

VOUCHER ADVANTAGE

Spring 2008

News for Owners and Managers in the Rental Assistance Program

Resident Manager Thinks Rent Increases Are a Breeze



Resident manager Merrie Havens with resident Irene Johnson

Merrie Havens is the on-site resident manager for La Casa Balboa, an 88-unit apartment community serving seniors and persons with disabilities. Located in Clairemont, La Casa Balboa is managed by Capital Growth Properties, Inc.

Merrie is relatively new to Section 8. She says she appreciates the help from San Diego Housing Commission employees teaching her about the program. One such example was staff showing her how to request rent increases.

"The Rental Assistance staff was very helpful. Also, the process itself was pretty easy," said Merrie, who recently processed a rent increase for longtime resident Irene Johnson.

The request was approved, so the contract rent went up. Since the amount did not exceed the Housing Commission's payment standards and was reasonable for the area, the resident's portion remained the same (while the Housing Commission's payment amount increased).

Irene, who has lived at La Casa Balboa for 28 years, says she loves her home and the opportunity to live near her three grown children. Her late husband, a gunnery sergeant for the U.S. Marine Corps, passed away in 1970. In the years that followed, she worked as a senior lunch program coordinator. Upon her retirement, she applied for and received a Rental Assistance voucher from the Housing Commission in 1982.

Wanted: Story Ideas

Voucher Advantage newsletter is designed to help rental owners and property managers get the most out of the Rental Assistance Program. Your feedback is key to helping us achieve that goal. Please send your ideas for articles to Communications Specialist Janine Rojas at janiner@sdhc.org.



Time to Raise the Rent? Here's How

Following are steps to help your rent increase request go smoothly:

1. Request a reasonable rent that is consistent with your neighborhood's rental market. Please remember, assisted tenants cannot be charged higher rents than non-assisted households in similar units within the same complex.
2. Send a written 60-day notice to your tenant and a copy to the Housing Commission at the same time.
3. The Housing Commission will send you a letter confirming receipt of your rent increase request. HUD requires the approved rent to be reasonable for the area, size and type of unit. Therefore, you may be asked to provide comparable rents for similar units in the area. The Housing Commission will notify you within 45 days as to whether your request has been approved.
4. If your request is approved, we'll notify you in writing, indicating the tenant and Housing Commission's portions of the rent as well as the date the rent increase will be effective (which will always be the first of the month following the end of the 60-day notice period).

Accessibility Funding Now Available

Grants for Making Your Rental Properties Accessible to Tenants with Disabilities

The Housing Commission offers grants of up to \$3,500 to make rental properties accessible to tenants with disabilities. The funds can be used to build ramps, widen doors, and install walk-in showers, grab bars, raised toilets, or to make other improvements.

These grants are available to any low-income tenant with disabilities who is renting a privately owned property in the City of San Diego. To apply, you or your tenant can contact our Housing Rehabilitation department at 619.578.7521. The tenant would then complete the application, provide proof of household income, and obtain your permission to make the requested repairs. Housing Commission staff assists by preparing work specifications, helping obtain contractor bids, and reviewing the work and payment process.



Pedro Garcia's new ramp has made his life much easier.

The Housing Commission can provide up to \$3,500 for needed upgrades such as wheelchair ramps, widened doors or grab bars.

Ramp Enhances House, Tenant's Life

Pedro Garcia, who uses a wheelchair, needed a ramp to better access his rental home. Pedro's landlord, Don Bean, wanted to help but was concerned about the cost. Then Don heard about the Housing Commission's program, which provides accessibility grants for tenants with disabilities. Soon, Pedro had his ramp.

"The process was very smooth, and I am quite pleased with the outcome," Don says. "The contractors configured the ramp in a way that fit well on the property, and it is attractively designed."

Pedro echoes those sentiments. "They did a fantastic job! It exceeded my expectations. I can easily get inside my home now, and it's a bonus that the ramp turned out so sleek and attractive."



Year-Round Termite Activity Revealed in Spring

Along with blooming flowers and warmer weather, spring also brings increased pest activities. Of most concern this time of year are termites, since they can be most destructive to residential properties.

While termites are active year-round, the harm they cause is not always visible because they are hidden inside walls. Some species also find haven in the ground. But in the spring and fall, termite colonies swarm and are easier to spot. Swarming is how termites reproduce – by sending out new colonies from one home or yard to another. If you see a swarm, this is often a sign that you might have a problem.

Be proactive and get your property inspected by a licensed professional every two to three years to identify and address infestation as early as possible.

This article was provided by Pest Control Operators of California. For more information, go to www.pcoc.org.



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