



Resident Connections

a publication of the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County

Counting on Your Help...

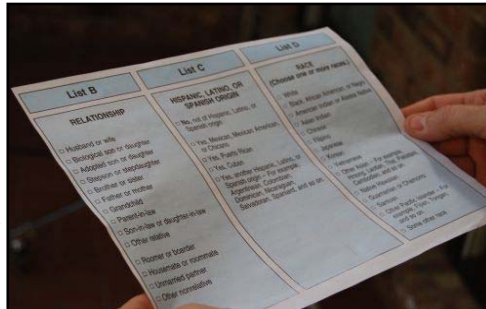
COME TO YOUR CENSUS

Census Day is April 1, 2010, and the Census Bureau has already launched operations to let people know how important it is to fill out and return the census form you will receive by mail in March 2009.

This critical national effort affects how the federal government allocates more than \$400 billion each year in federal assistance to state, local and tribal governments. This affects the funding of hospitals, senior centers, schools and services like home health care, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

QUICK & EASY

The 2010 Census will have one of the shortest census questionnaires in the history of the United States, dating back to the nation's first



The 2010 Census form will ask for:

- **Your Name**
- **Your Gender**
- **Your Ethnicity**
- **Your race**
- **Your relationship status**
- **Whether you rent or own your home**

census in 1790. The census form will take only about 10 minutes on average to complete. If assistance is needed filling out the form, Questionnaire Assistance Centers will be located throughout Montgomery County. Also, a toll-free assistance number will be printed on the questionnaire.



COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL

The information collected on your census form will NEVER be shared with any other organization or government agency. It is solely for the purpose of getting an accurate population count.

Other points to keep in mind:

- If a 2010 Census questionnaire is not returned, a household will receive a reminder postcard before a Census employee visits the home.
- All Census employees carry official government badges; you can ask to see a photo ID.
- Census workers will NEVER ask for a Social Security number.
- Responses to the 2010 Census questionnaire are required by law. All responses are strictly confidential and protected by law. ■

Inside...

Is it a Cold or the Flu?	2
All About the Family Self Sufficiency Program	2
New Ways to Cut Your Heating Bills	3
Changes to HOC Programs	3
Calendar & Important Phone Numbers	4

PROTECTING AGAINST H1N1 FLU



This year's most dangerous strain of the flu is the H1N1 virus. It can be spread from one person to another through coughing or sneezing or by simply touching a contaminated object. But you can take precautions that decrease your chances of catching the virus.

- Make sure that your mouth and nose are covered when you sneeze.
- Wash your hands frequently
- Always keep surfaces that you touch disinfected.
- Keep your distance from anyone coughing or sneezing.

Continued on page 2

THE FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM:

OPENING NEW DOORS TO THE FUTURE

El Programa Para la auto-suficiencia de la familia
(llame Ud. A Margaret Chapman 301-869-9291)

The Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program is available to Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing residents who want to increase their earnings, develop career skills and build savings.

You could overcome barriers to success if you enroll in FSS and work regularly with your FSS case manager on short- and long-term goals, career development, job training/education, budgeting, and problem-solving skills. Limited funds are available for tuition/books & transportation.

The FSS Advantage:

- Graduates have raised their earnings by an average of \$19,000.
- 20% of our graduates became home owners.
- As you raise your earnings, your FSS savings account grows.

For further information contact FSS at: 240-773-9393.

FSS is un programa con el propósito de ayudar a las familias a mejorar sus ingresos. Le ayudará una consejera a encontrar recursos. Para más información en español, llame Ud. A Margaret Chapman, 301-869-9291. ■



A group of graduates from the FSS Class of 2009 celebrate their achievements at a ceremony held in October 2009 at the Montgomery County Council headquarters.

U.S. WILL GIVE YOU \$2500 A YEAR FOR SCHOOL

A major part of the Obama administration's economic stimulus bill is a \$13.8 billion tuition tax credit boost called the American Opportunity Tax Credit. This tax credit reimburses 100 percent of the first \$2,000 of educational expenses for lower income students. For the next \$2,000, students receive a 25 percent reimbursement. In short, lower income students will receive \$2,500 in education reimbursements per year.

The bill also features other benefits for low-income students. Families that do not earn enough to pay income taxes can receive a \$1,000 education refund.

For more information, visit: www.classesandcareers.com or visit www.irs.gov and search on American Opportunity Tax Credit. ■

Flu, continued from page 1

- Stay well rested.
- Drink plenty of water, preferably 8 to 10 glasses per day.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Stay physically active.

What to do if you get the flu:

- Stay home and drink lots of liquids.
- Don't go to work/school for at least 24 hours *after your fever is gone*.
- See a doctor ASAP if you have shortness of breath, chest/abdominal pain, sudden dizziness/confusion, severe vomiting OR have chronic asthma or congestive heart failure. ■

IS IT A COLD OR IS IT THE H1N1 Flu?

A Cold

- Fever and chills are rare with a cold.
- A hacking, mucous-producing cough often is present with a cold.
- Slight body aches & pains can accompany a cold.
- A stuffy nose, sneezing & a sore throat are common with a cold.
- Fatigue is fairly mild with a cold.
- Cold symptoms develop over a few days.
- A headache and chills are fairly uncommon with a cold.
- Chest discomfort is mild to moderate with a cold

H1N1 Flu

- Fever is present in up to 80% of flu cases. Chills are often present.
- A non-mucous producing cough is usually present with the flu.
- Severe aches and pains are common with flu.
- A stuffy nose, sneezing & sore throat are uncommon with the flu.
- The flu has a rapid onset, usually within 3 to 6 hours.
- Tiredness is moderate to severe with the flu.
- A headache is very common and present in 80% of flu cases.
- Chest discomfort is often severe with the flu.

MORE WAYS TO REDUCE YOUR HEATING COSTS

(A few ideas you might not have heard before)

We've all been told to lower our thermostats and set them to 68 degrees to reduce our heating costs this winter. That's an obvious way to cut your bill.

But there are some other things you can do to lower your heating bills that are not so obvious.

- **Light a candle...**not for warmth, but for the purpose of a little fact-finding work. Hold the flame near windows, doors and light fixtures and look for smoke moving in a horizontal



direction. If you see it, that means you've spotted an air leak, and it likely means heat is escaping your home easily.

To solve that problem, install some low-cost caulking or weather-stripping, or consider adding some insulating material.

- **Keep windows covered when it's dark outside.** This will help you reduce heat loss and keep cold air at bay, especially if you have older windows. But be sure to let in the light during the daytime — those rays of sun will help heat your home.
- **Use an electric blanket.** There's no need to heat the entire house when you're asleep. There's no need to even heat the bedroom. An electric blanket is cheaper and cozier.
- **Dust** builds up on radiators and baseboard heating vents and then reduces the amount of heat that can get into a room. Dust and vacuum these surfaces often. ■

KIDS' CORNER



Learning to Cook – Young residents at Silver Spring's Paddington Square are learning the basics of cooking from Ms. Sincerria Carter, a Neighborhood Watch caption and Paddington Square resident who volunteers her time to the kids.

The Neighborhood Watch committee works closely with all the residents at the HOC-owned property to help improve their community. ■

HOC CHANGES CERTAIN VOUCHER & PUBLIC HOUSING RULES

HOC recently made several changes to the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. These changes were voted upon and passed by the HOC Commissioners at the October 2009 Commission meeting. All of the changes were discussed with the HOC Resident Advisory Board prior to their passage.

Among the changes are:

- a rule that gives HOC the authority to remove one member of a Public Housing household due to lease violations rather than evicting an entire family. HOC will continue to have the right to evict the entire household as per program rules, the lease and local law.

- a raise in the minimum rent payment for Public Housing from \$25 to \$50, which is the same for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.
- a change that requires a waiting list applicant who cannot verify that they qualified for the preference they claimed at the time of application will be removed from the waiting list.
- a clarification of HOC's Grievance Procedures. If a family faces termination from the Voucher program for HUD-mandated reasons, as detailed in federal regulations, the revision would not permit the family to have a Hearing Board review. Note: the family will always have the right to an information hearing or conference. ■

NEW 2009 VOUCHER PAYMENT STANDARDS

Bedroom Size	Payment Standard
Efficiency	\$1,098
1	\$1,252
2	\$1,419
3	\$1,831
4	\$2,396
5	\$2,755
6	\$3,115

CALENDAR

December 2009

■ **Tuesday, December 15, 10 a.m. to Noon:** *Budget Your Holiday Spending* Workshop at Seneca Ridge, 11400 Scenery Drive, Germantown. For more Information contact Luis Montoya, HOC Financial Literacy Counselor at: 240-773-9066

January 2010

■ **Wednesday, January 13, 9:30 a.m.:** *GED Class Orientation* HOC partners with Montgomery College to offer GED classes for HOC residents who have not yet obtained a high school degree. The Orientation Session will be held at Seneca Ridge, 11400 Scenery Drive, Germantown. For more information contact Margery McCarthy Hall at: 240-773-9349

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Please note that HOC has changed its phone numbers. ALL questions concerning your participation in our housing programs can be answered at: **240-773-9009**. (Applies to Housing Choice Vouchers and Public Housing)

Other numbers you may find useful:

Resident Accounting: **240-773-9346**

Inspections: **240-773-9396**

Family Self Sufficiency Program: **240-773-9393**

HOC Gaithersburg Customer Service Ctr.
101 Lakeforest Blvd. #200
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
240-773-9009

HOC Silver Spring Customer Service Ctr.
8241 Georgia Ave., 3rd Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910
240-773-9009



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