

NEWS FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

### Local Builder Mark San Agustin Hits the “Mark” With New Houses for Section 8 Families

After hearing about all the improvements that have been made to the Rental Assistance program, entrepreneur Mark San Agustin decided he could “bank” on Section 8 by building a row of new houses in San Ysidro to rent to families with vouchers.

He saw Section 8 as a way for him to help fill his vacancies and provide rent payments directly deposited to his account each month on the first. “It gives me a sense of security knowing the

small, three-bedroom, two-bath stucco houses with garages and patio yards. Nine more such homes on connecting land parcels are set to be built and rented in the same fashion. Among those who have already moved is the de los Santos family – single mom Susana and her two children. Ms. de los Santos, a financial data processor, used to feel overwhelmed from trying to juggle rent payments against other essentials her kids needed. “Now every day I wake up in this house and think, wow – I can’t believe how much better things are!” she said.

The story of Mr. San Agustin’s efforts and successful partnering with the Housing Commission and the City of San Diego was the subject of a KGTV Channel 10 news story earlier this year.



Owner Mark San Agustin welcomes the de los Santos family to their new home.

Housing Commission’s portion of the rent is guaranteed.” Plus, he has a heart for helping people. As a real estate broker, Mr. San Agustin is well aware of the lack of affordable housing in San Diego. “There are so many people who can’t afford to live here because of the high rents. I wanted to be part of the solution.”

With help from San Diego City Councilmember Ralph Inzunza, Mr. San Agustin and his crew recently completed construction on three new detached houses on side-by-side lots in San Ysidro – and promptly leased all three to families with vouchers. Most of the homes are



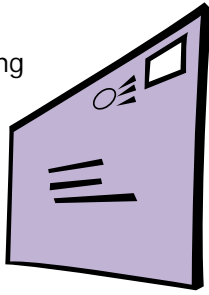
Susana de los Santos is delighted with her new home!

#### INSIDE . . .

Follow the money	2
Rent increase Q & A	2
New state law	3
Inspection tips	4
Free workshops	4

## Followin' the Money...

We're receiving rave reviews from landlords who are having their checks deposited directly into their bank accounts on the first of the month with our new Direct Deposit program. We're continuing to sign up new participants for this program on a daily basis. Meanwhile, many owners simply prefer to have their checks mailed to them – and that's fine! But no matter how you receive your checks, please feel free to call us if you ever have a question or concern. Just note, please, that the person to call in such cases is the Housing Assistant handling your tenant's case (rather than our Financial Services Department).



## Things to Remember When You Are Determining Rents

**Q: How can I speed up the "rent reasonableness" part of the inspection?**



**A:** Find out ahead of time what the comparable rents are in your neighborhood if you can, providing us with addresses and contact information. This will help the inspector quickly confirm that you are asking for a rent that is the "going rate" for your neighborhood.

**Q: How can I know that a Section 8 renter can afford my unit?**

**A:** There has been some confusion about allowable rents, and we would like to clarify this matter. What happens is that new Section 8 participants are given a "maximum gross rent" amount to keep in mind when they go out to look for a unit.

This is the total amount permitted for both rent and utilities. (The tenants have worksheets to calculate how much they should allow for utilities; this amount, called the "utility allowance," varies by unit.)

To figure out how much the total rent can be, they need to remember to subtract the utility allowance from the maximum gross rent. We are trying to better educate tenants on how this works, but in the meantime we thought it would be a good idea for you to understand it as well. Long story short, if a prospective tenant tells you they have a, say, \$1,500 "maximum rent," please remind them to subtract the utility allowance first. (For example, \$1,500 minus \$150 utility allowance = \$1,350 for rent.)

\$ 1,500	"Maximum rent"	
-150	Utility allowance	
<hr/>		
= 1,350	Rent	

## Let Us Help You With Your Rent Increase

Our rent review staff has increased to eight staff persons assigned to help you process your rent increase requests. Assignments for rent reviews have been assigned geographically to help staff gain expertise in particular neighborhoods and to better serve you:

Zipcodes	Name and e-mail	Phone
92113, 92114	Mamie Alston (mamiea)	619/578-7692
92113, 92101, 92102, 92103	Deborah Whitfield (deborahw)	619/578-7663
91950, 92037, 92104, 92106, 92110	Nghiem Nguyen (nghiemn)	619/578-7614
92111, 92116, 92117	Maria Montes (mariamom)	619/578-7616
92105 (north of Laurel St.)	Maria Tapia (mariat)	619/578-7611
92105 (south of Laurel St.), 92020, 92108, 92115, 92119	Nancy Tooson (nancyt)	619/578-7668
92139, 92154, 92173	Carmen Lee (carmenl)	619/578-7639
92107, 92109, 92120–92131	Joanne Gutierrez (margareg)	619/578-7696

*(All e-mails above, are followed by sdhc.org.)*



### How Our Inspections Can Help You

The annual inspections conducted by the Housing Commission can be an “added bonus” when you consider that, under state law, your own access to the property is limited. But you can have peace of mind that your unit is well maintained thanks to our inspections. Our detailed inspection reports can give you a glimpse of what’s going on with your property – either help you know that all is okay, or alert you to any problems that could cause safety hazards or costly repairs.

The only instances when you are permitted to enter the property are described in California Civil Code 1954:

*A landlord may enter the dwelling only in the following cases:*

- *In case of emergency*
- *To make necessary or agreed repairs, decorations, alterations, or*

*improvements; supply necessary or agreed services; or exhibit the unit to prospective or actual purchasers, mortgagees, tenants, workmen, or contractors.*

- *When the tenant has abandoned or surrendered the premises.*
- *Pursuant to a court order.*

The law says that the landlord “shall not abuse the right of access or use it to harass the tenant.” Except in cases of emergency, when the tenant has abandoned or surrendered the premises, or if it is impracticable to do so, the landlord must give the tenant reasonable notice of his intent to enter and enter only during normal business hours. Twenty-four hours is presumed to be reasonable notice in absence of evidence to the contrary.

### Legal Update: New State Law for Three-Day Notices

Lawmakers recently passed a new law requiring rental owners to make changes on your “three-day pay rent or quit” notices. According to this law, which is now in effect, rental property owners and managers must include in these notices information that makes it easier for tenants to reach the owners and submit their rent payment.

Specifically, the forms must show:

- Name, address, and telephone number(s) of the person receiving the rent payment.
- Office hours/dates for making payments in person.

It’s also a good idea to provide an after-hours drop-box for payments, since by law tenants may have up to three full days to pay after receiving the notice. The new law also allows the option of including bank information for tenants to set up direct deposit payments; however, this practice is not recommended because it could be difficult for owners to protect themselves from a lawsuit.



*The Housing Commission’s Martha Brownlee makes sure a water heater is properly installed.*

## Housing Commission Wins Awards for Re-engineering Section 8 Program

Thanks to your efforts to help us redesign the Section 8 program, the Housing Commission just won two awards. The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials and The Communicators honored us for dramatically improving the program.

Your feedback was essential to our success in making the Section 8 program faster and easier. Some of your suggestions that we incorporated included our “fast-track” 24-hour inspections for new tenants and getting our portion of the rent to you within an average of two weeks, rather than two months.

Recreating the program from the inside out was quite an experience for our staff. One of the biggest changes was learning to view everything they did through the eyes of their customers – that is, you, the rental property owner or manager. One employee in particular, senior housing assistant Shantilay Reed, was able to see a “night and day” difference between how things were before and how they are now. That’s because Ms. Reed had transferred out of the Rental Assistance Department, where she worked from 1993 to 1997, to work in our Public Housing Program for a while. She returned to the Rental Assistance

Program just recently, and was amazed to discover a “miraculous” change in terms of process improvements. “It’s so impressive to see how quickly we operate now. I can’t believe that a client can bring in their Request for Tenant Approval form one day, and the next day we’ve got an inspector out there, and how soon we cut a check after that. This is a new Housing Commission, it really is. Customer service is now our driving force. We were always courteous before, but we’ve really gone up several notches in terms of focusing on

taking care of owners’ needs while at the same time complying with HUD regulations,” said Ms. Reed.

Participating owners, such as John Kudela, agree that the emphasis on customer service is refreshing. Mr. Kudela decided to give Section 8 a try despite rumors that it was a “hassle.” He was pleasantly surprised by the outcome. “It wasn’t at all what I expected – everything is so streamlined, and the staff is so responsive,” said Mr. Kudela.

Please help us continue to improve by e-mailing us at [owners@sdhc.org](mailto:owners@sdhc.org) or by calling Lynda Taylor-Brophy, 619/578-7680, with your suggestions.

## Free Workshops

Our workshops are designed to help you get the most out of the Rental Assistance Program with the least effort on your part. Sign up for one today!

The workshops are held at the San Diego Housing Commission offices at

1625 Newton Avenue, San Diego, CA 92113. To reserve your space, please call 619/578-7303.

**Rent increase “how to”**  
Wednesday, May 22  
9-11 a.m.

**Rent increase “how to” & inspections made simple**  
Tuesday, June 18  
9-11 a.m.

**Preventive law 101**  
Wednesday, July 17  
9-11 a.m.

*This workshop helps you understand how to proactively comply with the law in terms of housing discrimination, evictions, and other issues.*

**New owners: what to expect**  
Wednesday, August 7  
2:30-4:30 p.m.

*VIEWpoint is published by the Rental Assistance Department as a way to keep rental owners/managers updated on issues and policies regarding housing assistance programs. If you have any ideas for future stories, or if you have any suggestions about our programs, please contact Owner Liaison Lynda Taylor-Brophy at 619/578-7680; [lyndat@sdhc.org](mailto:lyndat@sdhc.org).*



Good Neighbors  
**San Diego Housing Commission**

- ◆ 1625 Newton Avenue
- ◆ San Diego, California
- ◆ 92113-1038
- ◆ [www.sdhc.net](http://www.sdhc.net)



A state agency authorized by the City of San Diego

