James Carr Speaks to Sold-Out Crowd

On May 21, 2015, James Carr provided the keynote presentation at the FHCWM’s 28th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon and Workshop Series. Currently, Mr. Carr is a housing finance, banking and urban policy consultant and a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress in Washington DC. Recently, Mr. Carr was named the Coleman A. Young Endowed Chair and professor of research in Wayne State University’s Department of Urban Studies and Planning, effective August 2015. Mr. Carr’s presentation, Market and Policy Influences on Mortgage Originations: 2015 and Beyond, spoke about five critical themes: the wealth effects from the foreclosure crisis; the current exclusionary lending environment; reopening the door to exploitative lending and further limiting anti-discriminatory protections; institutionalizing denial of access through housing finance reform; and taking control of the narrative and future of housing finance reform. He noted that “the challenges facing the mortgage market are multifaceted and require action on multiple fronts.” Almost 370 people gathered to gain more information on responsibilities as fair housing professionals and opportunities as advocates. Thank you, Mr. Carr!

2015 Fair Housing Awards

Also on May 21st, the FHCWM presented three Fair Housing Advocate Awards honoring three individuals for their significant work in fair housing. Connie Bohatch (City of Grand Rapids Community Services) presented the awards with FHCWM Executive Director, Nancy Haynes and FHCWM Director of Advocacy, Elizabeth Stoddard. First, Ms. Bohatch presented the 2015 Fair Housing Awards to Jonathan Bradford and Dave Jacobs. Mr. Bradford has led the Inner City Christian Federation, or ICCF, for 34 years. He is retiring in September and the FHCWM was very pleased to honor his work in fair housing. His life’s work embodies the FHCWM mission of preventing and eliminating housing discrimination and ensuring equal housing opportunity through education, advocacy and enforcement. Throughout his life, Mr. Bradford has demonstrated his passion for equality and justice, having learned from his father’s example in pushing for African American families to be admitted to Christian Schools in 1960’s Chicago. He works tirelessly to implement policies and procedures that further fair housing throughout ICCF and the greater community. Mr. Bradford ensures that fair housing remains a priority during the course of each project. He understands that fair housing is not just the right thing to do but also the profitable thing to do from a business perspective.

Dave Jacobs is a true advocate for fair housing. After time in social work at Pine Rest, he became the Executive Director of Home Repair Services in 1982. He also plans to retire at the end of the year. In his role as the Executive Director at Home Repair Services of Kent...
the landlord on behalf of Ms. Robinson and other identified victims. Ms. Robinson passionately and patiently persevered in the face of adversity throughout a long and sometimes trying process. Now, four years after she first contacted the FHCWM, because of Ms. Robinson’s great courage, perseverance and inner strength and the good work of the Justice Department, she and 26 other identified victims received over $500,000 in relief and that landlord will never again be in a position to engage in such discrimination. Ms. Robinson heroically used her voice to stand up against housing discrimination and to give a voice to many others that had been muted by fear and oppression. Her influence is far reaching and protects the fair housing rights of countless current and future residents of our community. She is a true advocate and a representation of the systemic impact that one brave, determined and courageous woman can have in achieving access to fair housing choice and equal housing opportunity.

2015 Membership Drive Kicks Off

The FHCWM is very pleased to announce the kick off of the 2015 Membership Drive. Board Members Brian Parks (Herman Miller) and Ryan VanderMeer (Urban Pharm) are this year’s Membership Drive Co-Chairs. The annual membership drive provides unrestricted funding which is critical to the FHCWM significantly furthering its mission. Membership dollars make it possible to take complaints, conduct tests, respond to requests for education and training, and do the necessary investigations without being limited by geographical or contractual constraints. Your support makes a difference!

FHCWM Board Update

The FHCWM Board and staff are delighted to welcome Susan Cervantes and Andrea Crumback to the Board of Directors. Ms. Cervantes is the Associate Director of Area Community Services Employment and Training, Inc. (ACSET). Ms. Crumback is a Law Partner at Mika Meyers Beckett & Jones, PLC.

Welcome, Susan and Andrea!
28th Annual Workshop Series

The FHCWM held three timely and comprehensive workshops this year. A record-setting 227 people registered to attend the content-rich workshops.

The Aging in Place: Ensuring Livable Communities for All workshop provided information on the projected demographic shifts that are reshaping our communities as more people seek to “age in place” and the resulting need for sustainable, accessible housing options that meet the needs of all. It also discussed how to overcome barriers to housing accessibility, including reasonable accommodations and modifications. The panel included Bill Caruso (Co-Executive Director, Fair Housing Legal Support Center & Clinic/ Clinical Professor of Law at John Marshall), Joanne Feutz (Registered Occupational therapist) and Renee Thompson (Licensed Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant) of Disability Advocates of Kent County, and Karen Kafantaris (Associate State Director for Livable Communities at AARP Michigan). Elizabeth Stoddard (Director of Advocacy, FHCWM) presented for and moderated this workshop, which was made possible by the support of the Kent County Senior Millage.

Fair Housing Best Practices: Applications for Housing Industry Partners focused on current hot topics as well as fair housing best practices for housing industry members, including information related to home sales, advertising, condos, pending cases and more. The panel included Shanna Smith (President & CEO at National Fair Housing Alliance), Steve Dane (Senior Partner at Relman, Dane & Colfax), Lola Audu (REALTOR, Owner at Audu Real Estate), Doretha Ardoin (Sr. Advisor, Realtor at Greenridge Realty) and Kathy Dennison (Owner, Broker at Lighthouse Property Management). Dale Zahn (CEO at West Michigan Lakeshore Association of REALTORS) moderated.

Neighborhood Stabilization in the Revitalization of Our Communities followed up to previous events’ real estate owned (REO) property sessions to explore the potential for stabilizing neighborhoods through the investment of resources. It focused on the implementation and outcomes of this work in Grand Rapids as well as Indianapolis and Dayton/Miami Valley area, as shared by Amy Nelson (Executive Director, Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana) and Jim McCarthy (President/CEO, Miami Valley Fair Housing Center). Lee Nelson Weber (FHCWM Project Consultant/Dyer Ives Foundation) provided an overview of the project while local partners shared updates on the work accomplished as the end of the project nears. Gustavo Rotondaro shared local data relevant to the Project area. Russ Cross (SVP/Regional Director, Wells Fargo) moderated.

Thank you all for joining us !!!

The FHCWM wishes to sincerely thank the following 2014 members who were inadvertently left out of our last newsletter. Thank you for your support!

- Bayberry Pointe Apartments
- Courtney & Abraham Properties
- Creston Neighborhood Association
- Elan Realty Lakeshore
- Good Samaritan Ministries
- Grand Rapids Housing Commission
- Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women (GROW)
- Heartland Builders LLC
- Heritage Hill Association Inc.
- Hidden Spring LLC
- Keller Williams RiverTown
- Ken Schmidt Productions, Inc.
- Lakeshore Rescue Mission/Holland Rescue Mission
- Manus Properties LLC
- Miller Real Estate
- Rockford Property Management
- State Farm / Koornedyk Agency
- Thomas Classrooms & Modulars LLC
- Universal Development of Michigan/ Draper Group USA
- Urban Pharm, LLC.

Local Fair Housing News

Kentwood, MI—The FHCWM recently assisted a resident of a HUD-subsidized apartment complex for seniors and people with disabilities in obtaining a reasonable accommodation for an assigned, accessible parking space. The resident contacted the FHCWM after his repeated attempts to request the assigned parking space had been denied by the on-site manager. He had provided the appropriate medical documentation substantiating his limited ability to traverse long distances in his manual wheelchair, but the manager continued to deny his requests. One denial letter from the manager stated, “handicap parking is never assigned to a resident”.

The FHCWM sent a reasonable accommodation request letter to the corporate management office outlining the resident’s need for and right to an assigned, accessible parking space. The management originally remained resistant, making the misguided statement that assigning a parking space to the resident would infringe upon the rights of other residents. After additional correspondence by the FHCWM, the corporate office eventually understood and acknowledged the resident’s rights and their obligations under fair housing laws, and the request was granted.

The resident received his preferred parking space. He can now rest assured that he can come and go freely from his home with a safe, accessible parking space to which he can return.

Issues of note in this case:

- Subsidized housing complexes for seniors and/or people with disabilities are also required to make reasonable accommodations to assign parking spaces for residents with disabilities
- Residents can ask to be assigned an accessible parking space or for the creation of additional accessible parking
- Parking accommodations cannot be denied because they may lead to similar requests by other residents
Save the Dates! Upcoming Fair Housing Events

Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing: Save the Date!

The FHCWM is very pleased to announce that Kevin Boyle, author of Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights and Murder in the Jazz Age and the William Smith Mason Professor of American History at Northwestern University, will be the keynote speaker for the 9th Annual Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing Breakfast. This free educational event will take place on Thursday, October 22, 2015 from 8:30 to 10:00 am in Holland. Please contact the FHCWM if you are interested in sponsoring and/or attending. Check our website for more details!

Fair Housing Trainings

The FHCWM 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 designed to last 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. Check our website home page for upcoming dates: www.fhcwm.org.

The FHCWM hosts regular tester trainings. Testes are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a stipend in return for their time and volunteer service. 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.

2015 Summer Reading List: Fair Housing Book Club Selections

- Boy, Snow, Bird by Helen Oyeyemi
- Five Days at Memorial: Life and Death in a Storm-Ravaged Hospital by Sheri Fink
- The House Girl by Tara Conklin
- Into the Beautiful North by Luis Alberto Urrea
- Orphan Train by Christina Baker Kline
- The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates by Wes Moore
- Until Tuesday by Luis Carlos Montalvan

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