

Nonprofit developer named 'Housing Hero'

By Angela Carter
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NEW HAVEN — When Kimberly Streater and her six children took a sneak preview of their newly constructed apartment on Ferry Street two days before Christmas, her kids did not want to leave, despite the absence of furniture.

That was a Tuesday and furniture was to arrive Saturday. "They said, 'We'll sleep-on the floor.' They didn't care. They didn't want to leave, they just wanted to be there," Streater said Tuesday during a lunchtime reception to celebrate an award given to the housing project's nonprofit developer, Mutual Housing Association of South Central Connecticut.

Citizens Bank named Mutual Housing the recipient of its 2007 "Housing Hero" award for the successful completion of 24 new supportive housing units at Ferry and Poplar streets.

As part of the award, Mutual Housing will receive a \$50,000

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grant from the Citizens Bank Foundation. Executive Director Seila Mosquera said \$10,000 of that money would be used for financial literacy, home buyer education and youth recreational programs for residents.

Rich Barry, president and CEO of Citizens Bank of Connecticut, said the institution was impressed with Mutual Housing's organization and fiscal responsibility and how the Ferry Street project transformed that area of the Fair Haven neighborhood.

"They've got great people backing it. They get it done," Barry said. "They're having a meaningful impact on people's lives. We think it's important to give back to those communities

that make us successful."

Citizens is a \$5 billion bank with 50 branches and 60 ATMs in Connecticut. It is a subsidiary of Citizens Financial Group, a \$164 billion commercial holding company headquartered in Providence.

The Ferry Street development has a 25,000-square-foot learning center and the apartments have two, three or four bedrooms, large windows, balconies and decks, granite counters and Energy Star appliances and light fixtures.

Ed Seibert, president of Mutual's board of directors, said the Housing Hero award validates the organization's vision in creating the housing project, which faced

opposition in the early stages from another nonprofit builder.

"It is a basic human right for people to have decent, clean, affordable housing," Seibert said. "Our mission is not just to build houses, but to build communities."

Streater said New Haven Home Recovery, which runs emergency shelters and supportive housing programs for women and children, referred her to Mutual Housing for tenancy.

"We sleep comfortably every night, and the parking lot is well lit," Streater said, adding that her apartment "is gorgeous" and her neighbors are pleasant. "I heard negative things about Fair Haven. But the neighborhood has been really, really peaceful. Everyone's really nice over here."

She used to live in the Hill.

As a partner in the project, New Haven Home Recovery will provide ongoing services for six of its clients who live at the development and any other residents who may develop a need, Mosquera said.