

## HANDS earns award for community work

Housing and Neighborhood Development Services of Orange received an award for its work from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation.

HANDS was honored with the Neighborhood Impact Award during LISC's award program Nov. 1 at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

The Neighborhood Impact Award recognizes a local group or community-development corporation whose involvement has created a long-term impact on the revitalization of an area.

HANDS received the award for 21 years of carrying out and refining a neighborhood-revitalization effort in Orange and East Orange. Officials with HANDS said that by targeting problem properties for development, engaging residents and leveraging time and funds, it has been able to stabilize neighborhoods and create long-term sustainable changes.

The strategy's centerpiece is to revitalize neighborhoods through the high-impact development of vacant properties, the officials said. There are seven core elements of the strategy:

redeveloping pivotal properties in target neighborhoods; increasing homeownership; investing in first-time homebuyers; strengthening neighborhood organizations; developing leadership; forging strategic partnerships; developing comprehensive neighborhood plans; and, shaping public policy and private-sector initiatives.

Over the years HANDS' efforts have resulted in the development or rehabilitation of 129 housing units; a Home Buyers Club which has graduated 121 first-time homebuyers; and the development of 12,000 square feet of new commercial space with an additional 29,000 square feet planned for the next two years.

In addition, HANDS has facilitated the creation of ValleyArts, a community arts organization; the creation of two strong neighborhood groups and two city-wide coalitions; the establishment of the Leadership Training Institute; the deployment of new banking services delivered to urban areas; and the formation of a public/private partnership that created three redevelopment areas and a brownfield-development area.