

National Low Income Housing Coalition



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NLIHC Announces 2012 Award Winners

Each year, NLIHC recognizes excellence in advancing the cause of housing justice with awards for organizing and public education. The honorees will receive their awards for work completed in 2011 at the NLIHC conference on Tuesday, March 27 at the breakfast plenary event.

The third annual **State and Local Organizing Award** will go to the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People (NDCHP). NDCHP, an NLIHC state coalition partner, worked on a state-level campaign to create an affordable housing trust fund. NDCHP, along with other campaign members, were successful in establishing the North Dakota Housing Incentive Fund. The fund will provide \$15 million for affordable housing development and supportive services.

NDCHP played a vital role in organizing a broad coalition of housing advocates and the housing divisions of human needs organizations and foundations. These efforts created the Housing Alliance of North Dakota (HAND), which led the campaign for the housing trust fund.

One of the priorities of NDCHP and HAND was to revise the language in the 2009 version of the trust fund bill, which was defeated in the House. Advocates replaced the term “trust fund” with “housing incentive fund” to make it more legislatively palatable.

A variety of other strategies led to success, such as holding “legislative coffees” between legislative sessions with lawmakers and candidates on opposite sides of the trust fund bill; working with legislative champions to get the bill introduced in the Senate, where there was greater chance of success; expanding the coalition’s membership, creating a strong base of advocates prepared to act when necessary; and informing legislators, the public and media about the state’s housing crisis and how the Housing Incentive Fund would work to improve the affordable housing situation.

The first NLIHC **Resident Organizing Award** will go to the Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants (MAHT), for conducting local campaigns to preserve HUD-subsidized developments in Massachusetts and bringing their efforts to the attention of Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) to encourage him to support full funding of HUD rental programs and several amendments aimed at preserving HUD subsidized buildings. In January and February 2011, MAHT worked with other National Alliance of HUD Tenants affiliates to lead the “Have a Heart” campaign, which opposed funding cuts to HUD programs.

On February 14, MAHT, along with public housing and voucher tenants, marched from a Boston City Council hearing to Senator Brown’s office, where they met with his staff. MAHT leaders also met with Senator Brown’s staff in Washington, DC several times during 2011.

Senator Brown subsequently co-sponsored two preservation amendments to the FY12 HUD funding bill. The Durbin-Brown amendment extended Enhanced Voucher protections to at-risk tenants in buildings with expiring HUD mortgages or use restrictions that were previously not eligible for voucher assistance. The Merkley-Brown amendment authorized project-based vouchers in lieu of tenant-based vouchers for certain expiring affordability programs, which will ensure long-term affordability for homes that qualify.

New Orleans reporter Katy Reckdahl will receive the **NLIHC Media Award** for her extensive reporting on low income housing issues for *The Times-Picayune*. The NLIHC Media Award recognizes print journalists who have made a dedicated effort to inform the public about the inequities in housing and to add to the understanding of the disparities between the well-housed and the poorly or un-housed in a community.

Ms. Reckdahl has covered the New Orleans beat since 1999 and made significant contributions to the nation’s of the housing crisis created by Hurricane Katrina. Her stories in 2011 covered public and Section 8 housing, homelessness, and how New Orleans cultural institutions are affected by city or police policy. Over 30 of her stories were published in *The Times-Picayune* in 2011, including:

- “HANO subsidies may be driving up rental rates in New Orleans” (January 8, 2011)
- “Repairs to Guste high-rise will leave elderly without power” (March 29, 2011)
- “Homeless population in New Orleans rises 70 percent since Hurricane Katrina” (June 2, 2011)
- “Road Home settlement will benefit nearly 1,500 homeowners” (July 6, 2011)
- “Neighbors of rebuild public housing see reduced crime, study says” (September 4, 2011)

“For years, I’ve pulled data from the annual *Out of Reach* wage to rent comparisons and relied upon insightful analysis from the National Low Income Housing Coalition,” said Ms. Reckdahl. “So it’s a special honor to receive this award.”

Read all of Reckdahl’s reporting at www.nola.com.

Hearty congratulations to the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People, Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, and Katy Reckdahl!

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