

Contact: Julie Howarth
1611 Genesee Street
Utica, NY 13501
Tel. 315-724-4197
Fax. 315-724-1415
Jhowarth@unhs.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOW WILL THE NEW HOUSING BILL AFFECT HOMEOWNERS WITH MORTGAGES?

Housing counselors at The HomeOwnership Center are ready to help sort out the confusion

July 31, 2008 (Utica, NY) – Now that more legislation has been passed in reaction to the housing and mortgage crisis, The UNHS NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center (HOC) is urging homeowners to dig out their mortgage papers and make an appointment to have them reviewed by housing professionals who can sort through the fine print

"Mortgage documents are signed on a day when all the homeowner can think about is receiving the keys to their new home and all of the excitement that accompanies it," says Janice Forte, executive director of The HOC. "It is crucial that homeowners know exactly what their mortgage loans contain and we are here to help explain that to them."

Certified housing counselors at The HOC review mortgage documents on a regular basis as part of their post-purchase programs. As a HUD-certified counseling agency, counselors also work with lenders to try to negotiate workouts for homeowners facing late payments or even foreclosure.

Julie Howarth, a foreclosure-intervention specialist at The HOC says "I have seen an increase in the number of predatory loans and the homeowners coming in for help are surprised to learn about certain features of their mortgages they didn't know existed. Every homeowner should think about their mortgage loan in terms of preventive care; just like you would go to the doctor with symptoms of an illness before it gets worse."

Of course early action is most important when a homeowner is facing the inability to make a payment.

"Finding a problem in the mortgage documents or a clause you didn't know existed *before* trouble hits is key. As long as the credit is still in tact, refinancing can be an option early on," Howarth says. "However, once you miss a payment on your mortgage, your credit score is going to take a hit and most lenders will be less willing to offer you financing."

In terms of the new housing bill for homeowners, more assistance will become available, but homeowners are still going to have to negotiate with their lenders. "If talking to the lender about your mortgage terms is at all intimidating or overwhelming, that's where we come in," Howarth says. "Having someone on your side in this process can be very reassuring to the homeowner."

Chartered in 1979, The HomeOwnership Center has been the leader in housing initiatives for over 29 years. Through various programs such as Home Buyer Education, Financial Literacy and Pre-purchase Counseling, the certified and trained staff at HOC help serve low- to moderate-income families in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison counties.

###

If you would like more information on this topic, or to schedule an interview, please contact Julie Howarth at (315) 724-4197 or email Julie at jhowarth@unhs.org