



Dear *IDA Insights* Readers:

Greetings from Jackson. As we continue our work this year and look forward to 2007, I am very excited about what is being accomplished in our region in the field of asset building. Regionally, we were well represented at the CFED Assets Learning Conference in Phoenix, AZ with almost 50 participants!

I would like to wish a hearty welcome to Drew Murray and Southern University. Drew was recently hired at the Louisiana Department of Social Services to oversee the EITC and asset building programs and Southern University will be the lead on Louisiana's second statewide IDA program which is scheduled to launch this month. Welcome.

This newsletter includes information on the CFED conference, a question each of you should pursue and information from our welcoming neighbors in Texas.

In late June, FMS hosted a working meeting to discuss innovative ways IDA programs could deal with the devastating reality of Rita and Katrina and the potential for future disasters. One of the participants at the meeting was a representative of the Department of Community Initiatives of the City of San Antonio, TX. Below is a short description of the work they have been doing with citizens from our region.

If you have any ideas for future *IDA Insights* issues, would like to feature news from your IDA program, or just want to say hello please contact Necole S. Irvin at 601.863.0495 or at nirvin@fndmidsouth.org

Sincerely,
Mid South IDA Initiative Staff

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Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Reflection. Looking Back While Moving Forward

This quarter's *the Bridge* publication is a 48-page special edition that concentrates on the status of the region a year after Katrina and Rita hammered the Mid South Gulf States. The issue focuses on FMS's views of the recovery effort, the insights of leaders from the region, and keeping the disasters in the public's attention. To download a copy visit our website, www.fndmidsouth.org.

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Policy & Funding Update:

POLICY

Although this congressional session is almost over, it is not too late for our federal representatives to support the Savings for Working Families Act (SWFA) of 2006 (H.R. 4751/S.1780). H.R. 4751/S.1780 provides matching deposits for up to 900,000 IDA savers who save up to \$2,000 for education, small business capitalization or homeownership. The bill also provides \$20 million to non-profit organizations and tribes to provide financial education. President Bush included \$1.2 billion in funding for Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in his 2007 budget. The current list of Congressional co-sponsors includes 31 Republicans and 32 Democrats with only three from our region. Thank you, Representative Ross (AR-D), Senators Landrieu (LA-D) and Cochran (MS-R) for co-sponsoring this legislation. **Have you asked where your Congressional members stand on the issue of ensuring that matched savings accounts are available for more low-income families to acquire assets?**

FUNDING

The Mid South IDA Initiative made available mini-grants for IDA practitioners and participants in the region to attend the CFED conference last month. Twenty-two (AR/8, LA/4, MS/8, and TX/2) received funding. Following are some of their comments on the conference:

- *"The asset field for low income people continues to be strong and relevant in a rapidly changing economic environment because workers in this asset field have access to high quality learning opportunities such as those provided through this conference."*
- *"I spoke with practitioners around the country discussing ways to link VITA sites and the new split refunds with opening up IDAs."*
- *"The CFED conference has had a big impact on my work. I have a more thorough understanding of the policies and procedures. I have contact information from a dozen organizations. My organization has contact information and I have been in contact with two organizations that were participants there. We have shared information that I think has been beneficial to both my organization and theirs as well."*

- *“At these conferences there are so many opportunities to talk with other people in related fields. It is nice to share successes as well as daily issues. Sometimes we can get so bogged down with day in and out activities that we lose sight of the big picture. It is great to hear stories from program participants and how IDA’s have truly made a difference in their lives. This will help on an organization level as well, by making sure we are a success, thus spilling into the community. When we are a successful program, the community benefits by participants purchasing their asset thus leading to community pride and showing we are truly invested.”*
- *“It will take a strong partnership like MIDAP and other agencies in Mississippi to show our local and state officials how important asset building is for the residents of our state.”*
- *“After sitting in on sessions regarding universities and IDAs, I realized that we have a much underutilized participant base in that we have four year and two year universities in the majority of the counties that we serve.”*
- *“The second day, the conference hosted a roundtable discussion on employer-based IDA programs. The people involved in the roundtable were able to give both positive and negative feedback on the process of setting up an employer-based IDA program, and their experience dealing with these programs will be very useful when putting together our plan.”*
- *“I was made of aware of national trends in the area of IDA participant retention. Retention is a direct result of the emphasis placed on case management within a program. The clientele that we serve sometimes need more hands on case management as social survival skills are lacking.”*
- *“It was especially interesting to get some technical knowledge of the day to day operations of other IDA programs. I have ideas now on how to partner with different financial organizations, community organizations, faith based organizations and even individuals. I have also focused my vision of how I want to better serve my clients and help them get the most of the IDA program.”*
- *“Without a strong working relationship with the financial service provider asset building will be a impossible goal to reach.”*

Please visit our website, www.fndmidsouth.org to learn about the other available resources for non-profit organizations throughout our region with our Hurricane Recovery and Restoration Fund. This fund was established soon after Hurricane Katrina. 100% of the contributions made to the Fund will benefit nonprofits in the Mid South, particularly in Southern Louisiana, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and the Alabama Gulf Coast, working to rebuild the lives and communities of those affected by the disaster. For more information or to donate on-line, please visit our website, www.fndmidsouth.org.

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**IDA Story:
San Antonio helping Hurricane Katrina and Rita Evacuees resettle into their
new community**

Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, San Antonio, Texas and the surrounding area opened its doors to 25,000 evacuees. Of that number more than 7,000 FEMA registered families remain in San Antonio. To help ease the transition for its guests and potentially new citizens, San Antonio officials developed a short-range resettlement program for the evacuees. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide families the resources and support they need to make it on their own and build a strong economic future.

The first focus was to reunite families, assist families who wanted to relocate and then transition families from shelters and hotels into permanent housing. The majority of the families, with the assistance of FEMA, local government, community agencies, and organizations, were placed in suitable housing. Approximately 1,500 families are presently participating in FEMA funded rental assistance paid to apartment complex management, Housing and Urban Development, San Antonio Housing Authority, and Fannie Mae programs. Thousands of other families are receiving direct rental assistance from FEMA. Additionally, the city of San Antonio, through FEMA funding, contracted with several community agencies to provide case management services. These services include workforce development, financial planning, identification recovery, and assistance with permanent relocation, public benefits, health care, food, furniture, transportation, and lodging negotiation. Numerous San Antonio communities, charitable and faith-based organizations are also allocating resources and dedicated staff toward the resettlement effort. Case managers report many evacuees are still struggling to meet basic needs. Many are daily tackling significant issues including medical, housing, employment, and transportation concerns.

San Antonio's future challenge is to ensure its resettlement services continue once FEMA funding ends for rental assistance in March 2008 and many of its case management programs at the end of this month, July 31, 2006.

In March of 2006 the Fannie Mae Foundation donated \$50,000 to the Department of Community Initiatives Individual Development Account (IDA) program. In turn the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) matched the \$50,000 with an additional \$50,000 of HHS dollars for a total of \$100,000. These dollars are to assist evacuees who are looking to purchase a home for the first time.

Presently there are 270 active IDAs 137 for post-secondary education, 120 for first time homeownership and 13 for micro enterprise. To date 217 people have used an IDA to purchase an asset 84 for post-secondary education, 118 for first time homeownership and 15 for micro enterprise. Presently we have a waitlist of 152 50 for post-secondary education and 102 for first time homeownership.

One unique approach to the San Antonio IDA program is to have elected officials donate or help raise donations for the IDA program. We track IDA activities in each elected official's district and share the information with them. Being that we have a waitlist at this time we encourage the elected officials to help us raise donations so we can continue to help their constituents obtain a long term asset.

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