Living the Dream

By Andrea Cambern

"Hello, my name is Andrea and I'm a Houseaholic…"

I can't say for sure when my addiction to houses began. But I think the origin of this obsession goes wayyyyy back. In fact, I blame it on my dollhouse. Oh how I loved that thing! I would spend hours moving the tiny furnishings from one room to another, dreaming of the day when I’d be able to do that for real!

It is the American Dream after all. And it's something Wenda Pagliaro dreamt of too. For years the Cottage Hospital physical therapist and her husband Gino, worked toward the goal of owning their own home. “I would say our whole life, we both grew up in. "It's been really, really amazing," she says. "But we thought there is no way we are ever going to be able to buy a house in Santa Barbara because of financial limitations."

Wenda gives much of the credit for making that dream a reality to the Coastal Housing Partnership. The local nonprofit has been helping employees of local companies realize their dream of home ownership for over 28 years.

The organization partners with central coast employers to help them address the recruitment and retention challenges associated with the high cost of housing in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. Home prices in the area continue to rise at a rapid rate, far outpacing increases in employee salaries. Not only that, navigating the path to home ownership can be a daunting experience.

“Home buying education has been central to our work over the years," says Corby Gage, Executive Director of the Coastal Housing Partnership. "Lack of information about the process can be one of the biggest obstacles to home ownership."

To combat that, next Saturday, the CHP will host its 4th annual Path to Home Ownership Home Buying Fair. “The Home Buying Fair is designed to give attendees the opportunity to find out more about the home buying process, the real estate market, and to meet local real estate professionals,” says Gage. Wenda attended the event two years in a row. "The resources of CHP helped us get started and kept me thinking this could really happen," she says.

Reassurance and guidance isn’t the only perk of the CHP. Its partners often provide special discounts and programs to help put home ownership within reach. “We look back at what the real estate agent credited, the waived closing fees and home inspection discounts and we really see the savings,” says Ponce. "All the partners worked on our behalf so we could save even more money over the life of our mortgage."

Whether you’re just beginning to think about buying or ready to take the plunge, organizers say the fair offers something for everyone. Attendees can meet one on one with real estate agents, lenders, credit and financial advisors and home builders in a relaxed — no pressure — environment. In addition, free seminars will be presented throughout the day on local market conditions and the home buying process.

Since its inception in 1987, the organization has helped over 10,000 people become homeowners. “That’s what we live for” says Gage. “It is so rewarding to feel that we could provide the tools to get them started on their path to home ownership. Seeing them in their new homes is so inspiring.”

No, there's nothing like seeing a dream come true, just ask the Pagliaros who can't believe that today they are raising their family in the same Goleta neighborhood they grew up in. “It’s been really, really amazing,” Wenda says. "There are some days that we are still saying ‘is this really ours?"

The Romero family calls the Coastal Housing Partnership a beacon of light that helped them realize the dream of home ownership in Ventura. Photo Melissa Walker

The Houseaholic

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Wenda and Gino Pagliaro say they can’t believe they are able to raise their children in a house in the same Goleta neighborhood they grew up in.

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