

C.A.P. Will Give You \$4k to Buy Home!

Written by Precinct Reporter Group

By **Dianne Anderson**

Any program these days in San Bernardino with a few extra bucks to spare is hard to find, let alone a free \$4,000 giveaway for a down payment on a home, or starting a new business, or continuing school. It takes a wild stretch of the imagination.

But it's true.

Charles James heads the Community Action Partnership Individual Development Accounts program orientation, and shows local low-income families how to access the free money, and he's always shocked that there isn't standing room only at his events.

No qualifying applicants are turned away, he said. In the past, they've had over 130 people attending, and they can accommodate more into the program at the next orientation.

"It makes you wonder, particularly those individuals that live in this county, why more aren't taking advantage of this opportunity. The workshops should be full, the orientations should be full," Mr James said.

From the last round of 90 applicants, about 50 selected home ownership as their asset goal, 22 wanted the extra money for business, and 18 selected education.

Participants who finish all workshops and put in \$2,000 of their own money over a six-month to three- year period can walk away with the \$4,000 free money. Saving the money may be difficult, and it requires a lifestyle change, but he said that it is possible. Many families are accomplishing their asset goals.

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“Many of our clients also qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. They use a significant portion of their EITC for saving for the IDA program,” he said, adding that the program is getting good participation from the Black community, which comprises about half the class lately.

IDA has 42 workshops a year, about four a month, mostly focused on personal finances and how to buy a new home. Prior to the enrollment selection, interested applicants must attend orientation, which is held quarterly.

Mr. James, who has been with the IDA program for eight years, said that it’s always exciting to see their graduating class moving forward, finally making it to self-sufficiency. Next orientation is set tentatively for August, and applicants can contact his office for the time and location.

“It’s a buyers market,” he said, adding that couples can also receive \$8,000 free money. “If they both qualify, and they don’t have to be married.”

While everyone can take advantage of the IDA program, Ana Gamiz, with the San Bernardino Housing Authority, said that their agency also offers a separate family self-sufficiency program that has helped many families into homeownership over the years.

Families in that HUD agency program work with coordinators and staff to start their own escrow account that can be applied toward the purchase of a home at the end of their five-year program.

To help families save, rent for participants remains at 30% of their income, with the difference going into their savings account over the five years so that they can build their down payment toward asset goals. That program, however, doesn’t offer free matching dollars.

“The family can take their money for their economic goals they are trying to accomplish, whether training, going back to school,” Ms. Gamiz said. “How much they save depends on the family and the job they find that will increase their income.”

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Last week, Ms. Gamiz commended Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino County for coming through with lunch, hotdogs and hamburger buns, and 300 backpacks, and dessert to share with the community after a last-minute shoe donation came through for the kids at their 9th Street location.

In recent times, there have been two different shoe donation events, one at Waterman Gardens and one at Maplewood Homes Community, totaling about 400 shoes for the children at those locations.

“The whole event was on short notice; our donor wanted to move quickly. We were lucky to pull together our partners to help out,” she said.

For information on the CAP IDA program, call Mr. James at (909) 723.1571 or email pjames@capsbcounty.gov

For information on the Housing Authority Self Sufficiency and other programs, call 909.890.9533.

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