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Bend event to help homeowners prevent foreclosures

(Salem) — As part of an ongoing effort to help homeowners avoid foreclosure, state agencies are organizing a foreclosure-prevention event in Bend on Saturday, March 27.

The Home Ownership Preservation Event (HOPE) will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Central Oregon Community College's Pioneer Hitchcock Auditorium at 2600 N.W. College Way in Bend.

This is the third Home Ownership Preservation Event the state has helped organize. The other events were in Portland in May 2009 and Medford in October 2009.

"Until the Oregon economy improves, we expect to continue to see homeowners struggling to stay in their homes," said Cory Streisinger, director of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services. "Arming homeowners with information and resources is an important tool in slowing the rise in foreclosures."

At the free event, homeowners will be able to attend workshops – offered in both English and Spanish – that will teach them how to participate in foreclosure prevention programs, such as the federal Making Home Affordable Plan. Other workshop topics include homeowners' rights under new Oregon laws, short sales, avoiding foreclosure scams, and how lawyers can help prevent a foreclosure. Nonprofit housing counselors, state agencies, and lawyers will be on hand to provide information and answer questions. Representatives from the Oregon Employment Department will also be present, providing employment information.

"It's vitally important that we do everything we can to help people stay in their homes during these grim economic times," said Attorney General John Kroger.

Sponsors for the Bend event include: the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services, Oregon Department of Justice, Oregon Housing and Community Services, Mortgage Lending Education Board, Hagar Institute, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, OAMP Central Oregon, Oregon State Public Interest Research Group, and NeighborImpact.

"Not knowing what to do or who to talk to adds to the stress during a personal financial crisis," said Victor Merced, Director of Oregon Housing and Community Services. "Good information is a powerful tool for families."

For more information on the event, call 1-866-814-9710 or go to www.foreclosurehelp.oregon.gov.

The Home Ownership Preservation Events are one way the state has been helping Oregonians facing foreclosure. The Department of Consumer and Business Services, the Department of Justice, and Oregon Housing and Community Services have been working with the legislature and consumer groups to protect Oregonians from mortgage fraud and provide resources to homeowners facing foreclosure.

The agencies have provided funding for foreclosure counseling using proceeds from Oregon settlements

exposing mortgage fraud. Homeowners can call 1-800-SAFENET or log onto www.211info.org to find a counselor in their area. In addition, a state Web site, <http://foreclosurehelp.oregon.gov>, contains information and resources to help homeowners prevent foreclosure, avoid scams, and better understand the foreclosure process.

Oregon has several new laws that further help homeowners. Senate Bill 628 requires lenders to meet with borrowers facing foreclosure – either in person or by phone – and evaluate whether they qualify for a loan modification. In addition, House Bill 3610 passed in the February 2010 session requires an explanation from the lender if the homeowner is found ineligible for the modification.

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