shelly Betrus  
*Resident*

Albert Casab  
*Resident*

Cynthia A. DelPiano  
*Government*

Roy Duhart  
*Resident*

Frank Gerace  
*Business / Community*

Brain Gerling  
*Business / Community*

Mary Grant  
*Resident*

Barbara Hoehn  
*Business / Community*

Kay Lanaux  
*Resident*

Michael McGlynn  
*Business / Community*

Phillip Montana  
*Resident*

Robert Ohmann  
*Business / Community*

Morris Pearson  
*Resident*

Julieann Sylvester  
*Resident*

Laraine Washburn  
*Resident*

Kurt Wiehenstroer  
*Resident*

## 2006 Staff

**Executive Director**  
Janice A. Forte

**Associate Director**  
George Acee

**Communications Manager /  
Weed & Seed Coordinator**  
Gene A. Allen

**Comptroller**  
Deborah Dorsino

**Contracts Coordinator**  
Gary Edwards

**Development Manager**  
Judith A. Goldstone

**Community Coordinator**  
Craig Grant

**Contracts Manager**  
David Grosse

**Grant & Reporting Coordinator**  
Helen M. Madden

**Financial Literacy Coordinator**  
Julie Howarth

**Loan Coordinator**  
Joanne Nitka

**Contracts Coordinator**  
Richard Ostler

**Services Coordinator**  
Victoria Steele

## 2006 HomeOwner of the Year

*"If you don't think you can do it and want to give up . . .  
DON'T! Bite the bullet and go for it!"*

That is the advice Kim and Pete Cunningham give to every prospective home buyer. If you take advice from anyone, listen to the Cunninghams. This family has seen it all overcoming obstacles that would stop most people . . . job loss, bankruptcy and rejection. Nothing deterred Kim and Pete from obtaining their dream of HomeOwnership!

Like many families, everything was going along smoothly, when the business employing Kim went through a crisis and she lost her job. Finding work was difficult and the bills started to build up. Even with reduced payments, it would be over 10 years before they saw the light of day. After considerable soul searching, they were forced to declare bankruptcy.

Despite the setbacks, they never lost sight of their ultimate goal of owning a home of their own. "We knew that our daughter would soon be going to school and we wanted her to feel secure," said Kim. The HomeOwnership Center armed them with knowledge and determination to succeed.

The Cunninghams attended HomeBuyer Education class and then started individual credit counseling. According to Kim and Pete, they followed the guidelines to a "T". "Anything we were told to do, we did it," Kim said. "It was tough," said Pete. "We really had to set priorities and stick to them, no matter what."

Whenever they were stuck, they went back to the manual, provided by HOC, and followed the directions. "The one thing I remember most was to pay everything on time," said Kim. Their hard work and perseverance paid off. In just three years their FICO score went from 400 to over 700. "It's not how much money you have, but how you use it," said Kim.

Sitting in the HOC office, Kim and Pete waited to see if they would pre-qualify for a mortgage. "When we saw the answer



I just started to cry," Pete said. Then the hunt for a home began. They weren't just looking for a house they wanted a home.

Fate seemed against them once more. Each time they found a home they wanted, they hit another roadblock. They had a bid on a house but there was a contingency for the current owner to find a replacement.

First one month went by. Then two. Finally they had to back out of the purchase. They placed an offer on another house but were outbid.

Then, out of the blue, Kim's cousin came to visit. While surfing the internet, she saw what would turn out to be their new home. "We weren't even looking in that area," said Kim. At first they were skeptical, but once they saw this house they knew it was destined to become their home.

"We are so thankful to The HomeOwnership Center who made this all possible," said Pete. "Whenever we were down, there was always someone to lift us back up and offer guidance."

## A message from our Executive Director



A family of four came to The HomeOwnership Center to preserve their home. The family consisted of a mother, father, and two children, ages 3 and 6.

The head of the household worked for the same employer for many years until he was terminated, through no fault of his own. He notified his mortgage lender that he had lost his employment, but would catch-up with the mortgage payments when their tax refund was received. He kept his promise and remained current with his mortgage.

It took him quite a while to find another job, but when he did, it was at a lower income. They fell behind on the mortgage, again, due to their decreased income and the length of time to find the job. They applied for food stamps, HEAP and Medicaid for the first time in their lives. They lived in a very rural community, so it was impractical for the mother to work due to lack of transportation and the cost of daycare.

The HomeOwnership Center provided counseling. After preparing the family's financial statement, it was determined there was no discretionary income to catch up on the mortgage. If they lost their home, a subsidized apartment rental would cost more than the mortgage. However, if they caught up with the mortgage payments, they would be able to continue to remain in their home and continue mortgage payments.

The HomeOwnership Center contacted social services to discuss the family crisis. Social services described the solution we provided as "creative and innovative". Arrangements were made for a onetime payment, preserving the home and saving the tax payers money.

The HomeOwnership Center is a HUD approved counseling agency providing professional services. We maintain our certification through NeighborWorks® America. We have joined with NeighborWorks® America and the Credit Counseling Resource Center to provide quality counseling to assist homeowners who may be delinquent on their mortgage or in financial distress. A national hotline has been provided where local families will receive assistance through CCRC and then contact The HomeOwnership Center directly.

Foreclosure rates have increased throughout the country as the result of the lack of Home Buyer Education, pre-mortgage counseling, variable mortgage products, and loose underwriting guidelines. In our service area, we have provided 7 families with foreclosure counseling in 2003, by 2006 this climbed to 39 families. However, of the 346 customers purchasing homes through HOC, between 2003-2006, there is no evidence that foreclosure counseling was needed. Home Buyer Education and Pre-mortgage counseling works!

The UNHS NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center has been your catalyst for change for 28 years. We provide multiple programs to encourage community development in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties.

Your catalyst for change,  
Janice A. Forte,  
Executive Director

# Many Thanks to our Donors

## Unrestricted Donations

George Acee  
Gene Allen  
Nancy C. Agen  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Arlott Office Products  
Toni Coote  
Alicia and Fran D'Ambrosio  
John & Debra Deater & Family  
Deborah Dorsino  
Father Paul J. Drobin  
Gary Edwards  
M.M. Eisnor Insurance  
Agency  
Janice Forte  
Judith Goldstone  
Dr. & Mrs. Edmund Goldstone  
Mr. & Mrs. Harold Goldstone  
Dr. & Mrs. Jack D. Goldstone  
Mary Lynne Graham  
Craig Grant  
David Grosse  
Gustafson & Company  
Jan Heap  
Simona Henry  
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Hill  
Margaret Holohan  
Julie Howarth  
Kevin M. Howarth  
Jay-K Independent Lumber  
Corporation  
Susan Jouard  
Edward Landesman  
Gillian Mould  
Mr. & Mrs. William Murdock  
Joanne Nitka  
John H. Ossowski  
Richard Ostler

Honorable Gerald J. Popeo  
F. Eugene Romano  
Staffworks  
Victoria Steele  
Kelly Walters  
Donna A. Wilczek

## In Memory of:

Willie Steele  
By Anonymous  
Dr. Ronald Goldstone  
By Sherry Goldstone  
Bea & Vic DeSantis  
By Lucretia D. Hunt  
Bea & Vic DeSantis  
By Lucretia D. Hunt  
Baum McLeod  
By Marron W. McLeod

## In Honor of:

Victoria Steele  
By Anonymous

## Small Cities Grant

Herkimer County  
Oneida County

## Matching Donations

AXA Foundation

## Financial Partners

Allstate Foundation  
Bank of America  
Bank of Utica Foundation, Inc.  
Citizens Bank Foundation  
First Source Federal Credit  
Union  
HSBC Bank  
NBT Bank  
Partners Trust  
Rome Savings Bank  
Foundation  
State Farm Insurance  
Companies

The M & T Charitable  
Foundation  
Utica National Insurance Group  
Wells Fargo Housing  
Foundation

## Financial Literacy

Allstate Foundation  
Broadview Networks, Inc.  
JPMorgan Chase Foundation  
Wells Fargo Foundation  
on behalf of Wells Fargo  
Home Mortgage,  
Syracuse, NY

## The Gary Hamilton Memorial Fund

Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Michael Brown  
Octagon Engineering  
Robert E. Rice, Jr.  
Brian Rowback

## 2006 Annual Dinner Corporate Sponsors

First Source Federal Credit  
Union  
M & T Bank  
MetLife  
NBT Bancorp  
NeighborWorks® America  
Partners Trust  
Rome Savings Bank

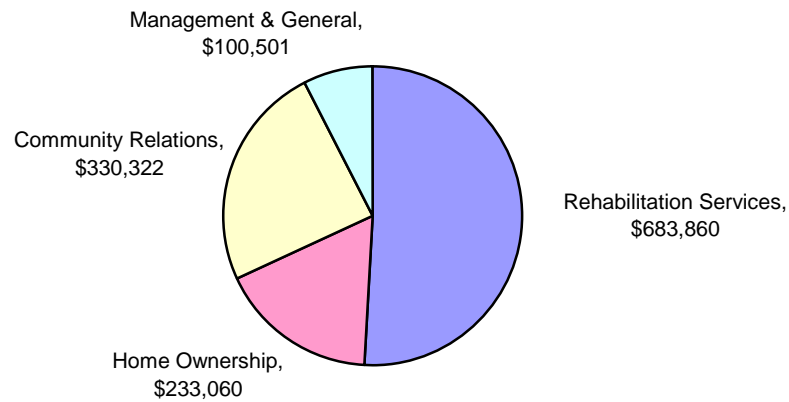
## Gifts-in-Kind

Columbia Barbara Allen  
Harden Furniture, Inc.  
Home Depot  
Hummel's Office Plus  
Jay-K Independent Lumber  
Corporation  
Barbara Malley  
Partners Trust  
Safe Housing Coalition of  
Central New York  
Sherwin-Williams Company  
Urbanik's Paint & Wallcovering



# Financial Overview

## 2006 Program Services



<b>Current assets</b>		<b>Current liabilities</b>	
Cash	\$58,660	Current portion of long-term debt	\$4,771
Grants receivable	256,270	Accounts payable and accrued expenses	20,527
Other receivables	-	Escrow deposits payable	359,218
Prepaid expenses	19,475	Deferred revenue	<u>121,317</u>
Loans receivable - Current portion	<u>383,939</u>	Total current liabilities	505,833
Total current assets	718,344		
		<b>Noncurrent Liabilities</b>	
<b>Property and equipment - net</b>	155,362	Long-term debt	<u>45,997</u>
		Total liabilities	551,830
<b>Other assets</b>			
Restricted cash	815,823	<b>Net assets</b>	
Loans receivable - Noncurrent	817,165	Unrestricted	9,682
Deferred financing fees	<u>896</u>	Permanently restricted	<u>1,946,078</u>
Total other assets	1,633,884	Total net assets	1,955,760
<b>Total assets</b>	<u>\$ 2,507,590</u>	<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<u>\$ 2,507,590</u>

# A Message from our President



As my term as Board President comes to an end, I thought it a perfect time to reflect on how being a part of The HomeOwnership Center has impacted my life. I have been an active Board member, as well as active in my community.

on the City of Utica Common Council; to receiving the National Dorothy Richardson Award; to Board President of The HomeOwnership Center; to the Executive Director of another not-for-profit agency – the Parkway Senior Center.

The theme for The HomeOwnership Center is “Your Catalyst for Change”. The experience that I have gained in being an active participant with The HomeOwnership Center has brought about change in my life that I did not foresee.

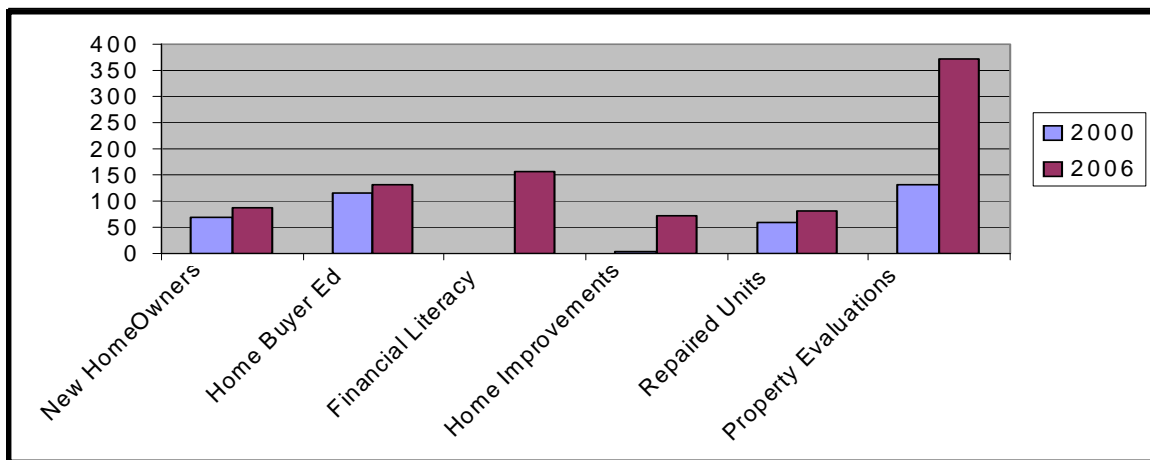
My association with the organization dates back over 12 years. I am proud to have been able to serve as Board President for the past 3 years.

Throughout the years, I have been on various committees and have attended numerous trainings provided by NeighborWorks® America. At the time that The HomeOwnership Center sponsored the national training, I did not realize that what I was learning would impact my life, so profoundly. I went from leading my neighborhood Block Association; to serving two terms

They have been active in changing our community; and, although my term as Board President is coming to an end, I will continue to support The HomeOwnership Center. I have personally experienced the difference that this organization has made in our community.

Thank you.  
Kelly Walters  
President of the Board

## 2000 - 2006 Customer Services Economic Investment - \$41,781,852



# Community Empowerment

*"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."*  
John F. Kennedy

Understanding how to work together to create a new sense of community is paramount to ensuring a neighborhood's livability. This is the goal of The HomeOwnership Center. Through education, HOC is your catalyst for change. Residents attending trainings facilitated by HOC gained an improved understanding of their roles as partners in the community.

For example, Community Coordinator for Youth, Craig Grant presented a workshop on Alcohol Prevention for fifth graders at Martin Luther King School. This endeavor entitled "Teach-In" was a joint effort between The HomeOwnership Center, Safe Schools Healthy Students, and Cornhill Caring Community. During the summer, he assisted the New Life Institute program as a co-facilitator. Later in the year, he presented information on Sexually Transmitted Diseases to a teen group at the Boys & Girls Club.

In partnership with HOC's Weed and Seed program, the Utica Police Department conducted three eight week Citizen's Police Academies (CPA). This training provided an overview of some of the fundamental principles of the basic training that is given to police officers. Over the eight weeks, the class received instruction and hands on experience in Fire Arms Training and Article 35 – the use of force; Constitutional Law, Penal Law and Functions of a Patrol Officer; Defensive Tactics, Drug and Gang Cases, and Criminal Investigation – TV vs. real life. They investigated a mock crime scene, to determine the course of events, and learned finger printing techniques.

In 2006, HOC kicked off our latest endeavor in community education – Landlord Training. This two hour program covers all aspects of rules, regulations and laws for ownership of property in Utica. There are sections on screening applicants, rental agreements and the responsibilities landlords and tenants have to one another. In all 81 landlords took advantage of this new offering. A city-wide Landlord Association is now in the development stages.



The success of our resident programs has been recognized. The Attorney General's Statewide Neighborhood Watch Conference was held in Albany on May 24. HOC's Weed & Seed Initiative was a recipient of the 2006 Attorney General's Neighborhood Watch Award of Excellence.

HOC's Communications Manager/Weed & Seed Coordinator, Gene Allen, conducted a special Resident Leadership Training session for a group of seven new homeowners who have recently purchased homes through the Hope VI project. With our expansion into Madison County, he was called upon to facilitate the first City-Wide Neighborhood Watch meeting in Oneida.

HOC is recognized nationally as a leader in the Community Building and Organizing field. As such, Gene presented workshops around the country at Community Leadership Institutes, sponsored by NeighborWorks® America, and was the featured presenter for a two day "Place Based Training" sponsored through a partnership of the Department of Justice's Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO) and NeighborWorks® America.

As Your Catalyst for Change, HOC assists residents in the forgotten neighborhoods of our community to articulate a common agenda, exercise their own capacity for internal change, and forge working relationships with institutions and power structures.