

Having a Stable Home Helps Us Stay in School



by David Ricks

There are a lot of things that could and should happen in our communities to help students in adult education classes to be able to stay in school. If we had stable places to live, for example, we could put down roots, learn what resources are available in our neighborhoods, and stick with them. Unfortunately, many of us can't stay in our apartments for very long, and that affects our ability to stay in school.

Let us take a look at the landlords. It's no surprise to any of us that rents are going through the roof. Rather than take the time and effort to improve or maintain the buildings they own and rent out, many are just selling out. They take the money and run! New owners are re-working the very same apartments that you rented for \$400.00 a month. They add in a dishwasher, high-end appliances, and laundry, and then sell them as condos for outrageous prices you can't afford.

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I've been living this problem for so long. I've been displaced or had to move at least four times in the last 10 years. It's ridiculous. You're in a neighborhood, you find a place where you can pursue an education, and then your landlord sells. You have to move, and you can't keep up with the program that you were in. You've got to pack, find a new apartment, and look for a new program. The

new program might have different hours, so you'd have to change your work schedule to match the new class hours. Or you might have to travel back and forth to the old program. Once I took classes in a library, but you had to live in the same neighborhood as the library, so after I moved, I couldn't continue.

One possible solution to this problem is to create a landlord-tenant association in which the landlords and tenants agree to maintain the property and keep the places reasonably priced. The tenants then can afford to stay. The tenants could also agree to stay current on their rents and not destroy the places in which they live. This is just one suggestion that could make it easier for adult education students to stay in school.

David Ricks lives in Chicago and takes classes at the Howard Area Community Center. He's hoping he doesn't have to move again anytime soon.

For Discussion

What is your experience of being a tenant? Have you had to move frequently? What is happening to renters in your area?

What do you think of David Ricks' suggestion that landlords and tenants work together to prevent displacement?

Use the internet to find an organization in your community that works on tenants' rights.