

Community *focus*

VISION:

We envision Appalachia as a place proud of sustaining its culture and environment, where growth, opportunity and hope are balanced so that all people fulfill their potential with regard to housing, employment, education, opportunity, and quality of life.

Returning Iraq War Veteran and Family

In late summer 2006, FAHE received a phone call from Amanda Hutchins, a young mother in east Tennessee looking to finance a home for her family. Amanda's husband, David, had recently secured permanent employment after returning from military duty in Iraq. At the time, they faced a number of challenges, including too much debt to qualify for the home they needed and a lack of originating agents in the area. With some helpful advice from FAHE's mortgage division, JustChoice Lending, David and Amanda gained control of their debt over the course of the next year. Working in cooperation with the Tennessee Housing Development Authority, JustChoice Lending worked with the family to secure a piece of property for a builder to construct a house. With a little work and JustChoice Lending's fair financing, David and Amanda are moving into their new home.

MISSION:

FAHE leads a network of Appalachian organizations to sustainable growth and measurable impact through collective voice and provides access to capital that creates housing and promotes community development.

Stop Abusive Family Environment, Inc. (SAFE) builds and renovates homes for sale or rent to low-income families and provides low

-interest loans to enable low-income families to become homeowners in southeast West Virginia. SAFE employs local contractors for home construction and rehabilitation in a variety of housing programs. The Starland Heights project was built with local labor because SAFE formed a construction company. SAFE continues to grow by supporting a new non-profit, Travel Beautiful Appalachia, Inc. (TBAI). TBAI was formed to develop services for tourists coming into the area through a recreational trail. SAFE anticipates that by bringing a regular stream of tourists into its area, SAFE will be able to garner ongoing volunteer and financial support that is vital to its sustainability.

Focus on a FAHE Member

Recent SAFE Success Story

Ronald Blevins lived contentedly by himself for decades in the small McDowell County community of Landgraff, on the banks of Elkhorn Creek. Then, in July 2001, the rains came and the creek overflowed its banks, devastating his home. Everything in his basement, including his water heater, was destroyed. From that time on, Ronald had to heat bathwater in his microwave. Still, he fixed the place up as well as he could and remained there "... because it was home." In May 2002, disaster struck again. Ronald was operating a pump in his basement, trying to stay ahead of the rising water, when "a river just came down the steps on me. I was lucky I got out," he recalls. He and his neighbors couldn't go far—the roads were washed out—but they gathered on higher ground and watched as flood waters ravaged their community. Ronald's garage was washed away, and everything in his house was ruined. "I knew I couldn't handle it again," he remembers. "I was retired and living on Social Security. I didn't know what to do."

A FEMA worker introduced Ronald to a McDowell County non-profit organization called SAFE. In 2002, SAFE spun off a sister non-profit called SAFE Housing and Economic Development (SHED). Says SAFE and SHED Executive Director Sharon Walden, "we have our work cut out for us. Even before the floods came, 50% of the housing in this area was substandard, and 75% was more than 50 years old." Now, since the floods, even more of the housing is substandard. Ronald Blevins is one of many people glad that SAFE and SHED took on the challenge. After the second flood, Ronald became one of the first residents at Starland Heights, which has been fully occupied since it opened. "I was grateful to be there," he says, "but I missed owning my own house. I just never thought that could happen for me again."

SHED Housing Development Specialist Cathy Rose recalls that, "SHED had bought a vandalized HUD foreclosure property in the town of Crumpler, a nice little community 20 minutes up the mountain from Landgraff. We tore it down, put in a septic system and water lines, and then built a new house in cooperation with Mennonite Disaster Services." SHED provided materials, MDS volunteers provided labor and soon a tidy, 1,200-square-foot house was standing on the corner lot. In cooperation with FAHE, SHED designed an affordable mortgage—Ronald pays just \$70.43 per month—and he soon moved into the house. One of the first things he did was put up a flagpole, and every day the American flag flies proudly from the porch.

LIVING IN APPALACHIA:

\$22,000:

Minimum annual income to afford a mortgage with grant subsidy

\$21,000:

Minimum annual income to afford rent and utilities without rental assistance

25%:

Households with incomes below \$15,000

INVESTING IN FAHE:

FAHE's goal is to be the largest provider of housing & community development to Appalachia. An investment in FAHE has a double bottom line:

- Financial return
and
- Mission return

Community Focus is a quarterly newsletter for FAHE investors. For more information on our programs or making an investment:



phone: 888-969-1399

web: www.fahe.org



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