

Banks Give \$2M for SB Housing Needs

By Jon Poser — *Reporter*

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A local humanitarian organization is opening its wallet to help open the doors on more affordable homes for Santa Barbara County's less fortunate residents.

With the help of two \$1 million donations from Santa Barbara Bank & Trust and Mid-State Bank & Trust, the Housing Trust Fund (HTF), a nonprofit agency working with local organizations to provide more affordable homes for the area's low-income residents, created the Revolving Door Loan Fund on April 6 to help finance such housing projects. HTF Coordinator Jennifer McGovern said the fund was designed primarily to aid charitable organizations seeking to initiate housing development for Santa Barbara County residents - such as farm workers, minimum-wage workforce employees and senior citizens - who cannot afford the high cost of living in the area.

"We are working to maintain the social fabric of Santa Barbara County, by helping to provide housing that is affordable for local workers and residents," McGovern said.

McGovern said although the organization has not yet received any applications for the \$2 million in funding available, she said she expects

a healthy response to the program.

“We anticipate a good response from nonprofit, faith-based, and special needs groups as the fund gets going and people see what it can do,” she said.

Joyce McCullough, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Santa Barbara, said her organization is considering applying for funding through the HTF’s loan fund in the future, although she said no definitive plans have been made as of yet.

“Habitat for Humanity is looking forward to working with them in exploring what the community has to offer,” McCullough said.

McGovern said she hopes the fund will make it possible for charities and other groups that want to help remedy the low-income housing shortage in Santa Barbara, but lack the resources to do so independently, to undertake their own housing projects. She said organizations that take money out of the Revolving Door Loan Fund must eventually pay it back as a low-interest, short-term loan, thereby replenishing the fund so that it can finance future projects.

Paul Mistele, senior vice president of Mid-State Bank & Trust, said the bank’s decision to contribute to the fund was based heavily on its commitment to improving the Santa Barbara area.

“We feel there is a need to participate in the community and working with efforts like the Housing Trust Fund is just good business practice,” Mistele said.