

HOME Line's Quarterly Highlights

January through March 2010

What's new with HOME Line!

Tenant Hotline:

- Our tenant hotline served 2,756 callers this quarter, prevented 53 evictions, helped tenants recover \$23,667 in wrongfully withheld security deposits and rent abatement (rent returned for substandard living conditions).
- These numbers continue to show the growing use of technology to help tenants get the information they need. 6,695 visited our website this quarter, a 29% increase over the same quarter last year, 2,393 accessed legal forms, a 9% increase over last year, and 105 people emailed our attorneys for legal advice.
- The top three caller issues were: repairs, evictions, and foreclosures. Foreclosures continue to affect renters, accounting for over 13% of all calls.
- HOME Line hotline volunteers have donated a record 1,016.5 hours. This is largely due to the hard work of Alex Hussey, one of our two hotline VISTAs).

Policy Advocacy:

- HOME Line is one of the lead organizations fighting to save the Renters' Credit. And while the fate of the Governor's proposed 27% cut this summer is still up in the air (pending court action), there is good news to report on the permanent status of the program. In late March 2010 the Minnesota Legislature passed (and the Governor has promised to sign) budget bills for 2011 and 2012 that will restore the renters' credit to its full amount.
- HOME Line and Legal Services Advocacy Project have teamed up for a multi-year Minnesota Tenant Bill of Rights campaign to make Minnesota law more tenant-friendly. During the 2010 Session, we are poised to pass legislation that will save tenants millions of dollars through revisions to policies on tenant screening fees, late fees, attorney fees, and security deposits.

Tenant Organizing:

- HOME Line Organizers assisted tenants in 4 project based Section 8 buildings representing 408 units of affordable housing in Chaska, Hopkins, and Maple Grove.
- Minnesota Tenants Alliance added 18 new members to its Action Network.
- HOME Line Organizers doorknocked and flyer'd 5 Metro buildings to do outreach to and to assist tenants who were having serious repair and water issues in their buildings.
- This quarter, HOME Line established a new blog called Landlords in the News. The blog features noteworthy Minnesota news stories and videos about landlords that we have gathered online. <http://homelinemn.org/landlordblog/>

Here is an example of recent organizing.

In December, HOME Line received a call from a tenant in Golfview Apartments in Anoka. Tenants in the 32 unit building were dealing with intermittent water usage and sewage flowing into their basement. HOME Line organizers worked quickly to organize the tenants and guided one tenant through filing an Emergency Tenant Remedies Action, and then organized a tenant meeting in order to assist other Golfview tenants.

After involving the Anoka City Council and the media, the City of Anoka stepped in to make repairs and sanitize the building. The tenant who filed the ETRA received a break on her January rent by court order, and HOME Line assisted other residents in trying to receive money back as well.

HOME Line assisted a tenant in Anoka County Court. The judge ordered that she was then excused from paying rent for two months, because of the apartment conditions with which she dealt. Another tenant was also engaged in advocacy by testifying to several legislative committees about her rental experience. HOME Line addressed the Anoka City Council twice in order to encourage a review of the city's rental ordinances. We continue to also work with the Anoka HRA in order to hold a renters' summit in the summer of 2010.