

Fayette County Redevelopment Authority receives \$150,000 grant

Amy Revak Herald-Standard | Posted: Friday, October 22, 2010 4:00 am

The Fayette County Redevelopment Authority was recently selected to receive \$150,000 in grant money from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to repair and improve housing for low-income, rural homeowners. Although the authority has received a USDA allocation every year for the past 22 years, Andrew French, executive director for the authority, said this marks the first time in his memory that the authority has received the amount it requested.

In July, the authority approved a grant request to the USDA Housing Preservation Grant for \$150,000.

"Usually, they say we can't have the total amount but this time for the first time, we got the full amount we requested," French said.

French said the authority uses the money every year to complement the homeowner rehabilitation program to assist low-income homeowners make more substantial repairs to their homes.

Normally, the authority receives about \$100,000 annually from the program.

"This is a pretty significant increase," French said.

This year, the authority will combine the USDA money with other programs for a total amount of \$850,000. The funding will assist 42 homeowners with repairs, French said. Of that amount, 15 homeowners will benefit from the USDA funding.

The loans are either paid back or deferred until the property is sold, French said. They are made available to homeowners who make 50 percent or below the median income at zero percent interest.

The money will be used to address code deficiency issues such as roofs, heating, ventilation and air conditioning units, windows and electrical systems, French said.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently selected the authority among 163 recipients in 50 states and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The announcement of the awardees was made Thursday by USDA's Rural Housing Administrator Tammy Trevi'o on behalf of Secretary Vilsack during a speech in Boston to the National Council of State Housing Agencies.

"The Obama administration is working to ensure that rural homeowners have safe, sanitary, energy-efficient places to live, and USDA is working with community organizations and non-profit groups to help people make needed repairs," Vilsack said.

Locally, in addition to the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, Greene County received an \$86,701 grant.

For more information on programs offered by USDA Rural Development, call the Pennsylvania State Office at 717-237-2299 or visit its website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa.