City housing agency gets good report card

ANN BAKER STAFF WRITER

St. Paul's Public Housing Agency was ranked fifth among the 3,300 public housing services across the United States, its annual report card came last week from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"I think it has to do with our staff and the systems we have in place," said executive director Jon Gutmann when asked the secret of his agency's success.

"They're the hardest working and most competent group of people with whom I've ever worked. We're a tenant-centered organization, and the staff are grounded by their daily involvement with the successes and failures of our residents."

PUBLIC HOUSING

Public housing in St. Paul provides a staff of 240 to oversee 2,400 publicly owned housing units in four large complexes — McDonough, Mount Airy, Roosevelt and Dunedin homes. High rises for seniors and handicapped people and more than 300 houses and duplexes scattered throughout the city.

The agency also oversees 2,500 Section 8 grants, which are federal subsidies that allow low-income people to pay no more than a third of their monthly income on rent in privately owned buildings.

The St. Paul agency provides numerous services for its residents, typically in collaboration with other local agencies. They include:

* A Community Outreach Police (ACOP), which uses $609,000 in drug-prevention federal grants to pay salaries of city police officers and support staff in the four large family housing complexes.

* Youth sports programs, including $24,000 to help open a Boys and Girls Club at Mt. Airy, where the community center also is being renovated. It will reopen in November.

* Head Start preschools, well-baby clinics, food shelves, counseling, job hunting programs and nutrition classes at McDonough, Mt. Airy and Roosevelt. Residents of Dunedin are encouraged to use similar services at the adjacent Neighborhood House.

"We're focused on a specific mission: provid-

AGENCY CONTINUED ON 2

Note:

This article inaccurately reported the number of units owned and operated by the Saint Paul PHA. The agency owns and operates 4,281 units of public housing including 16 high-rise, four family rowhouse developments and 421 scattered site units.