

A single home foreclosure has an impact on more than just one family. It affects the entire community. Each foreclosure depresses the property values of the properties around it, which in turn can force some of those properties into foreclosure. To avoid this damaging ripple effect, I have worked with homeowners facing foreclosure.

This past summer, I heard from a Monmouth County couple struggling during the economic downturn. The husband's income had dropped because many of his clients could not pay their bills, while the wife suffered an accident that left her unable to work at her sales job for almost a year. The value of their home plummeted by 55 percent and, despite eliminating all unnecessary expenses for themselves and their children and spending their nest egg, they found themselves in debt to relatives and in danger of foreclosure. They appealed to their financial institution for a modification of their mortgage loan so they could afford payments on their reduced income, but the bank turned them down.

I wrote to the bank asking it to reconsider, and last month the couple called me to say that their mortgage adjustment had been approved and they will be able to stay in their home. There are both [federal and state programs](#) designed to help minimize the number of home foreclosures. If you are in danger of losing your home, please call me at 1-87-RUSH-HOLT to get information on programs that can assist you.

Expanding Mental Health Care

The enactment in October 2008 of the [Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act](#) was a strong first step to ensuring that those who need access to mental health care can get it. With the passage of the health reform bill, Congress increased the availability of mental health services.

In addition to expanding coverage to millions of uninsured Americans, the health reform law promotes mental health in existing health insurance plans. The law specifies that mental health and substance abuse treatment are an essential category of benefits for health insurance plans. The law also gives Americans free access to effective preventive care, including several mental and behavioral health services, such as adult and adolescent depression screening and alcohol misuse screening.

Click [here](#) to read more about how the law helps ensure that mental health is recognized as a key component of overall health.

Disaster Loan Deadline is June 1

Homeowners, renters, small businesses, and non-profit organizations in 12 counties have until June 1 to apply for an SBA loan for physical damage caused by the severe storms and flooding that affected Central New Jersey in March and April. Low-interest loans are available to repair damage to residences, personal property, and business equipment. More information about the loans, including how to apply, can be found [here](#) or by calling 1-800-659-2955.

Congressional Art Competition

Congratulations to the winners of the 2010 Art Competition, which I hosted last week in Plainsboro. The grand prize winner was Gopi Patel from South Brunswick High School, who won with the drawing titled "See Tools as Jewels." As the grand prize winner, her artwork will be displayed in the U.S. Capitol Building for one year, along with the winners from the other Congressional Districts.