



## SHIP Provides Safety from Floods in Pasco County

SHIP Helps Extremely Low-Income Families Leave a Deplorable Public Housing Project



BY GEORGE ROMAGNOLI

Dade Oaks Apartments was literally under water. Built in 1977 by the Pasco County Housing Authority (PCHA), it sits right on top of the low spot of a 160-acre drainage basin, which may in fact have been a lake at one time.

The topography caused the apartments to suffer from chronic flooding, resulting in unsuitable living conditions and a high vacancy rate. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development threatened the PCHA with seizure and closure of the apartments if the problems were not corrected. Had this happened, the County would have lost 69 units of affordable housing for extremely low-income persons.

The residents of Dade Oaks were victims of a dysfunctional Housing Authority, unwilling to take the action needed to remedy the situation. Fortunately, the entire board of the PCHA was replaced, and a new Executive Director was brought on board.

The newly constituted PCHA took action. It hired a consultant/developer, Gorman and Company, to help find a suitable location to reconstruct the Dade Oaks

Apartments. The PCHA chose a site north of Dade City on 14th Street. The plan was put in place to reconstruct the development on this site with a modern energy-efficient apartment complex, fittingly named Hilltop.

Making the numbers work on a multifamily apartment that needs to be affordable to extremely low-income families requires several layers of financing. Pasco County responded to a competitive solicitation for state HOME funds from the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, providing \$500,000 in SHIP funds to meet the match and leverage requirements.

The grand opening of the new Hilltop Landings Apartments, just one mile from the original site of Dade Oaks, brought together public officials and the community at large to witness the joy on the residents' faces as they envisioned their lives taking shape in homes that would no longer flood, and apartments that would be safe and air conditioned, enabling them to provide healthy homes for their children. All of the apartments have energy efficient appliances, front porches, and an old-time Southern feel. "I'm ecstatic.... Our kitchen is beautiful," said future resident Suzette Sharrer. [HNN](#)