



HACY program helps residents gain self-sufficiency

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Gregorio Ambriz has achieved his dream of having a home of his own - one not provided by the government.

He is among more than 100 families who have had that dream come true, thanks to the Housing Authority of City of Yuma's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Even as they lived in public housing administered by HACY, the self-sufficiency program has provided families the means to financial independence and homeownership through, among other things, education scholarships, access to job training and placement services, high school equivalency and citizenship classes.

The program "benefited me every way one could hope for in order to have a new home," Ambriz said. "It helped us with government grants, and thanks to that, my monthly (mortgage) payments are low.

"You can do anything with your own effort," he said. "I quit paying rent (for HACY housing) and began paying off my house a year ago."

And that's not all. The FSS program helped him to gain his GED high school equivalency certificate and his U.S. citizenship.

Ambriz was among 15 people honored in a recent graduation ceremony at the Yuma Main Library after having successfully completed FSS.

The federally funded program has been in existence in HACY for 14 years, having helped more than 100 people in that period, said Sandra Nuñez, the city's public housing manager.

"Usually, the people who come into the program have very low incomes and don't have their own homes, and by the time they graduate, they have risen above the poverty line, and they graduate buying their own homes," she said.

The success of FSS stems from the fact that HACY helps tenants in all facets of their quest for self-sufficiency, from counseling to referral to other agencies that can provide job training or education, among them the Yuma Private Industry Council and PPEP

"For me, the program helped me get a house, get my GED and take classes in typing," said Maria Lopez, a single mother of one who moved into her own home earlier this year after having depended on subsidized housing for years. "They were lofty goals, but it pleased me to know that there are government programs that give someone so much help."

The federal government this year is funding the program to the tune of \$200,000.

"The funding was increasing 3 percent annually, but now it has been (frozen) until further notice," Nuñez said. "We'll have to work with the same amount, and we don't know if the scholarships will be available next year."

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