



POAH

# PRESERVATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING



## **How Housing Matters** *by Jo-Ann Barbour, POAH Manager of Resident Services*

Quality affordable housing can be a catalyst for improving the quality of life and opportunities for the thousands of low income households who live in our properties and in today's political environment, it is increasingly important to document these connections. This point was made by HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan in his remarks at the start of a day-long conference in early November sponsored by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Office of Policy Development and Research at the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Building Museum. Hundreds of researchers, advocates, and practitioners were presented with new inter-disciplinary research and case studies that show impressive social and financial impacts of quality housing on health, education and economic opportunities.

Building on the MacArthur Foundation's \$25 million dollar, five-year, How Housing Matters initiative and HUD's own strategic initiative, the conference featured a discussion between HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan and HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius about how HUD, HHS and other agencies are working to deepen the connection between housing, community development and health policy. The results of HUD's fourteen-year study, Moving to Opportunity, were released showing that families who moved into lower poverty neighborhoods not only experienced improved housing quality and family environment, but also improved mental and physical health for adults. This includes lower rates of extreme obesity, diabetes, psychological distress, and major depression for adult women. For the full report go to <http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/pubasst/MTOFHD.html>

Three panels of researchers and practitioners reviewed innovative programs that connect housing with improved quality of life including:

The Bridge Project in Denver Colorado showing the connection between housing and high quality schools and educational programs

The Family Self Sufficiency Program in Montgomery County Maryland showing the link between housing and increased income and job opportunities

The Cathedral Square Corporation in Vermont showing the link between quality housing and improved mental and physical health for children, families and older adults and the connection between integrated health services and lower health care costs

The fourth panel, "Evidence to Policy and Practice" highlighted the importance of high quality research as the basis for creating practices that drive outcomes. Research also helps practitioners to align goals and data and provides policy makers and practitioners with demonstrable evidence to achieve shared goals. To view the conference and panel discussions go to:

<http://www.nbm.org/programs-lectures/programs/2011-programs/november-2011/how-housing-matters.html>

To view the case studies go to:

[http://www.nationalbuildingmuseum.net/pdf/HHMv10\\_small.pdf](http://www.nationalbuildingmuseum.net/pdf/HHMv10_small.pdf)