

"HELP OF SOUTHERN NEVADA" LAUNCHES DISPLACED HOMEMAKERS PROGRAM

By Muhammad Abdullah

In an attempt to expand the services presently being offered to residents in Southern Nevada, HELP of Southern Nevada, a non-profit information and referral agency located in the Commercial Center, 953 E. Sahara, Suite 23B, recently launched a new program called "Displaced Homemakers."

The Displaced Homemakers program targets primarily women whose principal job had been homemaking and who have lost their main source of income due to divorce, separation, widowhood, disability or long term unemployment of a spouse, or loss of eligibility for public assistance.

The Displaced Homewok-ers program was adopted in July of this year by HELP of Southern Nevada and is a part of the National Displaced Homemakers Network.

The Sentinel-Voice spoke with LaVerne Batts, an Information and Referral Specialist for HELP of Southern Nevada. Batts is also the Displaced Home-

maker Liason for Region IX of the national organization representing California, Nevada Arizona, Hawaii and the island of Guam.

"We opened here in Las Vegas in July of this year. We have been working on a Task Force targeting (minorities) women-of-color and we are attempting to let them know that we hear them and we know their needs. It is better if they come to us because we don't know where they are."

"Lillian McMorris and I are heading up the task force. She was selected the Multi-Ethnic Liason and we will be working together. Hopefully we can get more minorities and women-of-color involved in the program," she said.

Batts is an example of the success that the program can be in that she is a "displaced homemaker" herself and was hired by HELP of Southern Nevada through the Displaced Homemakers program.

"A woman may have been dependent on someone else (i.e.

her husband, a boyfriend, her parents) and all of the sudden there is no more support. It could be a father who has been taking care of his daughter all of her life and now she must go out and take care of herself. Basically, someone who was dependent on someone else all their lives, and then one day that support is not there. It could be someone who was on welfare and all of a sudden they are cut

off for some reason. Most of the "displaced homemakers" are women who have never worked. You would be surprised; the number of women who have not worked for fifteen years, or women like myself who were married for twenty-two years and then all of a sudden, they (the husbands), are not there," she said.

HELP of Southern Nevada offers other programs as well,

such as: Community Alternative Sentencing, Weatherization, Travelers Assistance and Emergency Resources.

Those who are interested in learning more about the services offered by the "Displace Homemakers" program may call Carol Rhodes, Displaced Homemaker Coordinator or LaVerne Batts at 369-HELP.

According to Rhodes, HELP of Southern Nevada was re-

sponding to "displaced homemakers" even before the national organization became involved.

"We have been an information and referral agency for at least 20 years, and we would see displaced homemakers as a matter of course. These women would be coming through our offices and would see our agents for help. We are often the first place people call when they don't know where to go," she said.

CONGRESSMAN BILBRAY AND NEVADA DELEGATION URGE APPROVAL OF GRANT TO AID WEST LAS VEGAS

Congressman James Bilbray joined members of Nevada's Congressional Delegation in calling for the approval of federal monies to continue revitalization underway in West Las Vegas.

"The work being done by members of the Multijurisdictional Community Empowerment Commission must continue if we are to see real progress in the Westside. Out of the tragedy of civil unrest last Spring comes

new hope that community efforts will lead to lasting revitalization."

The City of Las Vegas has requested a \$350,000 technical assistance grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. If approved, the grant will be used to continue the work of the Multijurisdictional Community Empowerment Commission, formed in the wake of the Rodney King riots.

Congressman Bilbray and his staff play an active part in the work of the Commission. Mr. Franklin Simpson, a member of the Congressman's Las Vegas staff, serves on the Multijurisdictional Commission and is an active member of the group's economic development commit-

tee. Mr. Simpson and Mr. Felix Martinez, a member of Bilbray's Washington, D.C. staff, also serve on the local "Weed and Seed" steering committee. "Weed and Seed" is one of several programs the Multijurisdictional Commission is considering in their efforts to revitalize economically troubled areas of Las Vegas.

The entire Nevada Congressional delegation has signed a letter sent to Mr. Jack Kemp, Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. In the letter the delegation strongly urges Mr. Kemp to approve the grant request, calling the work of the Multijurisdictional Community Empowerment Commission "critical in developing and implementing programs

and strategies to turn around the economic stagnation in West Las Vegas."

The delegation letter also praises the Commission's coordination of efforts by the many different agencies and departments working in the revitalization of the area.

Congressman Bilbray believes the continued work of the Commission is vital to the future of Las Vegas. "The work the Multijurisdictional Commission is doing is of critical importance to my district. I pledge to continue my support and that of my Congressional staff both in Las Vegas and in Washington, D.C. I strongly urge Mr. Kemp give this important request his most careful consideration for approval."

State Senator Joe Neal Appears Before U.S. Senate Subcommittee Regarding Bank Redlining In Las Vegas

Las Vegas - Nevada State Senator Joe Neal, as a representative of the Las Vegas Alliance for Fair Banking, testified before the Subcommittee on Housing & Urban Affairs of the Senate Banking Committee Tuesday.

Senator Neal was invited to the hearings after the Subcommittee received the Alliance's report "Cashing Out," which detailed inequitable lending practices by major lending institutions in Las Vegas. "Our report provided the cold facts on unfair lending practices in Clark County that minority and working class parts of this community

have known and felt for years," said Senator Neal. "The CRA provided us with a starting point to correct the problem, if we are willing to face it head-on."

The Subcommittee, which includes Senator Richard Bryan, sought input from community and banking leaders from Las Vegas and Southern California to review the performance of the federal Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and to consider ways to improve it. In his testimony today, Sen. Neal supported ef-



STATE SENATOR JOE NEAL

forts for strengthening the CRA through broader disclosure requirements and detailed the Alliance's efforts in addressing the problem in the Las Vegas community.

"For the first time, our major financial institutions are encountering organized, consistent, and well-founded challenges to "business-as-usual," said Senator Neal in his testimony. "And they are also finding new partners for commitments to (programs) that make credit and banking services available to all members of our community."



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