

Grant Makes Home Affordable for Prince William Teacher

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DALE CITY, VA. - It may not be much to look at now, but in November a Prince William County school teacher will have a newly renovated home that he can finally afford.

Sam Schiccantano teaches technology at Occoquan Elementary in Woodbridge, and recently was awarded a federal housing grant by the state to purchase of his single family home in Dale City.

This single, first-time homebuyer said he's spent more than \$60,000 in rent costs since moving to the area to become a teacher six years ago, and had been working with a realtor and looking to buy a foreclosed home for the past year.



(Jeff Mankie/News & Messenger)

DALE CITY, VA. - Scott Schiccantano is moving into a house he is buying through a program provided by the Dale City Fire Department.

"That became hard because as soon as something would pop up on the market an investor would buy it before I could, so there is no way I could compete with them," said Schiccantano.

Income is one of the major deciding factors of who is awarded the grant money, and because a teacher's salary is limited, Schiccantano said the state loan administered through several groups, including the Prince William Housing Consortium, Catholics for Housing and the Dale City Volunteer Fire Department Foundation, is the only way he could have become a new homeowner. He learned about the grant program through a newsletter distributed by his school.

The consortium used grant money to buy the home off Nickelson Drive for \$173,000, though it appraised at the time of purchase for \$205,000, said Dale City Volunteer Fire Department Capt. Jeremy McPike.

Schiccantano, McPike, and contractor Jerry Moore, gave a tour of the home Friday afternoon.

The carpet had been ripped up, a downstairs bathroom was stripped to bare walls, and wallpaper that dates back at least 25 years was partially torn off the walls on both floors of the home.

"When we first walked into the home it was pretty bad. It was hard to breathe, and it still is, but we're putting in a new kitchen, new bathrooms, and converting the garage to a real garage, after it looks like someone once converted it to a living room or something," said Schiccantano.

The house was foreclosed upon, and these new renovations should not only make the house a nicer place to live but also improve what was once an eyesore in the neighborhood.

"It's kind of like opening a time capsule when you look inside this place," said Moore. "Back in the 70s and 80s when the building codes were different, they could use this kind of material called crust cardboard—which is basically just compressed paper that expands when it gets wet—and it's all over the place in this house. You don't see that kind of building materials used today" Moore said while crumbling some of the cardboard in his hand.

Not only will the home get a new roof, it will also get new insulation, new double-paned windows and enhanced fire safety features like smoke alarms on each floor.

The home will also become more energy efficient.

"We do a 'blower test' in the beginning to test the insulation to see how much heat we could be losing, and then again in the end after we replace all of the insulation to improve the overall efficiency of the home," said McPike.

When it's finished, \$45,000 in renovations and improvements will be done to the home using grant money.

The deadline to make the major renovations comes next month, while Schiccantano and Moore will stay on until November making their own renovations, which are not covered by the grant money. The housing consortium will sell the home back to Schiccantano for \$218,000. McPike said he will not have to repay 20 percent of that cost to the state so long as he lives in the home for 10 years.

Anyone is eligible to apply to benefit from the program. Those who are picked are counseled and then matched up with one of 10 properties that were purchased in Prince William County.

Along with being awarded the grant money, recipients also receive instruction on responsible home ownership, which focuses on managing finances to make sure the soon-to-be homeowner isn't taking on a responsibility that's too large to handle, said McPike.

"It will be nice to live close to where I work and be a part of the community," he said.

For more information visit catholicsforhousing.org/ten_homeownership.htm or call 703-330-1541.