



FHC Kicks off 2005 Membership Drive



**Pat Vredevoogd, 2005
Membership Campaign co-chair**



**Patrick Miles, Jr., 2005
Membership Campaign co-chair**

Pat Vredevoogd and Patrick A. Miles, Jr. have agreed to co-chair the 2005 Fair Housing Center Membership Drive. They lend their support in helping the center reach its membership funded goal of \$8,500.

The Fair Housing Center began holding a membership drive in 1996. The contributions received have been a support for the mission of the Center to provide education and enforcement of fair housing laws throughout the Grand Rapids area.

Pat Vredevoogd, broker/partner in AJS Realty, has been active in Equal Housing and Cultural Diversity in the Grand Rapids Association of Realtors as well as chairing the Equal Housing Committee for the National Association of Realtors. She is now First Vice President of the National Association of Realtors and will become president in 2007.

Vredevoogd serves on the Baxter Community Center Board of Directors in Grand Rapids, and as a long time FHC supporter, served as Vice President on the Board of Directors in the crucial early days of the Center. FHC thanks Pat for her willingness to serve as co-chair of the drive.

Patrick Miles, Jr. is an attorney with Varnum, Riddering Schmidt & Howlett representing companies ranging in size from start-up ventures to public, multi-national corporations. He is an expert on minority/woman owned business formation.

Mr. Miles is currently serving as president of the Grand Rapids Bar Association.

He serves as Vice-Chairman of the Aquinas College Board of Trustees and is on the DeVos Children's Hospital Foundation Board. Mr.

Miles' work in the private sector, as well as his community accomplishments have awarded him recognition for leadership.

The Center welcomes him as co-chair of the 2005 membership drive.

Stood in for 2005 membership co-chairs, Patrick A. Miles and Pat Vredevoogd at the 2005 FHC Luncheon he, Mike Chielens, long-time FHC Board of Director's member, urged the crowd to help FHC achieve its membership goal of \$8,500. In his address, he explained that membership monies support the mission of the Center by allowing FHC to accept and investigate fair housing complaints wherever they arise without regard to geographic constraints imposed by contracts. He also reminded the guests of the important role FHC plays in education and enforcement of fair housing law for housing providers and homeseekers.

Mr. Chielens invited the luncheon attendees to join on the spot and save a stamp, or to take the contribution envelope home with them to join in the near future. Either way Mr. Chielens stressed, each membership is vitally important to FHC's work against housing discrimination in all its forms.

The Center needs your membership too! Please use the enclosed envelope to send in your tax-deductible contribution.

Professor Okianer Dark Energizes Fair Housing Luncheon Crowd



Professor Okianer Christian Dark shared her story with the audience.

The 18th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon and Workshop Series was an overwhelming success, due in no small part to the keynote address. Attendees were moved and energized by the address given by Howard University School of Law professor Dr. Okianer Christian Dark. Evaluation comments included "Great Speaker!" and (Speaker) would be "hard to top".

Using her personal experience of being discriminated against when trying to rent an apartment, Dr. Dark tried to make housing discrimination less abstract by giving the victims of housing discrimination a face.

She analogized her experience to that of submitting a resume that was wadded up and thrown away because it was printed on the "wrong" color paper.

She explained that the crumpled paper represented her feelings about the act of discrimination against her and that no matter how many times she tried to smooth out the paper, the damage remained.

In the second part of her address, Dr. Dark outlined the five key components to

achieving societal change, including fair housing. Her points included Vision, Training, Courage, Education and Outreach, and the Need to Fight. Dr. Dark cited the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case as an example.

In her comments she marveled at the effectiveness of the struggle behind changing the United States Constitution in removing the principal of "separate but equal". She argued that without a strategy that incorporated all five of her points, such change could not have come about.

Dr. Dark ended her comments by paraphrasing a quote from Marian Wright Edelman. She said that enough committed fleas, biting strategically can make even the biggest dog uncomfortable and transform even the biggest nation.

Dr. Dark challenged everyone in attendance to be a "flea for justice" in a united effort to bring down the "dog of housing discrimination".

"Enough committed fleas, biting strategically can make even the biggest dog uncomfortable and transform even the biggest nation".

This year the FHC offered four workshops featuring local and national panelists: Planning for the Future: How Does West Michigan Want to Grow?, Building for the Future: Reasonable Accommodations & Universal Design, Justice for the Future: Understanding the Impact of Housing Discrimination, and Perspectives on Diversity in Mortgage Lending.

FHC thanks the panelists and over 300 participants for making the Workshop Series a resounding success!

Special Thanks

FHC wants to thank Burgett Floral and Eastern Floral for their support by providing the beautiful flowers that added so much to the luncheon.

Also special thanks to Fannie Mae for their support to this year's event.

2005 Award Presentation

Each year the FHC gives an award to an individual, company or corporation that has made outstanding contributions to furthering the ideals of fair housing opportunity for all. Nominations are solicited from the FHC Board, FHC members and friends of fair housing.

Criteria used in selecting the award recipients include:

**Demonstrated 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 raising awareness in the community about fair housing and other issues related to providing equal housing opportunity for all*

**Demonstrated accomplishments in fair housing efforts.*

This year's awards were presented by board members Doretha Ardoin and Margaret Seih.

The Outstanding Individual Award went to Louis Berra, District Director of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The award was given in appreciation for a career worth of accomplishments that have enhanced the lives of people throughout West Michigan.

Mr. Berra was instrumental in re-organizing the local HUD office, turning it into an agency that connects people to resources. He and his staff have committed themselves to identifying and working with grass root organizations making life better for people throughout West Michigan. They work with groups in the area to build the capacity to reach their goals.

Mr. Berra takes his role as "*Community Builder*" very seriously. His leadership and hard work have opened housing opportunities for individuals throughout West Michigan and enabled agencies like the Fair Housing Center to connect with federal resources.

The Award for Outstanding Effort by a Business that Has Furthered Fair Housing, was presented to Mr. Rich Kogelschatz on behalf of Heartland Builders LLC.

This Award was given to Heartland Builders because of their strong advocacy for Universal Design principles. They are one of the few builders in West Michigan

actively promoting these progressive standards in home design.

Universal Design allows a homeowner to continue living in their home as their physical abilities change over time so that a person is never forced out of their home because of a disability. It also means that a person can host gatherings with families and friends regardless of physical challenges guests may face.

Through both the homes they have built and the leadership they have provided in the industry, Heartland Builders has opened up housing opportunities for people throughout west Michigan.

The Award for Outstanding Effort by an Organization that Has Furthered Fair Housing was presented to Bill Hoyt representing the City of Grand Rapids Planning Department. Under his leadership as City Planner, the City of Grand Rapids incorporated fair housing principles into all aspects of their work.

During the past four years the department developed a new Master Plan and is currently working on drafting a new zoning code that is consistent with the new master plan.

The Planning Department has made fair housing a real concept and one that will be furthered through compliance with both the Master Plan and the Zoning Code.

The work of Bill Hoyt and his staff opened up housing opportunity for all who live, work or visit the city.

The Center congratulates this year's award winners!

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Our event was made possible in part by a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Thanks Liz!

FHC congratulates Liz Keegan on another successful Luncheon & Workshop Series. Liz has played a major role for the series for the past five years and has shaped Michigan's premiere fair housing event into an even better and more informative occasion.

The Center looks forward to working with her again next year!

Thank you Liz for all your hard work!

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