

## Rocchio named Originator of the Year by Rhode Island Housing

June 1, 2014

Rhode Island Housing recently named mortgage originator Rob Rocchio its Originator of the Year Award winner. The award recognizes Rocchio's demonstrated commitment to creating affordable financing opportunities for first-time homebuyers.

One of the longest-tenured originators in the Rhode Island Housing Loan Center, Rocchio increased his total number of closed loans by 15 percent in 2013. He serves homebuyers in Block Island, Cranston, Coventry, Jamestown, Narragansett, North Kingstown, South Kingstown and parts of Providence.

Rocchio holds a B.S. in psychology from the University of Rhode Island.

**PBN:** How has Rhode Island Housing incorporated technology to serve homeowners and community partners?

**ROCCHIO:** Within the last two years we have introduced several technological improvements, including our HomeCompare mobile app, a recently launched Homeownership microsite and online homebuyer education. Our new homeownership site was built completely with the homebuyer in mind, giving visitors the information they need, without having to dig for details. Our loan products, educational services, key contacts - all of it can be easily found on the new site. We have also introduced an automated, streamlined underwriting process, which enables smarter and faster underwriting decisions. We want to help homebuyers learn as much as they can upfront so there are no surprises down the road. These new tools certainly help us achieve that.

**PBN:** What do you think the state should do to promote the homebuyers market?

**ROCCHIO:** Many homebuyers still feel anxious about the market and need additional tools and education to make them more comfortable and better informed. They may also be in need of financial supports to help them achieve the dream of owning a home. Our state is very fortunate to have groups like the Housing Network, Realtor boards and others who take steps to educate homebuyers. I also see the positive impact of programs that several cities offer that help with down payments and closing costs. These programs are big incentives for first-time homebuyers and if more municipalities offered them we might see the significant uptick in the real estate industry that we need.

**PBN:** Can you speak to the housing programs that assist rental-property owners in the state?

ROCCHIO: While I primarily work on homeownership efforts at Rhode Island Housing, our agency also helps rental property owners and landlords. Our LeadSafe program and Healthy Homes initiative help both homeowners and landlords eliminate the hazards of lead and address safety issues in their homes. These funds helped landlords to remove lead paint from homes, perform energy-efficiency updates to reduce utility bills, install handicap-accessible features, and make other property updates to increase the value of the home and improve the living space for renters.

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