



NEWS

For Immediate Release

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FAMU College of Law and Orlando-area Community Groups launch education campaign to stop loan modification scams *Law students and counselors go door-to-door to alert and educate at-risk homeowners in Pine Hills and other high foreclosure neighborhoods*

Orlando – Today dozens of specially-trained students from the Florida A&M University (FAMU) College of Law knocked on doors in the Pine Hills neighborhood to offer help to distressed homeowners who may be targeted by loan modification scammers. The effort kicked off a year-long campaign coordinated by NeighborWorks® America and the FAMU law school to combat the growing number of Orlando-area homeowners falling victim to bogus loan modifications while trying to save their property from foreclosure.

“Today, we went right into the heart of a neighborhood hit hard by foreclosures to make sure the owners who are at risk of losing their homes recognize the red flags concerning loan modification scams,” said NeighborWorks Southern District Director Donald Phoenix. “The national foreclosure rate has reached an all-time high of 8.85 percent. More and more scammers are cheating people out of their money and homes. This campaign is going to help Orlando-area homeowners facing foreclosure learn the signs and get the facts.”

Orange County Commissioner Tiffany Moore-Russell joined the law school students and the other neighborhood canvassers, which included volunteers from the Orlando Neighborhood Improvement Corporation, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights under Law, and the Florida Department of Financial Services.

As partners in the campaign, these groups are using resources and materials from NeighborWorks’ national Loan Modification Scam Alert program to teach homeowners how to identify scam artists, who are openly taking advantage of people in difficult circumstances. Their mostly likely victims are seniors, Hispanics, African Americans and Asian Americans.

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“By joining this national education campaign we’re giving our law students real-world experience and more importantly, we’re helping to fight an illegal activity that is having a devastating impact on our community,” said FAMU College of Law Dean LeRoy Pernell. “Today’s outreach effort marks the beginning of a long-range initiative between our legal clinic and community partners to educate homeowners and help put an end to loan modification scams in our area.”

Florida is currently ranked third in the nation for foreclosures, with Orlando placed 11th in foreclosures for metropolitan areas. Pine Hills residents are particularly vulnerable to scammers because the 32808 zip code has one the highest rates of foreclosure in Orange County.

“With Florida being a high foreclosure state, it is important that a program is in place to keep residents from falling victim to illegal activities, such as loan modification scams,” said Commissioner Moore-Russell. “I’m pleased that NeighborWorks[®] chose Orange County and the Pine Hills community to launch this campaign, and I’m thrilled that so many community partners are dedicated to providing at-risk homeowners with foreclosure and scam-prevention counseling.”

Anyone can be a victim of a loan modification scam. The most telling signs of a scam include people or companies that:

- Ask for fees in advance
- Guarantee they can stop a foreclosure or get your loan modified
- Tell you to stop paying your mortgage company and pay them instead

“Knowledge is a homeowner’s best defense against loan modification scammers. We are urging homeowners to call and report scam artists to the authorities,” said Phoenix. “Our purpose is to stop scammers by empowering homeowners with information in order to fight loan modification scams.”

To report a scam at any time, call 1-888-995-HOPE. For more information about the campaign, visit www.LoanScamAlert.org. These sources can also connect homeowners to free, HUD-approved counseling agencies and to the FAMU College of Law.

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/orlandoloanscamalert

On Twitter: www.twitter.com/orlandoscamhelp

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About NeighborWorks® America

NeighborWorks America is a national, nonprofit organization created by Congress to provide financial support, technical assistance and training for community-based revitalization efforts. NeighborWorks includes a national network of 235 community-based organizations in 50 states, which strives to create healthy communities through the work of thousands of residents, business people, government officials and other partners.

About FAMU College of Law

The FAMU College of Law was founded in 1949 on the main campus in Tallahassee. After graduating 57 lawyers, the law school was closed by the state of Florida in 1968. The Florida Legislature voted to reopen the law school in 2000 and Orlando was selected as the location. The reestablished FAMU College of Law opened its doors in 2002 and is now housed in a state-of-the-art facility at 201 Beggs Avenue in downtown Orlando's Parramore neighborhood. The FAMU College of Law received full accreditation from the American Bar Association in July 2009, and is ranked No. 1 in the nation for Diversity by *U.S. News & World Report*.