

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Collaborative Foreclosure Prevention Program Launched in Onondaga County *Innovative "Triage System" connects homeowners with financial help, legal screenings and more*

Syracuse, NY – A coalition of seven Syracuse-based organizations have launched a regional Foreclosure Prevention program to help combat the mortgage crisis in Central and Upstate New York. Using an innovative "triage" system based on a single point-of-contact, struggling homeowners in Central New York can now access free financial and legal counseling, in English and in Spanish, from a network of qualified providers within 48 hours.

The collaborative program, funded by the New York State Banking Department and the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, will primarily target Onondaga County while also providing services to four other counties including Oswego, Cayuga, Cortland and Madison. Housing and financial counseling is being provided by Cooperative Federal Credit Union, Home HeadQuarters, and the Northeast Hawley Development Association (NEHDA), each of which are HUD-approved housing counseling agencies. Refinancing, debt consolidation, and loan modifications can also be arranged through these counseling programs. Homeowners anywhere in Central New York can receive free legal advice, provided by Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society, Legal Services of CNY and the Syracuse University College of Law. Syracuse United Neighbors (SUN) will lead grassroots outreach efforts to educate neighborhoods and steer at-risk homeowners toward the program.

"Keeping people in their homes during these difficult economic times plays a major part in stabilizing the economy," said Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney. "This is important information to get out to homeowners who are struggling to meet their mortgage payments – Help is available."

"I applaud the Foreclosure Prevention Collaboration for stepping up to address the mortgage crisis here in Central New York," said Syracuse Mayor Matthew Driscoll. "Avoiding foreclosure not only helps people keep their homes and hold on to what they've worked for, but it's also a critical step toward fortifying our local economy."

For a homeowner, the process starts with a single phone call to Home HeadQuarters, where triage experts will gather vital information to best determine next steps. Clients will then be referred to a foreclosure counselor at one of the participating agencies who will work one-on-one with each homeowner to create a foreclosure prevention action plan that includes assessing the situation and creating a crises budget. Counselors will then work with lenders and homeowners to negotiate terms to reinstate the homeowner's mortgage that can include items like repayment plans, loan modifications, refinancing, and/or legal review.

To get help now, call Home HeadQuarters' foreclosure prevention center at (315) 474-1939 ext 253 or email info@homehq.org.

"All of this help won't matter if people don't call as soon as they realize they might be in trouble," says Rich Puchalski, Executive Director of Syracuse United Neighbors. "Every day you don't call, it becomes more unlikely you'll save your home."

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Home HeadQuarters is the largest not-for-profit housing and community development organization in Central New York. Established in 1996, Home HeadQuarters offers Nationally-certified Homebuyer Education for first time homebuyers, financial and homeownership counseling, Foreclosure Prevention and real estate planning and development. Since its inception, Home HeadQuarters' staff has counseled close to 6000 potential homebuyers, helped generate more than \$117 million in home purchase mortgage financing and facilitated more than \$30 million in home rehabilitation contracts. Home HeadQuarters is also one of the largest regional providers of affordable home and energy improvement loans and grants to area homeowners.

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Cooperative Federal (Syracuse Cooperative Federal Credit Union) is a non-profit, community development credit union that has been serving Syracuse families and small businesses since 1982. By combining fair, affordable loans and accounts with education and advice, Cooperative Federal works to build members' financial strength and foster a fair local economy.

NOTE: Foreclosure Prevention Program customers may be available for interviews. Given the subject matter however, homeowners that have faced foreclosure and received help may be hesitant to use identifying information.