FHCWM to Honor 50th Anniversary of Fair Housing Act

Event to Honor Past, Look to the Future of Fair Housing

The FHCWM is busy finalizing plans for the 31st Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series on Thursday, April 19, 2018 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in downtown Grand Rapids. The theme is “50 Years of Fair Housing: A Constellation of Opportunities”; the artwork honors Dr. Martin Luther King, whose assassination on April 4, 1968 spurred Congress to pass the Fair Housing Act.

This year’s luncheon will also feature a must-see poetry performance by Grand Rapids Poet Laureate and FHCWM partner, Marcel ‘Fable’ Price.

There are 3 comprehensive morning workshops to choose from. Changing Assumptions About Housing for Seniors, made possible by the Kent County Senior Millage, will open with a legal update focused on senior housing and cases brought by seniors with disabilities from fair housing attorney Yiyang Wu (Relman, Dane & Colfax). Alan Headbloom (Headbloom Cross-Cultural Communication) will join the panel to highlight common assumptions made based on a person’s age and disability, to provide an understanding of cultural assumptions, and to assist participants in finding ways to identify and challenge such behavior.

Challenging Implicit Bias will feature Jillian Olinger and Kelly Capatosto of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University. They will share information from their recent report “Challenging Race as Risk: How Implicit Bias undermines housing opportunity in America—and what we can do about it”. Amy Nelson (Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana) will discuss common fair housing violations as well as best practices.

Fighting for the Future of Fair Housing, will be anchored by Lisa Rice (National Fair Housing Alliance), who will frame a conversation based on an exciting new book, The Fight for Fair Housing: Causes, Consequences and Future Implications of the 1968 Federal Fair Housing Act. This book tells the stories that led to the passage of the Fair Housing Act. The book also looks forward from the perspective of the nation’s leading fair housing activists, including Ms. Rice and other academic scholars.

Learn more and register now at fhcwm.org/lws. Social work and/or Realtor continuing education credits will be sought for select workshops (check website for updates). Tickets for a workshop AND lunch are $75; tickets for a workshop OR lunch are $45. Call our office to learn about scholarships for Kent County seniors and others, and hardship discounts.

John Relman, founder and director of Relman, Dane & Colfax, one of the nation’s most distinguished civil rights law firms, will provide the keynote presentation. Mr. Relman is a nationally recognized expert in fair housing and fair lending law. For nearly three decades he has represented individual plaintiffs, cities and leading civil rights organizations in many of the country’s most important civil rights cases. He served as lead counsel in the well-known Denny’s Restaurant class action lawsuit of the 1990s, has won multimillion dollar jury verdicts in landmark race discrimination cases regarding housing and public accommodations, and has represented the cities of Baltimore and Memphis in ground-breaking reverse redlining cases against Wells Fargo.

Our mission is to prevent and eliminate housing discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity through education, advocacy and enforcement.
**Client Story**

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan was contacted by a resident of a subsidized apartment community in northern Michigan who was being denied a reasonable modification. The resident was no longer able to use his shower or bathtub because of a disability that limited his ability to safely step over the edge of the tub. As a result, the resident requested a tub cut so that he could safely get in and out of his shower. Although the resident was not denied the modification outright, the delay in approval along with the lack of communication from the housing provider prompted the resident to contact the FHCWM. The FHCWM directly contacted the housing provider to mediate the situation. Shortly after contact from the FHCWM, the housing provider granted the modification. Due to the federal funding received by the property, the housing provider was obligated under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to install and pay for the tub cut. The resident was very grateful that he no longer had to worry about falling when getting in and out of the shower and was very happy to have the assistance from the FHCWM.

**FHCWM Case Update**

Grand Rapids, MI – The Department of Justice (DOJ) settled a federal civil rights lawsuit against a local landlord who owned and managed several dwelling units in or around Grand Rapids, MI; the case had been referred to DOJ by FHCWM. The lawsuit alleged that the landlord subjected female tenants and prospective tenants to discrimination on the basis of sex, including severe, pervasive, and unwelcome sexual harassment and retaliation, such as groping and unwanted sexual advances. Under the settlement, the landlord: can no longer perform any Property Management responsibilities, must pay a $10,000 civil penalty, and has to set up a $140,000 victim’s fund for already identified victims as well as any additional persons whom the United States determines may have been identified as victim. Contact the FHCWM if you suspect sexual harassment in housing.

**FHCWM Impact Demonstrated in 2017 Annual Report**

In 2017, the FHCWM provided education and outreach to 13,353 people, distributed 36,682 fair housing materials, and trained over 1,650 housing professionals. The Center also managed a total of 253 fair housing cases, 168 of which were newly initiated in 2017. The 168 cases resulted from 206 separate fair housing allegations and involved properties in 37 different municipalities spanning 15 counties. Also, the FHCWM conducted 261 fair housing tests which involved property in over 35 municipalities in order to investigate equal treatment and fair housing practices. Throughout 2017, the Center saw high evidence rates in testing on the following federal protected classes: disability (50%); national origin (50%) familial status (41%) and race (41%). Visit fhcwm.org/annualreports to view the full report.
Thank You to our 2017 Members!

Because of your generous support, we exceeded our 2017 Membership Goal by 126% - raising over $15,000 for FHCWM education and outreach programs!

Special Thanks to Our Supporting Members
- Michelle Behrenwald
- John Hunting
- Tim Reimink
- Marilyn Titche
- Macatawa Bank
- Mercantile Bank

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- York Creek Apartments

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- Casey & Lucia White
- Mike & Mary Alice Williams
- Jack Woller
- Troy Zapolski

Thank you also to our 2017 Membership Chair, Carol Townsend!

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Please visit our web site: www.fhcwm.org
Thank You & Welcome!
The FHCWM Board of Directors and staff sincerely thank two out-going Board Members, Val Best and Jon O’Connor. Ms. Best joined the Board in 2001 and was an integral part of the Events Committee, which laid a strong foundation for many important educational outreach efforts. She helped grow the Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series to a 500+ audience at a regional event! Thank you, Val, for your many years of wisdom, hard work, and support! Mr. O’Connor joined in 2016; thank you, Mr. O’Connor, for your service! Finally, the FHCWM welcomes Dr. Thomas Reeder to the Board. Dr. Reeder is the Superintendent of the Wyoming Public Schools. Dr. Reeder, we look forward to working with you!

Fair Housing Book Club
The FHCWM Book Club really enjoyed reading and discussing Furiously Happy: A Funny Book about Horrible Things by Jenny Lawson. Our next selection is Behold the Dreamers by Imbolo Mbue. Read along with us: www.fhcwm.org/booksweveread or send an email request to 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.

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.