
Watch us grow!

The Fair Housing Center is going through a lot of changes that will enhance our services and allow us to reach many more people in Western Michigan in our continuing fight to stop housing discrimination.

We are changing our name from the Fair Housing Center of Greater Grand Rapids, to the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan to better reflect our ability to provide more effective fair housing services throughout the western Michigan area.

Along with the name change, we also now provide a toll free number to allow more people to have access to our services.

If you are outside of the (616) service area and have any questions about fair housing, or if you feel that you are a victim of illegal housing discrimination, you will be able to dial (866) 389-FAIR (3247) and we will be waiting to help you.

FHC looks forward to enhancing the level of services, in our new space and to finding new opportunities to further the FHC's mission.

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 5:00 and our phone lines are available for any questions and concerns. Just dial (866) 389-FAIR!



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New Home - Same Commitment

The Fair Housing Center of Greater Grand Rapids is happy to announce that as of early spring, 2006 the Center will be continuing its work to ensure equal housing opportunity in West Michigan from a new location of its own!

Bank One has generously donated its former branch at 20 Hall S.E. (on the corner of Hall and Division) to FHC.

Now the Center can expand its services from a new and more accessible home. FHC will be kicking off a capital campaign to make the necessary renovations to this facility. With this important step, FHC starts a whole new stage in its history.

The new 4,000-square-foot home offers ample onsite parking and more office, meeting and storage space than FHC's current leased space in Eastown business district.

"The Fair Housing Center becomes only the second fair housing center nationally to own its facility and the first to receive a building donation," said Executive Director Nancy Haynes. "We are astounded and delighted with this gift from Bank One. This location will give greater visibility to the Fair Housing Center and our mission,



Executives from Bank One and Board Members are excited for the donation of the building. From left to right: Armando Hernández, Doretha Ardoin, Richard Haslinger, Kim Miller and Ron Eberhardt.

and it makes us more accessible to those whom we serve."

"A federal grant received last December permitted us to expand fair housing services to nine West Michigan counties," said Ron Eberhardt, Fair Housing board president and executive director of Community Rebuilders. "Now, with the Bank One building, our infrastructure can keep pace with our service expansion."

Through its corporate philanthropy program, Bank One supports community development, including housing initiatives, in the

communities it serves. "The Fair Housing Center will be a great neighbor and an even stronger asset to the community in this new location," said Richard Haslinger, president of Bank One's West Michigan market.

"Bank One is pleased that our long-time partner will be able to make excellent use of the building."

FHC is sincerely grateful to Bank One for fulfilling a long-time dream of a home of our own.

Thank you Bank One!

You Can Make A Difference!



Nancy Haynes believes in the power of one voice.

People often think that "just one person" can't make big changes and give up in defeat before the struggle is begun. Sometimes, one person can make huge, national changes through sheer persistence and determination. Nancy Haynes is just such a person.

Recently, Nancy, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center, was watching TV with her family, when she saw a promo for a new ABC reality program to be called "Welcome to the Neighborhood".

The basis for this program was to have three families "choose" a new neighbor from an array of culturally diverse contestant families.

Shocked at the blatant disregard of the provisions of the Fair Housing Act prohibiting discrimination in real estate transactions and the illegality of denying equal housing rights to persons/families protected under fair housing laws, Nancy immediately tried to contact ABC headquarters in New York.

Unsuccessful in her attempts, she enlisted the help of the National Fair Housing Alliance

(NFHA) in Washington, D.C. on whose executive committee she serves.

Shanna Smith, President of NFHA organized groups of very different people from various political perspectives who also protested the concept of the program and contacted the network.

The pressure caused ABC to cancel the program. Releasing a statement that announced it was pulling the show from its summer schedule. Those of us, who were fortunate enough to have heard Dr. Okianer Dark's keynote address, recall her reference to "Many little fleas moving a great big dog".

Nancy's action is a perfect example of while one little flea may not bother the big dog; calling in a bunch of "fleas" with the same objective can move a very large dog indeed.

FHC is a little voice against housing discrimination, but with your help we can make a mighty roar to ensure equal housing access for all. Please use the enclosed envelope to join the Fair Housing Center today!

Liz Keegan to Head our Capital Campaign

Many of FHC's members, friends and family know Liz Keegan as the driving force behind the annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series. Liz's expert guidance has made our event grow bigger and better every year.

The Center is pleased that Liz has agreed to contract with us to direct our capital campaign to renovate and adapt our very own building to our very specific needs. Liz's new responsibilities also include fair housing education and outreach. Our new facility will have plenty of room for onsite training with ample free off-street parking and space especially adapted to help our staff to better serve our expanded community.

Liz invites all of our readers to join with her to help create the perfect space for the new, vital Fair Housing Center of West Michigan! Please call the Center at 451-2980 with any questions. Liz will be happy to speak with you.



Liz would like to hear from you.

Cases update

FHC Case #03-084

An African/American woman called FHC with a complaint against the new manager of her apartment complex. She stated that in the short time the new manager had been there, the African/Americans in the complex had been held to higher and stricter standards than the White residents. She further stated that she and a witness heard the new manager use racist statements. Testing conducted by FHC gathered evidence to support the claimant's allegation and in September 2004 the case was filed with HUD. HUD forwarded the case to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) who is currently investigating.

FHC Case #05-048

In April 2005, the Fair Housing Center received a call from a complainant who alleged that a realtor had made racist statements when showing the complainant a property for sale. The complainant alleged that the realtor stated that this particular neighborhood was white, but it got "blacker further south." The Fair Housing Center is currently investigating these accusations and consulting with a cooperating attorney for his thoughts on this incident.

FHC Case #05-028

An unmarried woman who lived in a condo community contacted FHC in mid-February. She explained that she had an unrelated male residing with her and the condo board was charging her fees for disobeying by-laws which state that only single adults or families are to reside within the condo community. FHC referred the case to a co-attorney who agreed that the by-laws were discriminatory on the basis of marital status. The attorney contacted the condo board regarding the fair housing violation, and has since stated that the complainant should not have any future problems.

FHC Case #04-007

In January 2004, FHC received a call from a homeseeker alleging discrimination on the basis of race. The complainant stated that after seeing an advertisement in the Grand Rapids Press for an apartment she was interested in, she contacted the owner and agreed on a rental rate of \$500.00. The complainant then submitted a security deposit of the same amount. Just before she planned on moving in, the complainant alleged that the owner told her the rental rate would actually be \$575.00. When she disputed this rental rate as higher than they had agreed upon and stated that she would not move into the apartment at that rate, the owner refused to return her security deposit. The complainant feels that it was because of her race that the owner changed the rental rate and then refused to return her deposit. FHC testing supported the complainant's allegation of race discrimination and a complaint has been filed with the United States Department of Urban Development (HUD). The case is under investigation.

FHC Case #05-052

In May 2005, FHC received a call from a concerned home seeker who alleged that a condominium community's by-laws were discriminatory on the basis of marital status. The home seeker was interested in purchasing a condo with the intent to rent it to his daughter and her "designated roommate." As explained in a letter from the condo board, the condos are to be used strictly as single family dwellings. The letter stated that the board kept to the "historical definition of family: mother, father, son, and daughter" designated roommates were not allowed. The case had been referred to a co-attorney.

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