



AHCOPA 2022 Annual Report



**AFFORDABLE HOUSING
CENTERS OF PENNSYLVANIA**
Your Trusted Partner for Successful Homeownership

Table of Contents

AHCOPA Staff ... 3	Success Stories
Message from the Director ... 4	Foreclosure Prevention ... 9
Opening Doors of Our Own ... 5	First Time Homebuyer ... 10
Message from the President of the Board ... 6	AHCOPA Staff Homebuyers ... 11
\$2 Million for Housing Counseling ... 7	Client Demographics ... 12
Operation Will Power ... 8	AHCOPA by the Numbers ... 13
	Thank You to Our Supporters ... 14

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AHCOPA's Mission

We envision a future where every household obtains the dream of homeownership. We believe that homeownership creates wealth, supports stability and results in strong communities. We value diversity, equity and inclusion and a sense of belonging among all our stakeholders. In that context, our mission is to increase and preserve housing stability and homeownership opportunities for low-and moderate-income households and people of color through housing counseling, education, and advocacy.

AHCOPA Staff

Kenneth Bigos, <i>Executive Director</i>	Jasmine Johnson, <i>Homeownership Advisor</i>
Dionne Cerdan, <i>Director of Housing</i>	Jasmaine Williams, <i>Homeownership Advisor</i>
Misty Farrow, <i>Homeownership Advisor</i>	Sarah Kellogg, <i>Communications Manager</i>
Fernando Leal, <i>Bilingual Homeownership Advisor</i>	Derrick Thomas, <i>Will Power Program Manager</i>
Sakinah Lester, <i>Homeownership Advisor</i>	Erica Lua, <i>Bilingual Office Manager</i>
Darcel McDaniel, <i>Homeownership Advisor</i>	Eileen Mijlin, <i>Bilingual Office Manager</i>
Doris Paez, <i>Bilingual Homeownership Advisor</i>	Marian Mousa, <i>Bilingual Administrative Assistant</i>



The staff of AHCOPA and the Board of Directors at our strategic planning session in 2022.



AHCOPA's staff appreciation dinner



Staff bowling at the Holiday Party

A Message From The Executive Director

How do we define opportunity? According to Temple Grandin, PHD, it is a door that is going to open up to a whole new world.....and all you need to do is go through it. If you have the opportunity to learn about Temple Grandin, you may question whether opportunity, which eventually may result in success, can actually be achieved. At a very early age, Dr. Grandin was diagnosed with severe autism. She was nonverbal during her youth, and was an outcast socially. Thanks to the keen insights of a science teacher, her potential was realized and she was able to open her own doors to the future.

AHCOPA and our clients may reminisce about similar feelings in our own efforts in accessing opportunity. As they work to achieve homeownership, we experience the challenges of building respectable credit, the agony of wondering whether a mortgage application will be approved, and the challenges of maintaining a home and all of the upkeep.



Ken Bigos stands proudly outside the new West Philadelphia office

As the director of AHCOPA, my job has been to understand trends and issues, in order to create new opportunities. This may mean being presented with an opportunity to apply for a grant, developing a new program, or expanding to a new geographic area. The first obstacle I have overcome is my own sense of doubt

that we do not qualify for such an opportunity, or that the program aligns with our mission and values. I will admit there are feelings of trepidation, anxiety, and uncertainty when the door swings wide open and you walk through. When that happens, the feeling of resolve must be infused in our core, in order to recognize that this is a necessary action that must be undertaken. The building of this confidence among our clients is one of the primary objectives of our agency.

This report highlights AHCOPA's notable accomplishments and those of our clients in 2022, including our expansion into West Philadelphia and Delaware County, the launching of our Will Power program, and receiving the recognition of our housing counselors by the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations for the success of our advocacy work through the Housing Counseling Action Committee.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Bigos".

West Philadelphia Office Opening Doors of Our Own

In 2022, AHCOPA worked diligently to open doors for more communities within Philadelphia, and one of the big ways we accomplished this was by opening a new door of our own.

On July 29, we hosted a grand opening celebration at our new West Philadelphia office at 5901 Market St. This was the culmination of months of searching, securing additional funding, and working with developers to ensure the space was just the right size for our needs.

The location at 59th and Market is a newly constructed building with space dedicated to nonprofits and small businesses that serve the local community. AHCOPA's senior foreclosure prevention counselor, Fernando Leal and the highly experienced Aaron Williams, work out of the West Philadelphia office, giving clients in the area the opportunity to schedule in-person appointments, as well as greeting residents in the area who walk in.



Councilwoman Gauthier, Sen. Hughes, Ken Bigos, and Paul Johnson (AHCOPA Board President) at the official opening of the West Philadelphia Office.

The convenient location allows us to conduct more direct outreach to West Philadelphia, an area with great opportunity to increase and preserve homeownership for communities of color.

We were so excited to finally open our doors, and our grand opening celebration was a huge success. Councilwoman Gauthier and Senator Hughes joined us, and we greatly appreciated their kind remarks about the work AHCOPA does.

Additionally, our staff enjoyed networking with attendees, and ABC6 did a short piece on our new office!



Housing counselors Aaron Williams and Fernando Leal outside the West Philadelphia Office

“We have to direct resources to your work because it is so valuable to the community we serve.”

-- Councilwoman Gauthier

A Message From The President of the Board

Our past year was met with numerous challenges and opportunities similar to those faced by other organizations and individuals. We started to see rising mortgage interest rates and home prices, exorbitant monthly rental costs, neighborhood crime, and other inflationary pressures on households. However, we also saw public and private investments in first time homeownership, rental assistance, mortgage foreclosure prevention, and other services to help control household costs.

At AHCOPA, we acknowledged and responded to these challenges and opportunities. We are continually focused on opening doors for our neighbors. Through our rental assistance and mortgage foreclosure programs, we help you to keep your door firmly in place. Our first-time homebuyer workshops and homebuying counseling programs move you to open your own door, and by working with partners for estate planning, we can provide opportunities to protect and pass down your door to future generations by reducing the wealth gap in Black and Brown communities.



Paul Johnson speaking at West Philadelphia Opening. "This area holds special meaning to me. I grew up a block and half from here and still attend church nearby."

Our 2022 highlights include:

- Expanding the Board of Directors and Advisory Board to provide numerous diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds to help set the strategic vision of AHCOPA.
- Hosting a strategic planning retreat for the Board and staff to address challenges and opportunities.
- AHCOPA opened its own doors with two new locations to serve our communities in West Philadelphia and Delaware County.

Despite the challenges, we are optimistic and hopeful, and remain committed to opening doors for our neighbors.

The Board extends its appreciation to our passionate, mission-driven staff led by Kenneth Bigos, for the work and commitment that they give every single day. We also thank our public and private funders and supporters from local elected officials and financial institutions.

We are excited to continue to open doors in the communities we serve. We welcome you to please join us on this journey together.

Paul K. Johnson, MBA

Board of Directors President, AHCOPA



Paul Johnson and Ken Bigos speaking with a reporter at the West Philadelphia Opening

Coalition Building for the Future \$2 Million for Housing Counseling

Back in the spring of 2021, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were made available to the public, the national unemployment rate was dropping, the City of Philadelphia launched a nationally recognized eviction prevention program, mortgage interest rates were at a record low, and City Council approved funding through the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative to restart the Philly First Home Grant. The writing was on the wall (and on the door)

HOUSING COUNSELING ACTION COMMITTEE



that housing counseling was going to be in high demand, and would greatly impact the work of all Philadelphia counseling agencies. For that reason, Ken Bigos took the lead on organizing Philadelphia's Housing Counseling Action Committee (HCAC) with the objective of identifying the collective concerns of the agencies.



In-person homebuyer workshop at PHA, demonstrating the need for our programs

In 2022, AHCOPA and the other HCAC housing counseling agencies recognized the need to increase capacity in order to address the demand of households pursuing homeownership or avoiding eviction and foreclosure. Advocating for additional funding from the City of Philadelphia was HCAC's main priority. The coalition met with members of City Council and was successful in receiving an additional \$2 million for housing counseling!

For 2023, HCAC is determined to have a positive impact in advocating for an equitable housing policy in the 2023 Mayoral campaign, for increasing

banks' performance in lending to communities of color, and in playing an active role in Convergence Philadelphia through the Mortgage Bankers Association.

"Since the start of the COVID pandemic, we have seen how important housing counseling services are to keep people in their homes and help young families buy a home for the first time. The Housing Counseling Action Committee, chaired by Ken, stepped up to successfully advocate for an additional \$2 million in city funding to build the capacity of housing counseling agencies to respond to this increased demand for services."

— Rick Sauer, Executive Director, PACDC

Operation Will Power

“I want to leave it behind for my children.” For our clients who attend our first-time homebuyer program, this goal is what we hear the most. Yet, their understanding of how property is transferred is murky. The concept of estate planning is not understood, and is put off until it becomes too late, resulting in the home becoming a tangled title. This circumstance has a detrimental effect, including the inability to sell the house, to obtain insurance, or to use the house as collateral to make home improvements. As a result, the equity and wealth that was

to help homeowners protect themselves by obtaining a will and other estate planning documents. Of the major U.S. cities, Philadelphia has the highest owner-occupancy rate for households that earn less than \$35,000 per year. Estate planning education will ensure that the home is passed down to their loved ones, preserving the equity that has been generated over generations, while helping to stabilize communities.

In November 2022, AHCOPA hired Derrick Thomas to serve as the program manager of the Will Power program to coordinate with organizations in the creation of partnerships with non-profit organizations, and to recruit estate planning attorneys to involve themselves with the program. “When reading the Pew report on tangled titles, I felt we needed to take action on a preventive level to make sure homes can be properly transferred; this resulted in the creation of the Will Power program,” says Kenneth Bigos. “We are excited to have Derrick join the AHCOPA team and to build awareness of this important financial planning tool.”



Derrick Thomas and Ken Bigos promoting the Will Power program

generated over the years is lost, creating an astounding gap of intergenerational wealth between Blacks and white families of close to \$200 billion!

In September 2022, AHCOPA launched its Will Power program by having its first Wills Clinic with Community Legal Services of Philadelphia

In Partnership with Community Legal Services

WILLS CLINIC

Protect your family home and preserve your generational wealth, make a will!

AFFORDABLE HOUSING CENTERS OF PENNSYLVANIA
Your Trusted Partner for Successful Homeownership

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OF PHILADELPHIA
Est. 1966

“CLS recently expanded it’s work to include estate planning, and the partnership with AHCOPA is critical to effectively reaching Philadelphia residents who need these services enabling families to preserve and build intergenerational wealth.”

-- Rachel Gallegos, Staff Attorney at Community Legal Services

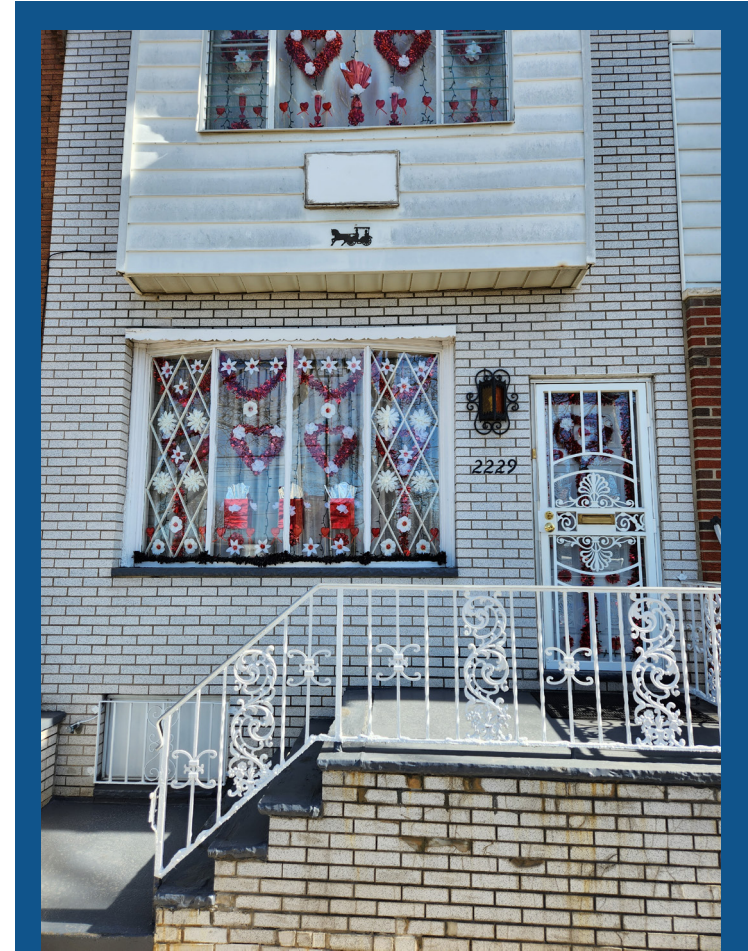
Saving Front Doors

Kim Bull is a single working mother who has lived in her house for 21 years. During that time, she has struggled to afford to fix important structures in her home. For years, she worked hard, doing overtime and sometimes seeking help from her family. Kim had been in touch with AHCOPA over the years to help her with various housing issues, but recently found herself struggling to pay her mortgage.

“I was not going to lose my house, that was just not an option.”

Kim once again contacted AHCOPA and began working with our foreclosure specialist, Fernando Leal. “Fernando has been phenomenal,” she remarks. He really helped me and really took the time to understand my situation.”

Kim worked with Fernando, following his guidance and exercising patience as the two of them pursued state funds from the PA Homeowner’s Assistance Fund. After receiving the PA HAF grant, Kim was able to bring her mortgage up to date, and pay her utility bills



Kim Bull's home of 21 years decorated for Valentine's day

down to zero.

“I started out 2023 great thanks to Fernando. I can sleep so well at night now. He is so sincere and he will not let you down.”

Like most homeowners, Kim Bull loves her home. “That’s why I was not going down without a fight,” she says, “That’s why I tried to get the programs to help me to keep it up and I will never forget those who helped me along the way.”



Fernando Leal receiving an award for his contributions to the community from Representative Regina Young

“I started out 2023 great thanks to Fernando. I can sleep so well at night now. He is so sincere and he will not let you down.”

Aleahbar Gets a Garden

Abdeltif Aleahbar is a father of three who purchased his first home in 2022 with the help of AHCOPA. Originally from Morocco, Aleahbar was considering moving back in 2019, but he decided to stay due to his son's autism. Wanting a more secure future for himself and his children, Aleahbar dreamed of buying a house.

"The rent is so expensive, it's not worth it," Aleahbar recalls, "So instead of paying rent, we wanted to put it to the mortgage. It was a dream for me to buy a house, and thank God we got it."

Aleahbar searched for over a year for a house, and found that the competition in the housing market was the hardest part. He saw that buyers were paying cash, particularly people from New York, and that they were using the houses to start their own real estate businesses. "I was really mad," he explains, "It's a bad feeling when you feel powerless and unable to provide for your children."

But with luck, persistence, and the help of AHCOPA's housing counselor, Doris Paez, everything finally came into place.

"The home, the area, everything! I was able to find a 3 bedroom house with a wide living room, a nice kitchen, and I have a garden and a backyard for my sons," says Aleahbar. "My sons are enjoying life. Everything is good. The neighborhood is safe and quiet and close to

their schools. And I'm excited to learn how to take care of the garden!"

Aleahbar credits his housing counselor for helping him navigate the homebuyer process,

"I learned a lot, how to evaluate a home, the responsibility of a house. They guided me... I advise all my friends about AHCOPA because they will help you save a lot of money, and they will teach you."

especially the down payment assistance programs. "Ms. Doris helped me a lot, especially with the LIFT program." Doris encouraged Aleahbar to approach multiple banks for pre-approval letters so that he could compare their rates and assistance programs and pick the best grants. Aleahbar was able to secure a lender that provided their own down payment assistance resources and layer that with the NeighborhoodLIFT grant.

"AHCOPA was a lot of help," says Aleahbar. "I learned a lot, how to evaluate a home, and the responsibility of a house. They guided me, checked my credit score, and advised me on what price house to buy. I advise all my friends about AHCOPA because they will help you save a lot of money and they will teach you."

"Even after I bought the house, Doris followed up with me. She gave me good information and shared a link about how to reduce taxes as a first time homebuyer. I hope she will continue to advise me. I appreciate her."

AHCOPA Counselors Purchase First Homes

We want to congratulate THREE of our own housing counselors for buying their first homes this year! Misty Farrow, Jasmine Johnson, and Jasmine Williams all purchased their first homes, all while raising kids and working extra jobs! They work too hard, but we're glad that they now have a door to call their own.

Misty Farrow utilized the NACA program, working with Bank of America to get a conventional loan with a low market interest rate. She also utilized down payment assistance, securing the \$10,000 Montgomery County homebuyer grant. Misty is most excited for the space her new home provides, including the huge yard.

Although she is an experienced housing counselor, Misty still encountered challenges with her lender and contractor. The process was a long one, but she was determined to use the program, and to help other people use it in the future.

When asked what advice she had to share with others trying to buy their house, Misty said, "Do your research, and not just one source. Different people have different information to share and different recommendations and perspectives on things. Do your own follow up, don't wait for people to follow up with you. No one can care about your living situation like you, because for everyone else it's their business, but for you, it's your life."

Jasmine Johnson describes herself as a "boss single mom of two" and says, "I'm most excited that my new house is going to create generational wealth for my family." Her advice to anyone looking for a house is to always get a home inspection!



AHCOPA's Jasmine Johnson receiving the keys to her new home!

Being a housing counselor helped Jasmine Williams purchase her first house, as she was very familiar with the process. She had a great experience that was smooth with no issues. She is most excited to do whatever she wants to her home saying, "We've painted, decorated, punched holes in the wall, and I don't have to worry about a deposit."

Her advice to others looking to purchase their first home is to "definitely vet out your options when it comes to lenders and realtors. It's not always best to go with the bank that you use, they may not be the best bank for you."

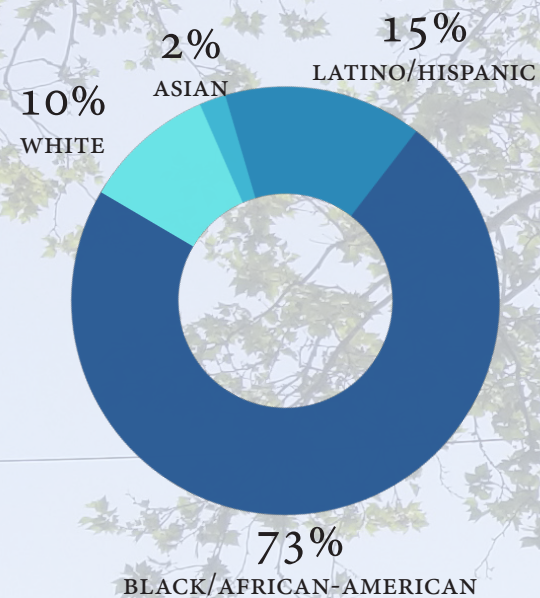
"No one can care about your living situation like you, because for everyone else it's their business, but for you, it's your life."

-- Misty Farrow, *AHCOPA Homeownership Advisor*

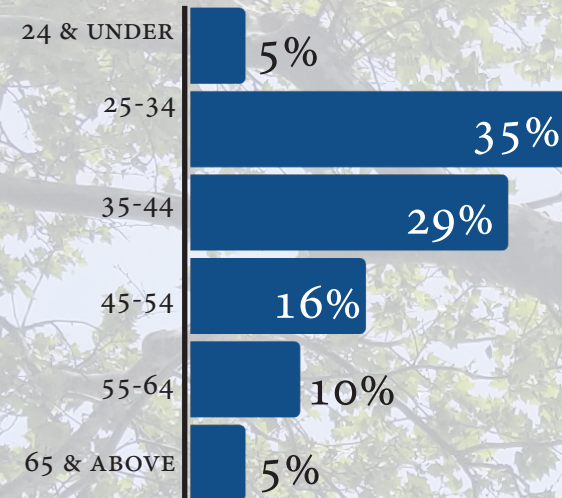
Gender Statistics

74% WOMEN
26% MEN

Racial Background



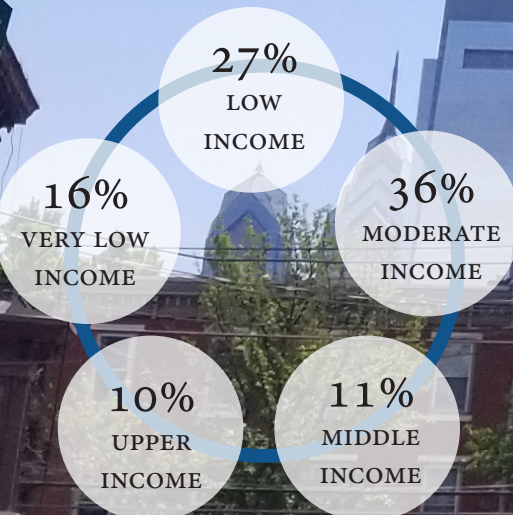
Age Breakdown



Residence of Clients Counseled

- Northeast Philadelphia - 23%
- North Philadelphia - 22%
- West Philadelphia - 19%
- Olney/Logan/East Oak Lane - 13%
- Northwest Philadelphia - 5%
- Center City/South Philadelphia - 5%
- Kensington/Fishtown - 3%
- Delaware County - 3%
- Montgomery County - 2%
- Other PA Counties - 3%
- Outside of PA - 2%

Income Breakdown



2,234

FIRST TIME HOMEBUYER WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

1,081

CLIENTS COUNSELED FOR PRE-PURCHASE

31

PHA FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT ATTENDEES

181

EVICTION PREVENTION CLIENTS

243

MORTGAGE/TAX FORECLOSURE CLIENTS

65%

RECEIVED POSITIVE OUTCOME

Philly First Home Statistics

*AS OF 3/1/2023

214

CLIENTS RECEIVING PHILLY FIRST GRANT

\$2,033,015

TOTAL PHILLY FIRST FUNDS AWARDED TO AHCOPA CLIENTS

RECIPIENTS BY RACE

GENDER

MEDIAN AGE

66% BLACK/AFRICAN-AMERICAN	78% WOMEN	36
16% LATINO/HISPANIC	65% WOMEN	31
15% WHITE	59% WOMEN	35
3% ASIAN	50% WOMEN	37

PERCENT CONVENTIONAL LOAN

AVERAGE SALE PRICE

BLACK/AFRICAN-AMERICAN	\$195,000
37% LATINO/HISPANIC	\$170,000
54% WHITE	\$232,000
66%	

Thank You to Our Supporters

AHCOPA and our Board of Directors want to share our appreciation to all our supporters in 2022! Your financial support is a reminder that you are endorsing AHCOPA's mission and purpose to better the housing and financial lives of our clients. We are prepared to open even more doors in 2023, and we hope to continue our partnerships as we improve housing stability together.

- Alston Beech Foundation
- Bank of America Foundation
- Citizens
- City of Philadelphia, Division of Housing and Community Development
- eHome America
- Exude
- Freedom Mortgage
- Fulton Bank
- Home Free USA
- Lincoln Financial Foundation
- M&T Bank Charitable Foundation
- Ocwen
- Patricia Kind Family Foundation
- Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
- Philadelphia Housing Authority
- Prosperity Home Mortgage, LLC
- PNC Foundation
- Republic Bank
- Santander Bank
- State Farm Insurance Foundation
- TD Bank Charitable Foundation
- Tompkins Vist Bank
- Truist
- Union Benevolent Association
- Univest
- Wells Fargo Housing Foundation
- William Penn Foundation
- WSFS Foundation

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All Photographs by Sarah Kellogg