

CAT Self Help Program Makes Home Ownership Dreams Come True

By Scott Laird

Community Action Team (CAT) is participating in a pilot program in Northwest Oregon that is helping families restore houses and become first time homeowners.

On June 18, CAT held an open house at one of their current projects in St. Helens to showcase the program. US Congresswoman Suzanne



Jessica and Jason Smith are renovating their new home with the help of Community Action Team.

this, it helps me to be here and meet people like Jessica and Jason and hear their story," said Bonamici. "It helps me to be able to see what this means for a family and see the difference this is going to make, not just for them and their children and their future, but for the neighborhood. It's a wonderful program."

What is unusual about the program is that, usually these types of self-help programs are used to buy vacant lots and build houses from the ground up, explained Rural Development's Walker. "CAT recognized that there are a lot of vacant houses already, so why not repurpose those houses and put the money that would normally go into building them, into rehabbing them. It's finding a different way to make these programs work."

"We couldn't do this without the USDA financing tools," says CAT Program Administrator Casey Mitchell.

CAT is one of only two organizations in the entire United States providing this unique, pilot, self-help program; the other program is

in Utah.

Not only does the program help create first time homeowners, it also helps clean up and revitalize neighborhoods by turning what had been a potential eyesore and a problem, into a home for a family. The new homeowners are usually young, with families, who are physically capable of investing the sweat equity needed to do the rehab work. They bring new energy, enthusiasm, and pride of ownership to the neighborhood and, as Walker noted, often bring children into the school district.

This is the second project CAT has initiated in Columbia County and they have one more pending. They currently have completed one project in Clatsop County and have two others in progress there.

Mitchell says he is actively looking for more potential and qualified applicants.

The qualification process can be very rigorous and can take from several months to one year. "USDA has some great tools for working with low income families, but at the same time,

continued on page 8

100th Columbia County Fair and Rodeo Features John Michael Montgomery

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Columbia County Fair and Rodeo. To celebrate, the fair will feature an opening evening concert with country music star John Michael Montgomery.

The Columbia County Fair runs from July 15-19.

This is the first time the fair has featured a top level music performer in concert. The concert takes place on Wednesday, July 15 at 8:00 pm. Early bird tickets are just \$30 and includes fair admission; ticket price increases to \$37 the day of the show.

Montgomery's long and storied recording career began in 1992. He has recorded eleven albums and had more than thirty singles reach the Billboard country charts, including seven that hit number one.

Opening for Montgomery at 7:00 pm is Showdown, a high energy, honky-tonk show.



John Michael Montgomery plays at the Columbia County Fair Wednesday, July 15.

The NPRA Rodeo is always a highlight of fair week and will be held Friday and Saturday evenings, starting at 7:00 pm. The Junior Rodeo takes place Thursday evening at 6:00 pm.

The rodeo is followed by concerts on Friday night at 9:30 pm with the Pacific Northwest country/rock sounds of Breaking Midnight and on Saturday with Briana Renea from Canby, OR who blends country and rock. Renea will play an acoustic set at 2:30 pm and perform with her full band at 9:30 pm.

The Rodeo Court Pageant takes place on Saturday, beginning at 1:00 pm.

Other entertainment at this year's fair includes an evening concert with Countryfied on Thursday, July 16 at 8:00 pm. Also on stage throughout the fairgrounds this year during the week will be Joe Dylan, Rabbit Agility, Professor Bamboozle, Dr. Solar, Brady Gross, Manfred the Talking Horse, Mind Surfing, Alex Zerbe, Kory Johnson, Leapin' Louie, Next of Kin, and Hit Machine.

The carnival opens daily at noon. Ride Bracelets are available for early purchase for \$23; they will be \$30.00 at the

continued on page 12

Bonamici stopped by to learn about the project from new homeowners Jason and Jessica Smith.

"I'm such a supporter of this program because it's a win-win for the community, it helps the family, and it helps the neighborhood" said Congresswoman Bonamici.

The Self-Help Acquisition Rehabilitation Program (SHARP) provides low interest financing for the purchase and rehabilitation of an existing home in Columbia, Clatsop or Tillamook County. Potential homeowners must be income and credit qualified and can earn instant equity by providing labor to make needed repairs to the home.

The program is financed through the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development office. Vickie Walker, the Oregon State Director of USDA Rural Development was also on hand in St. Helens for the visit.

The USDA loan package covers the cost of the house and materials needed to make repairs. The homeowner is required to supply thirty hours of labor per week.

"As somebody who has to vote for funding for the USDA and safety net programing like

inside

- 9 bca is now faith west
- 10 equestrian state results
- 10 taylor named ford scholar
- 15 where do you read the voice?

Find us on facebook

Eagle Scout Project Helps Shelter Dogs

Dogs at the Columbia Humane Society have a new way to exercise courtesy of a local Boy Scout.

Jordan Hoffman, age 17, from St. Helens, is working towards his Eagle Scout certification and chose to construct some agility equipment in an enclosed run where dogs at the shelter exercise daily. Hoffman is affiliated with St. Helens Second Ward Scout Troop #142.

Hoffman's project included the installation of several tunnels, a staircase, an A-frame ramp, a teeter totter and more. A hoop for jumping through, hurdles, and weave poles were also donated to the project. Hoffman installed a fence to divide the already established run into two sections so that



more than one dog can use the area at the same time.

"I've always been interested in animals, so doing something for the Humane Society just seemed like the right thing for me to do for my Eagle Scout project; it was something that

I was actually interested in," said Hoffman.

Hoffman organized volunteer help from his church, along with family and friends and spent three days building the project. He received donations of construction materials from the Columbia County Road Department, Knife River, Dahlgren's Building Supply, and family members.

"This would not have been possible without Jordan's help," says Columbia Humane Society Executive Director Dean Cox.

Dog agility is a sport in which a handler directs their dog through an obstacle course in a race for both time and accuracy.

continued on page 9