



APRIL IS FAIR HOUSING MONTH!

19TH ANNUAL FAIR HOUSING LUNCHEON & WORKSHOP SERIES

Thursday, April 20, 2006 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 8:15 am to 1:30 pm.

“Changing the Landscape: Welcoming Everyone to Our Backyard” UPDATE:

As April approaches, FHC Staff and the Events Committee are busy finalizing details for the 19th Annual Luncheon & Workshop Series. Centered around addressing NIMBYism, this year’s event will focus on making Grand Rapids a more welcoming community. The workshops and keynote address at the luncheon will challenge attendees to explore prejudices that exist in our community, increase multi-cultural competence, and further relationships with partners in the housing industry and the community in order to ensure equal housing opportunity for **every-one**. With these goals in mind, the FHC will offer three different workshops, each will run concurrently from 8:45 am until 11:45 am.

Doretha Ardoin, FHC Board President, will moderate the first workshop, titled “*NIMBYism: Understanding the Implications of Prejudice in Our Backyard.*” Luncheon Keynote speaker, Michael Allen, will provide the framework for the discussion on NIMBYism.

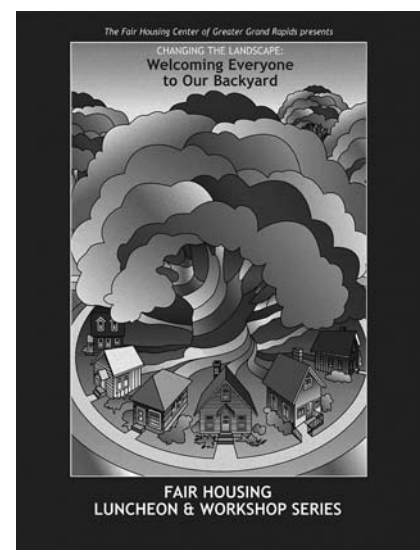
Michael is the Senior Staff Attorney at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law. He will discuss the history of NIMBYism as well as its emerging forms. He will challenge the workshop participants to think about the issues in new ways.

Local representatives on the panel will share their experiences in the face of NIMBYism in West Michigan. Pam Doty Nation, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity Kent County, will discuss obstacles her agency faced and continues to face when attempting to build homes in areas not previously served. Harold Mast, Executive Director of Genesis Non-Profit Housing Corporation, will focus his comments on the things his agency has learned in developing affordable accessible housing in Kent County. Finally, John Bitely, of Sable Construction, will discuss some of the challenges he and his firm have faced in trying to build affordable housing in West Michigan as well as the successful strategies they have developed.

The second workshop, titled “*Community, Industry & Advocates: Partners in Fair Housing,*” comes at

the recommendation of last year’s attendees, who were interested in gaining an understanding of the local fair housing issues and were looking for opportunities to get involved. This workshop will be moderated by past FHC Executive Director Lee Nelson Weber. Cat Cloud, Vice President of the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), will provide an overview of fair housing on the national level. Ms. Cloud will discuss the results of a multi-year national real estate sales testing project.

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.....FHC Event Update.....

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She will update attendees as to the status of cases wherein evidence of discrimination was found and cases have been filed either with the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and/or federal court. Ms. Cloud will spend some time discussing the Town & Country Real Estate case out of Detroit as well as some of the positive things that have transpired since the case was filed in August of 2005. She will also discuss fair housing issues as they relate to Katrina victims and rebuilding the Gulf Coast.

Using a recently completed report compiled by FHC staff, which identifies obstacles to housing choice in our region, FHC staff will provide information about housing discrimination in West Michigan. The report identifies discriminatory practices and procedures as well as regulatory barriers which interfere with housing choice. Participants will then engage in an interactive discussion of the trends reviewed, followed by opportunities to identify and discuss issues related to fair housing in small groups centered around different perspectives towards housing. The small groups will include builders and developers, mortgage lenders and appraisers, realtors, rentals property owners and managers, and community members. An individual representing industry and community segments will head up each table for discussion. Confirmed table leaders include Dan Grzywacz (Flagstar Bank/West Michigan Mortgage Lenders Association), Julia Rietberg (Executive Vice President, Grand Rapids Association of Realtors) and Kathy Vallie (Executive Director, Property Management Association of West Michigan).

The FHC is pleased to present a follow up to last year's workshop "*Perspectives on Diversity in Mortgage Lending*" presented by Dale Dicks, Senior Project Manager in Fannie Mae's Office of Diversity, titled "*Building Multi-Cultural Competence*." This workshop – back by popular demand to delve deeper into the issues that were discussed last year – will help members of the housing industry build multi-cultural competence through a variety of exercises and discussion. Participants will explore differences within cultures, key areas to look for differences, dynamics of human interaction, and influencing how others see you. Assessments of multi-cultural awareness and collective perceptions will better equip participants to work in the diverse and growing communities of West Michigan.

As always, the workshops lead into the annual luncheon, which features a presentation of the Annual Fair Housing Awards, the kick off to the 2006 Membership Drive, and a keynote presentation by Michael Allen, Senior Staff Attorney of the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in Washington, D.C. In his keynote address, "Making Room at the Inn: Housing for the Least Among Us," Michael Allen will chart a course for rebuilding our social contract and reconnecting neighbors to one another, all in the context of vigorous enforcement of the right to "housing of one's choice in the community."

Many scriptural traditions use the term "covenant" to describe a sacred relationship between the Creator and human beings. The Founders used this same term to describe a trust-filled relationship between citizens and their government. It is a measure of how far we

have fallen that the term is no longer understood as a binding and solemn agreement to work toward the common good. Rather, when we hear the word "covenant" these days, we assume it refers to some restrictive provision in a residential deed, designed to keep out "undesirables." Nearly 60 years after the Supreme Court outlawed the use of racial covenants, they are alive and well and being employed to exclude affordable housing, shelters, group homes and other forms of housing for the least among us.

Fair Housing Award Nominations Needed!

Fair Housing Awards will be presented to individuals and/or organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to fair housing, which is evidenced by strong leadership within the fair housing effort; economic, social and/or political impact in the community which has encouraged diversity and housing opportunities for all; past efforts in raising awareness in the community about fair housing and other issues pertinent to providing equal housing opportunity for all; and demonstrated accomplishments in fair housing efforts.



To nominate an individual and/or organization, please fill out the enclosed form and return it the FHC by March 17, 2006.

Selections will be made by the Events Committee.

...Fair Housing Center Happenings...

FHC Welcomes 6 New Board Members

The FHC is pleased to share that the news that the following community members have recently joined the FHC Board: Michelle Behrenwald of Inspired Design, Ira Hart of Consumers Energy, Charity Post of Independent Mortgage Company, Tim Reimink of Crowe Chizek, Suzanne Schulz of the City of Grand Rapids Planning Department, and Dr. Robin Smith of Grand Valley State University's School of Social Work.

WELCOME

Long-time FHC volunteer and Board Member Doretha Ardoin (Caldwell Banker) has become Board President. **Many** thanks to out-going President, Ron Eberhardt of Community Rebuilders. Ron, your leadership and dedication to the FHC is remarkable and **much** appreciated!

» *Thank You* «

Special thanks to our dedicated board members who have rotated off of the Board in the last year: William Hoyt (City of Grand Rapids Planning Department), Gary Gershon (Attorney), Dan Immergluck (GVSU), Jose Reyna (City of Grand Rapids), and Angela Ross (Attorney).

Spotlight on...FHC President Doretha Ardoin



Doretha Ardoin is a long-time supporter of the FHC. In 2004, she received a 20 year Board Service Award—an FHC record! Doretha has previously served two consecutive terms as Board President for the FHC, and has recently become President for her third term. A Real Estate Agent and Trainer for Coldwell Banker Schmidt, she provides training in partnership with the FHC and volunteers on the FHC Events Committee and Capital Campaign Committee. Doretha has received many awards and accolades for her good work in the community and as a practitioner of fair housing, including the prestigious *Realtor of the Year* award, a *YWCA Tribute Award* and *Woman of the Year* by the Women's Council of Realtors, among many others.

Capital Campaign Update

The FHC Board of Directors and staff are thrilled to announce that four area foundations have committed funds to help the FHC renovate the building recently donated by **Bank One**. The **Dyer-Ives Foundation** has approved a grant to help with marketing materials while the **Frey Foundation**, **Grand Rapids Community Foundation** and the **Steelcase Foundation** have all approved grants for the Capital Campaign. Stay tuned for more details and updates! *Contact the FHC to get involved!!*



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Suzanne Schulz
City of Grand Rapids

Margaret Sieh
Community Activist

Robin Smith
Grand Valley State University

Jim Wilson
Land & Company

...Fair Housing Center Happenings...

FHC Says Goodbye to Dania Santana & Welcomes New Staff Members

The FHC bids a fond farewell to former Investigations Assistant Dania Santana, as she and her husband move to the Big Apple. Best wishes, Dania!



The FHC gives a warm welcome to our new Fair Housing Specialist, Dante Pirtle. Dante has volunteered for the FHC over the years and will now assist with FHC investigations. Welcome, Dante!

WELCOME



The FHC also welcomes long-time Event Coordinator Liz Keegan to the FHC staff as the new Director of Education & Outreach. As you'll recall, Liz has worked on the Annual Luncheon & Workshop Series on a contract basis since 2001. She will be busy working on the capital campaign for at least the first half of the year but will eventually shift her focus to

education and outreach in helping the FHC transition to becoming a more proactive agency with the capacity to serve the fair housing training needs of our industry and community partners. Welcome, Liz!

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