New Housing Counseling Assistance Program offers housing counseling, navigation and eviction prevention

If you have listened to the radio or have watched television recently, there is a chance you may have heard about Colorado Housing Connects — a free phone help line operated through Brothers Redevelopment that helps residents navigate non-emergency housing services and resources.

Recently, Brothers Redevelopment launched a new TV and radio advertising campaign to promote Colorado Housing Connects. And as the pandemic continues, Brothers Redevelopment recognizes that many residents in the state may need help being connected to housing counseling, navigation and eviction prevention resources as around 16% of Coloradans were considered housing insecure at the beginning of June, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

But thanks to a new partnership formed on Sept. 1 between Brothers Redevelopment and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and the state’s Division of Housing, the Housing Counseling Assistance Program has been launched. Operated through Colorado Housing Connects, which can be reached at 1-844-926-6632, the program involves Brothers Redevelopment collaborating with more than 12 housing counseling and legal service agencies across the state to offer comprehensive housing counseling, navigation and eviction prevention to residents across Colorado.

“Renters and homeowners in crisis often don’t know where the first place to start might be. Colorado Housing Connects is a great first place to start to connect you with the resources to help with eviction and foreclosure prevention in the spirit of keeping people housed,” said Colorado Housing Connects Manager Patrick Noonan.

Funded through the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, the Housing Counseling Assistance Program involves organizations like the Douglas County Housing Partnership, a cooperative effort between businesses and local and county government to address affordable housing issues in the county, NEWSED, which works to solve long-term economic problems in underserved communities, Boulder County and other organizations.

The Housing Counseling Assistance Program helps to prevent evictions by connecting residents to local rental assistance resources, informing residents about the eviction process and their rights and by connecting residents to legal referrals. The program aims to prevent foreclosures by connecting residents to legal referrals, financial assistance and in some cases, working directly with a homeowner’s lender.

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Colorado Housing Connects offers counseling services for renters looking to become homeowners, tenant and landlord laws and rights, eviction advice, mortgage payment issues and more. Additionally, Colorado Housing Connects is the spot to learn about programs offered by Brothers Redevelopment like its affordable communities, Home Modification and Repair Program, which repairs and rehabilitates homes for disabled and elderly homeowners, Landlords Opening Doors Program, which helps residents in transition recovering from health issues and leaving rehabilitation to find housing, and other Brothers Redevelopment services.

You can learn more about Colorado Housing Connects by visiting coloradohousingconnects.org.

“It’s a great resource for residents of Colorado. With Brothers having a reputable name, we’re the agency that can handle this statewide partnership,” said Colorado Housing Project Manager Enrica Bustos.

Brothers Redevelopment in the news!

https://bit.ly/3m88JhU

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When the COVID-19 pandemic swept the nation, workers from Brothers Redevelopment’s Home Modification and Repair Program put down their tools and opened up their laptops to assist with the state’s Emergency Housing Assistance Program — a program in which Brothers Redevelopment provides rental and mortgage assistance to eligible Coloradans.

The Home Modification and Repair Program, which offers free home accessibility repair services, exterior home-repair services and interior repairs to seniors and disabled residents, was forced to halt operations until July as Brothers Redevelopment didn’t want to put residents at risk of contracting the virus.

But nine months into the pandemic, the program is back conducting needed home repairs and modifications for those in the community who are most vulnerable, and thanks to a $250,000 grant from the city of Aurora, Brothers Redevelopment expanded to the area to bring the Home Modification and Repair Program to around 15 homes in the city.

The grant comes from Aurora’s Minor Home Repair Program — a federally funded program that provides financial and technical assistance to Aurora homeowners who need essential home repairs. Among the repairs and modifications clients receive through the Home Modification and Repair Program include roll-in shower conversions, wheelchair ramp construction, plumbing repairs, exterior plumbing, light electrical repairs and more.

In October, the program completed 20 projects and followed guidelines from the state to slow the spread of COVID-19 by wearing masks and gloves and keeping a safe distance from elderly clients. The average clients of the program are women in their early to mid-70s and have lived at their home for 30 to 40 years.

“This is about retaining these neighborhoods, reducing the possibility of gentrification and preserving affordable housing and the history in these neighborhoods,” said Home Modification and Repair Program Manager Jason McCullough on the Aurora grant. “This program will allow us to take that stress and anxiety out and enhance the home and make it more stable. Our goal is for our clients to stay in their homes for at least another 10 years.”
Keeping Coloradans housed through COVID-19

When Colorado instituted a stay-at-home order back in March, Edgewater resident Betsy Pearce found herself without a source of income.

Pearce does freelance work as a teleprompter operator for events at the Colorado Convention Center — but the stay-at-home order, which required residents to stay at home unless for essential activities like work or to get groceries, halted events and left Pearce feeling anxious about her financial situation.

“I was probably coming up a couple of hundred dollars short (for bills),” said Pearce, who owns a home in Edgewater.

But thanks to Brothers Redevelopment’s small grant program, funded by the city of Edgewater to help Edgewater households that lost income due to COVID-19, the nonprofit was able to provide 30 households, including Pearce’s, with $300 individual grants in mid-May. During the week of Sept. 14, a second round of grants began as Brothers Redevelopment increased grant totals to $750 per grant. As of Nov. 24, 205 households in Edgewater have received a grant from the second round of the program, according to Brothers Redevelopment Grant Writer Hannah Beltrone.

Outside of Edgewater, Brothers Redevelopment is offering rental payments to other Coloradans. The nonprofit is administering rental assistance on behalf of Denver’s Temporary Rental and Utility Assistance program — offered to Denver residents who are facing financial difficulties and to those who need help with rent, utility or mortgage payments. From March 16 to Oct. 31, Denver’s Temporary Rental and Utility Assistance program served a total of 780 households.

Brothers Redevelopment Grants and Special Projects Manager Abby Bugas said it’s important to note that the nonprofit can potentially help qualified residents with multiple months of rent. She added that being evicted increases the likelihood of becoming homeless or facing long-term housing insecurity.

“As soon as someone is evicted, it impacts your finances and your ability to hold a job. Brothers Redevelopment’s rental assistance programs are pretty crucial at a time like this,” said Bugas.

As the need for rental assistance continues throughout the pandemic, Brothers Redevelopment added four new team members in June and July to assist with Denver’s Temporary Rental and Utility Assistance program. The nonprofit is also among the organizations providing mortgage assistance to eligible Coloradans through the state’s Emergency Housing Assistance Program — designed to provide emergency short-term rental and mortgage assistance to residents who are vulnerable to eviction or foreclosure. Since the program launch in April, Brothers Redevelopment has provided $1.15 million in financial assistance to 414 families.

Those who live in Denver who are seeking rental assistance can dial 3-1-1 then press 6 for assistance and a referral. For assistance with comprehensive housing counseling, housing navigation and eviction prevention, call Colorado Housing Connects (1-844-926-6632) — a free phoneline service operated by Brothers Redevelopment that offers counseling services for renters looking to become homeowners, tenant and landlord laws and rights, eviction advice, mortgage payment issues and more. For more information about the Emergency Housing Assistance Program, visit brihousingassist.org.

“(Brothers Redevelopment) helped take that pressure off,” said Pearce. “I think it’s incredible that there are opportunities out there like that. I felt like Brothers was there to help the community as a whole.”
Littleton residents Allan and Rosie Elliot are both legally disabled and have physical and financial limitations. The couple’s house that they have lived in for six years was previously painted a bright yellow color that was outdated, peeling and needed to be replaced. But painting a home can cost up to $5,000 and as Allan has gotten older, he has struggled to keep up with home repairs.

But thanks to Brothers Redevelopment’s Paint-A-Thon program, a free service offered to elderly and disabled residents in which volunteers paint the outside of homes throughout the metro area, the Elliot’s outdated yellow house was transformed with new blue paint, trim and replacement boards. The house is one of 35 projects the Paint-A-Thon program has completed throughout the metro area since the first week of March.

“You don’t notice things when you’ve lived with them for so long. In two days, Brothers Redevelopment transformed our house with the bright yellow paint with bad trim to a nice-looking house that made an impression on us,” said Allan. “It’s something we couldn’t have afforded to do. This is an important step to getting our house back in order. The people that came out here were really friendly, did a nice job and worked well as a team. It was certainly a blessing.”

Now in its 42nd year, the Paint-A-Thon program has painted more than 7,400 local house exteriors with more than 133,000 volunteers participating in the program. Recent projects through the program include the painting of two homes in southwest Denver carried out by the South Metro Denver Realtors Association — an organization for real estate professionals which contributed $1,500 toward the projects. Other Paint-A-Thon projects that have been completed this year took place in Commerce City, east Denver, Littleton, Brighton and other areas throughout Colorado.

Brothers Redevelopment took steps to ensure its clients stayed safe from the virus as the Paint-A-Thon program continued until mid-October. Paint-A-Thon workers and volunteers avoided physical contact with homeowners, wore masks, practiced social distancing and routinely bleached frequently touched surfaces like tools and materials.

Residents can be nominated to have their home painted through the Paint-A-Thon program by calling 720-339-5864 or by emailing chad@brothersredevelopment.org. Paint-A-Thon recipients must be 60 years or older and/or have a disability, must own and reside in the Denver metro area and plan to live in their home for at least 12 months.

“Our homeowners’ lives have changed significantly in terms of isolation, access to resources, higher fears and different worries,” said Paint-A-Thon Volunteer Program Manager Chad Nibbelink. “From the homeowner side, the need is still very relevant. So much that has gone on in the pandemic is individual isolation and a lot of hard stuff to hear and experience. The Paint-A-Thon is a united purpose of service and looking outside of yourself.”