



FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

20th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series

THE FAIR HOUSING CENTER PLANS ITS 20TH ANNUAL EVENT APRIL 26, 2007

This year, the Center is excited to announce that James Carr, Senior Vice President for Fannie Mae Foundation, will be returning as the keynote speaker for the 20th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series. In addition, the Center is also very pleased to announce that the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) is partnering with the Center to host the event. The Event will take place Thursday, April 26, 2007 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The Luncheon begins promptly at 12:00 noon (registration at 11:45 am).

The theme for the event is “*Fair Housing = Learning, Working, Thriving, Going Places Together.*” The Center is planning four workshops this year that will focus on the connections between fair housing and community issues, with four workshops on education, employment, healthcare and transportation. All four workshops run concurrently from 8:45 am until 11:45 am.

The “*Fair Housing + Education = Learning Together*” workshop will focus on the relationship between housing and education, the increasing disparities in school quality, and the lack of policies and practices that

address the situation. Other issues to be discussed include the impact of racial segregation on schools, national testing projects, innovative approaches to the issue and what is happening locally in our community.

The “*Fair Housing + Employment = Working Together*” workshop will focus on the linkage between fair housing and employment in west Michigan. In order to compete in the global market, our community must provide a skilled and diverse workforce and meeting that need is key. The role of residential segregation as a contributing factor, national data and information on persistent inequality in employment across racial and ethnic groups, the importance of building a culture that condemns discrimination and segregation are issues that will be addressed.

The “*Fair Housing + Health Care = Thriving Together*” workshop will discuss the relationship between the health of individuals and families and where they live. The severity of health care disparities along racial and ethnic lines has lead experts to research the factors behind the disparities. This workshop will focus on the connection between health care disparities and housing disparities from a fair housing perspective.

And finally, the “*Fair Housing + Transportation = Going Places Together*” will focus on the policies and practices of fair housing in creating economically and racially diverse neighborhoods that are served by transit. Recent reports project that the demand for transit-oriented housing is going to soar over the next twenty years. This workshop will provide national data as well as information on local and regional factors and decision making.



Please be sure to add Thursday, April 26, 2007 to your calendar!

2007 FAIR HOUSING AWARDS: NOMINATIONS NEEDED

Thank you to all of you who nominated such worthy community members in 2006. We *really* value your input! To nominate an individual or an organization for a Fair Housing Award, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to the Center by **March 30, 2007**. Thank you!



.....FHC Notes & News.....

SERVICE ANIMALS AND FAIR HOUSING

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan receives many calls regarding service animals every year. A service animal is not a pet and therefore cannot be treated as a pet or subjected to traditional pet policies for non service animals.



Among others, Fair Housing law protects individuals with disabilities (as defined by the Fair Housing Act); in order to be protected with regard to service animals, the individual must have a disability; the animal must serve a function directly related to the disability; and the request to have the service animal must be reasonable.

These requests or reasonable accommodations, if practical and feasible, allow the individual with a disability equal opportunity to use and enjoy their home or apartment. A reasonable accommodation might be modifying a no-pet policy to allow a service animal or modifying a cats-only policy to allow a service dog (on a case by case basis only).

It is important to remember that inquiries about a person's disability are prohibited by Fair Housing law when applying for housing; however, once an individual makes a request for a reasonable accommodation, the housing provider can then ask for reliable professional documentation, such as a letter from a doctor, confirming the disability and the need for the related accommodation.

Visit www.deltasociety.org for more information about the Human-Animal Health Connection.

SENIOR HOUSING DISCRIMINATION PROJECT UPDATE

Where you live affects all aspects of your life—where you learn, work and play. Communities with equal access to housing have strong, growing neighborhoods and are more vital economically. Discriminatory practices limit opportunity, disrupt lives and divide our neighborhoods. Therefore, the Center is excited to begin a new project funded through the Kent County Senior Millage, investigating the illegal housing discrimination that seniors in our communities face. Last year, the Center studied the impact of housing discrimination towards seniors and found that they are at a heightened risk for becoming victims of predatory housing practices by mortgage brokers, appraisers, property managers and Realtors. Many seniors are not aware of fair housing protections or don't realize that they may have been a victim of discrimination.

As part of this project, a Senior Program Coordinator will research, develop and distribute educational programming and materials to senior housing consumers, caregivers and social service workers in Kent County. Staff will work with local agencies, churches and community organizations that serve seniors to educate them about housing rights in order to increase awareness and reporting of housing discrimination. As always, the Center continues to work with housing providers to help them understand their obligations under Fair Housing law.

The Center will look at broad patterns and practices of unlawful housing discrimination in rental, sales, mortgage, insurance, appraisals, advertising, design and construction

matters. Volunteer testers will be used to check the housing market to determine the nature and extent of discriminatory treatment. Difference in the treatment of testers often forms the basis for successful resolution of the housing discrimination complaint.

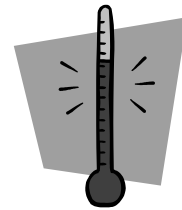
How Can You Get Involved?

The Center is recruiting senior volunteers to test for discrimination based upon race, national origin, source of income and disability status in all types of housing options in Kent County. All volunteers for this project should be over the age of 60; however the Center is always looking for testers of all ages! Each volunteer receives thorough training, mileage, and a small stipend.

If your organization serves Kent County's senior population, contact the Center to arrange for a presentation on fair housing pertaining to seniors.

Call 1-866-389-FAIR or 616-451-2980 to get involved! Thank you!!!

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE



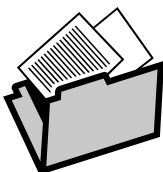
The Center is very excited to share that the *Housing Fair Housing* Capital Campaign has reached 75% of its goal of \$1,250,000, having raised just over \$920,000 in grants, in kind donations, pledges and gifts. To help us reach our goal, please consider sending a gift in the enclosed envelope. The Center is accepting multi-year pledges and truly appreciates all of your continued support and commitment to furthering Fair Housing in west Michigan! Many thanks to our friends and members who have helped us make this dream a reality.

...FHC Notes & News...

LOCAL FAIR HOUSING NEWS

COMPLAINT # 06-130—THE FAIR HOUSING RECEIVED A COMPLAINT FROM A DISABLED WOMAN WHO HAD MADE A REASONABLE MODIFICATION REQUEST TO HER CONDO ASSOCIATION FOR A THE ADDITION OF A SUPPORT POLE AT THE STAIRS TO HER FRONT DOOR. THE CONDO ASSOCIATION APPROVED THE ADDITION OF THE POLE BUT RESTRICTED ITS LOCATION TO A LESS VISIBLE UNIT. FHC STAFF WORKED WITH THE CONDO ASSOCIATION TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE LAW RESULTING IN APPROVAL FOR THE SUPPORT POLE AT THE NECESSARY LOCATION.

COMPLAINT # 05-116— IN LATE 2005, LAVONNE BARNES, AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN CONTACTED THE FHC WITH A COMPLAINT AGAINST SHORELINE MORTGAGE. MS. BARNES ALLEGED THAT DURING HER FIRST PHONE CONTACT WITH THE INSTITUTION, SHE WAS TOLD THAT SHE WOULD QUALIFY FOR A CERTAIN LOAN PRODUCT HOWEVER, AFTER A FACE TO FACE MEETING WITH SHAWN TAYLOR, THE LOAN OFFICER, WHEREIN HER RACE WAS MADE KNOWN, SHE WAS OFFERED AN INFERIOR PRODUCT. MS. BARNES ALSO STATED THAT AFTER THE FACE TO FACE MEETING, SHE HAD DIFFICULTY GETTING RETURN PHONE CALLS OR STRAIGHT ANSWERS FROM MS. TAYLOR REGARDING OBTAINING A MORTGAGE WITH SHORELINE MORTGAGE. TESTING CONDUCTED BY THE FHC GATHERED EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE COMPLAINANT'S ALLEGATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. IN DECEMBER 2006, THE CASE WAS FILED WITH HUD.



NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Toledo— A property management company in Toledo has been accused of housing discrimination in a civil lawsuit. The lawsuit was filed by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and alleges that Dunbar Real Estate treated Desmond Wilson, a developmentally disabled man, differently than other applicants who are not disabled. Mr. Wilson's mother planned to co-sign the lease as he did not meet the income guideline alone. The application was refused in spite of the company's policies and procedures which allow for prospective renters to have co-signers on lease agreements, such as students having parents co-sign. The Commission is seeking in excess of \$25,000 in punitive damages and attorney fees.

Detroit—A Detroit apartment complex and its management company are being sued by the American Civil Liberties Union in U.S. District Court in Detroit. The complex allegedly evicted a woman who ex-boyfriend broke into her apartment and vandalized it. The ACLU said North End Village apartments evicted Tanica Lewis, 25, and her two children early last year after the children's father vandalized her unit. Ms. Lewis had recently ended their relationship. The ACLU said the complex violated federal fair housing and state civil rights laws by discriminating against the woman based on stereotypes about women who are victims of domestic violence.

Spokane—The Northwest Fair Housing Alliance received a complaint from a woman who applied for a two-bedroom apartment in Spokane Valley and was told her service animal had to be certified and trained to be allowed in the apartments. The Alliance sent testers to the complex and the results confirmed the

discriminatory treatment. The complaint was filed with the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and investigated by the Washington State Human Rights Commission. The apartment complex agreed to pay the complainant \$2,000 and to take fair housing classes through the Washington State Human Rights Commission.



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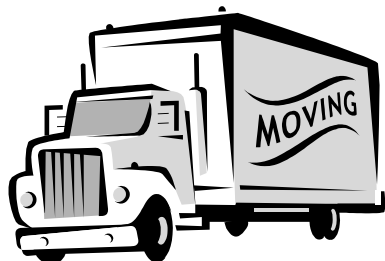
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