



# FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

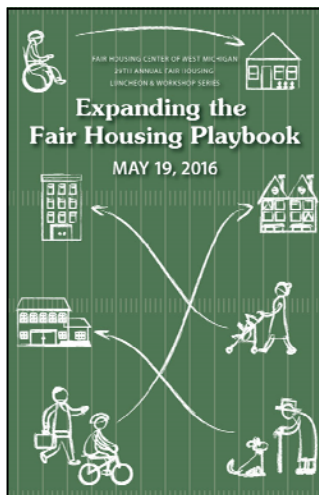
## Expanding the Fair Housing Playbook

### Fair Housing Center Plans 29th Annual Event for May 19th

The FHCWM is very pleased to announce that **Herman Boone**, retired football coach and motivational speaker, will be visiting Grand Rapids to provide the keynote presentation for the *29th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon &*



*Workshop Series* on **Thursday, May 19, 2016** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Coach Boone—portrayed by Academy Award-winning actor Denzel Washington in *Remember the Titans*—faced the challenge of a lifetime in uniting black and white players from previously rival schools in the newly-created Titan football team. Coach Boone will speak on his experiences with housing discrimination as well as diversity as it relates to community involvement and the importance of character. Taking inspiration from Coach Boone, the theme for this year’s event is “Expanding the Fair Housing Playbook.” As such, the morning workshops will include ways for housing industry members



to establish fair housing best practices to proactively combat housing discrimination before it occurs. The FHCWM is making plans to offer four concurrent morning workshops from 8:45-11:45 am; the luncheon will begin at 12 noon. One workshop will feature our partners at the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR), who will provide a fair housing training for rental professionals, with an emphasis on ways to ensure compliance. A second will feature cultural intelligence and fair housing training for realtors (legal CE credits pending) provided by Lola Audu and Doretha Ardoin. A third workshop, made possible by the support of the Kent County Senior Millage, will focus on age-friendly communities with a legal update from Relman, Dane & Colfax and interactive training. Finally, the FHCWM is planning a workshop on expanding



opportunity through affirmatively furthering fair housing featuring Debby Goldberg (National Fair Housing Alliance). Attendees will better understand the critical relationship between where one lives and what opportunities one has, how our communities developed, and the lasting legacy of early public policy that must be addressed in order to build stronger communities. *Stay tuned to [fhcwm.org/lws](http://fhcwm.org/lws) for more details.*

### 2016 Fair Housing Awards: Nominations Welcome

Please consider submitting a nomination for an individual or organization to receive a 2016 Fair Housing Award. Selection is based upon a demonstrated commitment to fair housing; the awards will be presented at the May 19th luncheon. Nomination forms can be downloaded from our website or mailed on request. Forms should be sent to the FHCWM via mail, fax or email by **April 8, 2016**. You may submit more than one nomination.



#### Inside this issue:

29th Annual Fair Housing Event .....	1
2016 Award Nominations.....	1
A Guide to Occupancy Limits.....	2
2015 FHCWM Members.....	3
Board Updates & Book Clubs .....	4

## A Guide to Occupancy Limits under Fair Housing Laws

Occupancy limits are a hot topic in fair housing trainings and litigation. Due to concerns about health, safety and capacity, some landlords, property managers, and condominium associations place limits on the number of people that can live together, among other restrictions. However, federal and/or state fair housing laws protect against discrimination on the basis of familial status, gender or age, making some occupancy restrictions illegal.

Here is a guide for housing providers about setting occupancy restrictions in compliance with fair housing laws while balancing concerns about overcrowding and other capacity issues.

### **Can I limit the number of people that I allow in my apartment?**

**Yes, but do your homework.** Make sure you know the local law on occupancy limitations and the size of the apartment. The “two people per bedroom” standard should **not** be applied as a “general rule of thumb”.

The Fair Housing Act does not limit the applicability of reasonable local, State, or Federal restrictions regarding the maximum number of occupants that can occupy a dwelling. The allowable number of occupants is usually based on the size of the unit, with particular emphasis on the square footage of the bedrooms and living areas. These requirements can often be found in the “Property Maintenance Code” or other similar provision of the city or township where the property is located. Where there is no local code, a housing provider could defer to the 2012 International Property Maintenance Code, Chapter 4, Section 404, “Occupancy Limitations”.

The “two people per bedroom” standard has come under heightened scrutiny and has been successfully challenged in an increasing number of cases. In many circumstances, a 2-bedroom apartment can accommodate more than 4 people based on its size and layout. If a housing provider allows fewer occupants than would be allowed under the applicable code, then it could be challenged as discrimination against families with children.

### **Can I prohibit teenage boys and girls from sharing a bedroom?**

**No.** You cannot restrict occupancy based on a person’s age or gender.

### **Can I tell a single mother that she can’t share a bedroom with her child?**

**No,** unless the bedroom can only legally be occupied by one person.

### **Can I limit the number of adults that can live together?**

**Maybe.** In general, a housing provider should never place a limit on the number of adults (or children) that can live in a home. However, the definition of family in the zoning code that applies to the property might limit the number of **unrelated** adults that can live together. Check the local code.

### **Should I immediately give a Notice to Quit to a family in a 2-bedroom unit just because they had a third child and now have 5 people in the home?**

**No.** The home may be able to accommodate 5 people. If the home can only legally accommodate 4 people, then it is usually reasonable to give the family through the end of their lease, or up to a year, to vacate the premises.

## FHCWM News

FHCWM Board Members **Floriza Genautis** and **Sharon Smith** have been named among the 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan in the Grand Rapids Business Journal. *Congratulations Floriza and Sharon!*

The FHCWM welcomes **Cecilia Kellogg** from Aquinas College. She will intern for the college semester to aid in education and outreach programming and administrative tasks. *Welcome, Cecilia!*



### **Fair Housing Center of West Michigan**

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# Thank You to our 2015 Members

**THANK YOU SO MUCH  
to all of our  
2015 members!**

**Because of your generous  
support, we exceeded our  
2015 Membership Goal by  
raising over \$11,000 for  
FHCWM education and  
outreach programs!**

## **Special Thanks to Our Supporting Members**

- John Hunting
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*Thank you also to our 2015  
Membership Co-Chairs,  
**Brian Parks and  
Ryan VanderMeer!***

You can join the FHCWM or  
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visiting this page on our  
website:  
[www.fhcwm.org/giving](http://www.fhcwm.org/giving)

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*Please visit our web site: [www.fhcwm.org](http://www.fhcwm.org)*

# ...FHCWM News & Events...

## FHCWM Board Updates

The FHCWM Board of Directors and staff sincerely thank **Fred Mackraz** for his long-time support and commitment as he has recently concluded his service on the FHCWM Board. Mr. Makraz has been a cooperating attorney for the FHCWM and has served on the Board since 2008. *Thank you, Fred, for your many years of wisdom, partnership, and support!* The FHCWM Board of Directors and staff welcome **Sarah Lucas** and **Jon O'Connor** to the Board. Ms. Lucas is the Executive Regional Planning Department Manager at Networks Northwest and Mr. O'Connor is a 1st Ward Commissioner for the City of Grand Rapids. *Welcome, Sarah and Jon!*

## Fair Housing Book Club

The FHCWM Book Clubs have been reading some great books: Out of My Mind by Sheri Fink and All The Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr. Our next selection will be A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman. Read along with us: [www.fhcwm.org/booksweveread](http://www.fhcwm.org/booksweveread) or send an email request to [contact-us@fhcwm.org](mailto:contact-us@fhcwm.org) to be added to our Book Club email alerts! We meet at **11:45 am** in our office (20 Hall Street SE, Grand Rapids) or the Coldwell Banker office (466 E. 16th St. Holland). Bring a lunch, a friend and join the discussion!


## Fair Housing Trainings

The Fair Housing Center offers fair housing trainings, including Fair Housing & Advertising, Fair Housing Training for Rental Professionals and Fair Lending sessions. Costs vary depending on the type of training. Each training is 3 hours and includes a comprehensive packet of reference materials.

Some sessions are held at the FHCWM office; we can also come to your location. Call Liz Keegan at (616) 451-2980 to learn more or register. **Check our website home page for upcoming dates: [www.fhcwm.org](http://www.fhcwm.org).**

The FHCWM hosts **tester trainings** each month. Testers are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a stipend in return for their time and services. In order to accommodate differing schedules, one training will take place during business hours while the other will be held in the evening. For the specific training dates, to register, or any other questions contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980.

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