



# Brand New Day Diary



Leading the charge for change

Autumn 2008

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## Brand New Day honored by Governor's Award



(Left to right) Krishma Garlic, BND executive director, holding hands with her son, Khalil Rashada, poses with Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage, Joseph Doria, commissioner, Department of Community Affairs, Marge Della Vecchia, executive director, New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, Fatimah Raymond, Elizabeth Development Corporation (EDC), Zoe Gaby, BND project developer and Bill O'Dea, EDC.

The Elizabeth Development Company, in collaboration with the Elizabethport Neighborhood Empowerment Council, was honored to receive the Governor's Excellence in Housing Award. The award was given in the category of Best Innovative Housing Partnership for the Brand New Day Homeownership Project. The award was presented during the 2008 Governor's Conference held September 23 and 24 in the Atlantic City Convention Center.

The goal of the award is to recognize projects and professionals who are on the cutting edge of innovation in the field of affordable housing.

"I congratulate the winners of this year's Excellence in Housing Awards," said Joseph Doria, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, who along with the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, sponsored the conference. "These individuals and organizations exemplify DCA's mission of investing in communities and providing quality housing that all New Jerseyans can afford."

## From Ember to Blaze: Annual Gala to light up the night

Time to get out your dancing shoes.

Brand New Day will celebrate its annual gala Tuesday, October 28, in the new Fire Lounge at the Prudential Center in Newark. Entitled From Ember to Blaze: The Keeper of the Flame of Community Development, the gala is BND's major fundraising event. The evening, which begins at 6 pm, will include dinner, dancing, a silent auction and, best of all, good company. BND encourages its stakeholders to purchase a ticket or, better yet, become a sponsor.

Brand New Day chose the Newark site, itself a symbol of community revitalization, to emphasize its expansion statewide. BND continues to establish a presence in nearby communities. It is now one of the state's top foreclosure prevention resources and has formed partnerships with several faith based institutions to increase outreach and strengthen community redevelopment. The Gala is also an opportunity for BND to say thank you to some of the people who have supported its mission.

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*Brand New Day's mission is to revitalize and enhance the quality of life for low and moderate income families through the development, management and preservation of affordable housing, expanding wealth creation opportunities through home ownership and neighborhood-based economic development and advocate for social stability.*

## From Ember to Blaze: Annual Gala, cont.

This year's honorees: 2008 Financial Institution of the Year, Y.B. Phillips, Bank of America; 2008 Community Stakeholder of the Year, Maria Tocci, IKEA; and 2008 Rev. Joseph H. Garlic

Humanitarian Award, Rev. Russell C. Block.

For more information, contact Tracey Howard at 908-282-0781, x 101.

## First time homeowners go house shopping

Recently, BND hosted a bus trip, but instead of going to Atlantic City, they placed a safer bet with a group of well educated, prospective homeowners.

Beginning last July, BND and the City of Elizabeth have hosted bus tours of homes in or close to foreclosure for qualified buyers. It was the first tour of its kind to be offered as a public service in New Jersey. The tour is a win-win situation for the buyer, who can now purchase a home, and the seller, who can avoid credit-ruining foreclosure. The city avoids having foreclosed homes in its neighborhoods.

Hopeful buyers, like Lagretta Jennings, were all approved by BND. Lagretta, who participated in two tours, took BND's Financial Literacy course, then pre-qualified for a mortgage. Once she got her commitment

letter from the bank, she could register for the bus tour.

"I felt really comfortable on the tour," said Lagretta. "Penny Meredith, Krishna Garlic and other Brand New Day staff were accompanying us as well as staff from the city. They were there to guide us through. It was nice to have that support from Brand New Day. I would look at a house and say, 'I want to put in a bid.' Penny would say, 'Now remember what we talked about. You have to do what you can afford.' I felt confident knowing I had Brand New Day to support me and that they educated me. I won't have to go through foreclosure like other people. An educated consumer is a confident consumer."

Lagretta currently has a bid on a three-year-old, five-bedroom home that seems perfect for her and her sons, eight-year-old Jared and 15-year-old Stephen.

## Foreclosure prevented for limousine driver

The DHL employees will probably always remember the day when the limousine pulled up in front of their door and Penny Meredith, BND's community education coordinator, stepped out to mail her package.

Penny may not be a celebrity, but she certainly must seem like one to a limousine driver from Bayonne. The man was referred to BND in July 2007 because his home was in danger of foreclosure. The family, which includes his wife and two young children, was originally from Pakistan. His wife is a part-time seamstress. The couple were not fluent in English, so they had great difficulty negotiating with mortgage, banks and credit companies.

"We originally modified the loan in December 2007, but he couldn't come up with the down payment and the

deal expired," said Penny.

Then began the roller coaster of talking to the banks. He was finally able to save for a down payment and qualified for an affordable mortgage.

"He called every day," said Penny. "When I was on vacation, I gave him my cell phone number. I had to talk him down on numerous occasions from taking deals from disreputable people."

On the day he had to send his papers, he showed up at BND in his limousine asking how to mail his package.

"Well, we'll go together," said Penny. And she got into the limousine.

**Homeowners at risk for foreclosure should call 1-888-995-HOPE.**

## Rev. Russell C. Block



This year's recipient of the Rev. Joseph H. Garlic Humanitarian Award, Rev. Russell Block shares a long history with the award's namesake, reaching back to 1976. Back then, Rev. Block was serving at Connecticut Farms Presbyterian Church in Union when he heard about the Elizabethport Presbyterian Center. He decided to bring his church's youth groups there.

One year later, Rev. Block was a member of the Elizabethport Presbyterian Center's board of directors. He has been there ever since. A few years later, in 1985, the board took a look around the neighborhood and noticed an increasing need for affordable housing.

Said Rev. Block, "We felt there a great need for low income housing in the community."

Their answer was Brand New Day, on whose board Rev. Block also sits. The results have exceeded his expectations.

"It has been remarkable what Brand New Day has been able to do," said Rev. Block. "It started the first major renovation in the port area and worked with the housing authority to get Hope VI money. The housing authority and Brand New Day have been building homes ever since. The whole nature of Elizabethport has been changed dramatically."

## Do you know that ...

✓ Housing costs should be no more than one-third of the family's income. About 90 percent of people who spend more than half their income on rent are earning below \$27,000.

*This newsletter was written and produced by The Write Words, Fran Sullivan, owner.*