

Olga K. Scanlon



SMHA Debt & Credit and Financial Literacy Instructor

Olga volunteered with Southern Mutual Help Association, Inc., for 5 years. Her work had an estimated economic impact in Acadiana of nearly \$30 million. She worked with over 300 low-income individuals and families pursuing homeownership. About fifty of those families achieved the goal of purchasing a home, moving an estimated \$4,500,000 in affordable capital into rural communities in Acadiana. Other clients learned valuable financial literacy skills to be more financially viable now and, perhaps, become homeowners.

Olga was honored as a recipient of the 2008 Louisiana Heroines Award sponsored by the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations (LANO). The award was given in recognition of and to honor Olga for giving so generously of her time, talent and treasure.

Olga's involvement went far beyond the formal sessions of Debt & Credit Counseling and Financial Literacy. With a remarkable balance between a sense of gravitas and a sense of humor, Olga supported her clients one-to-one long after the formal sessions ended. The individuals and families with whom she worked often faced complex and seemingly insurmountable barriers in achieving the American Dream of owning a home. Her ability to be direct and “no-nonsense” was coupled with great compassion. Her ability to listen actively, read body language and separate fact from fiction were incredibly important skills. Her dedication to poor rural families while facing her own serious health challenges demonstrated courage that inspired her clients who were often burdened with overwhelming levels of stress.

A new homeowner protégé of Olga's volunteered to share her success story with a new class of prospective homeowners. “If I can do it, anyone can” was her message. The leadership skills developed by this individual and the sense of community responsibility demonstrated in encouraging others to believe in themselves point to Olga's impact on the lives of rural families.