



FAIR HOUSING NEWS

Produced by the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan

Lakeshore Fair Housing Award Presented to Al Serrano

The Center is pleased to announce that the 2013 Lakeshore Fair Housing Award was presented to **Al Serrano** at this year’s annual *Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing* breakfast in Holland, MI. Mr. Serrano received the award for his dedication and commitment to raising community awareness about fair housing rights and responsibilities, and for his role in bringing fair housing services to the Holland area. He served as the Director of the City of Holland in the Human Relations Department, where he worked to protect the equal rights and equal opportunities of all



Al Serrano accepts his award from Advisory Board Mbr. Gail Harrison.

citizens through educational activities that sought to prevent discrimination in housing, education, employment, and public services. He also worked to promote social justice, cultural understanding, and improved relationships among all citizens in Holland. He retired earlier this year after 27 years of service. Mr. Serrano also served on the Center’s Lakeshore Advisory Board until his retirement. Gail Harrison, of the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, gave him the award.

Dr. Dennis Preston Speaks on Linguistic Profiling

The Center hosted its 7th Annual *Lakeshore Friends of Fair Housing* breakfast on Tuesday, October 10th at the Midtown Center in Holland, MI. **Dr. Dennis Preston**, Regents Professor and Co-Director of the Center for Oklahoma Studies, Oklahoma State



Keynote Speaker Dr. Preston with linguistics chart.

University, and University Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Michigan State University, provided a thought-provoking keynote presentation on the science of linguistic profiling through the lens of fair housing, especially how profiling may be used in the denial of fair and legal treatment by housing providers. His presentation, “*Linguistic Profiling: When Your Brain Messes with your Ear,*” stressed that people believe that they can determine someone’s race by their voice 75% of the time.

Dr. Preston is nationally recognized for applying his linguistic research and studies to better understand the

pervasiveness of the assumptions that people make based upon language, and the impact of acting on those assumptions. He was Director of the 2003 Linguistic Society of America Institute, President of the American Dialect Society, and has served on the Executive Boards of those societies and others, as well as the editorial boards of numerous journals and panels of granting agencies.

Lakeshore Advisory Board President Dave Stellin (First Place Bank) opened the breakfast with an update on the state of fair housing. Since 2006, the Center has investigated nearly 276 complaints of housing discrimination from the Lakeshore region; 30 of those complaints were opened since last year. In the last 7 years, the Center has conducted more than 300 matched pair tests, finding evidence of significant differences in 43% of those tests. The Center has conducted over 90 fair housing trainings for homeseekers, housing industry personnel, and/or social service agencies in the Lakeshore area.

Many thanks to our sponsors who made this great educational event available at no charge: Chemical Bank, PNC Bank, First Merit Bank, First Place Bank, the Bank of Holland, Huntington Bank and City Flats Hotel.

Inside this issue:

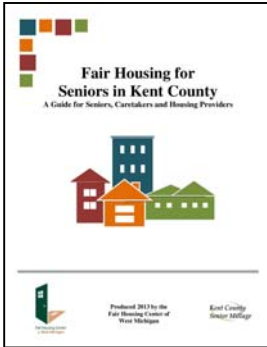
2013 Lakeshore Fair Housing Award...1
Lakeshore Breakfast Highlights1
“Fair Housing for Seniors” Report2
Local Fair Housing News.....2
Best Practices: Advertising3
Save the Date..... Back page

...FHCWM Notes & News...

FHCWM Releases an Updated “Fair Housing for Seniors in Kent County” Report

In 2006, the FHCWM conducted a pilot project to learn more about the existing barriers and housing discrimination experienced by senior citizens of color and seniors with disabilities in Kent County. High rates of evidence of differential treatment were found in the investigations. In response, the FHCWM, through the Kent County Senior Millage, has worked to expand access to affordable housing for older adults traditionally shut out of the housing market. The FHCWM is very pleased to be releasing an updated report based on the continued information gained from this project.

*Kent County
Senior Millage*



The report, “Fair Housing for Seniors in Kent County: A Guide for Seniors, Caretakers, and Housing Providers,” notes significant housing discrimination

against seniors in Kent County. It cites Fair Housing Laws specific to Kent County and covers topics such as Policies and Practices, Advertising and the Rights of Seniors with Disabilities. The report also contains extensive information on the fair housing rights of seniors, and offers practical guidance and best practices for senior housing providers, including many examples as well as helpful tips for providers.

The Fair Housing Center hopes that this comprehensive, user-friendly report will be an important resource and tool to protect and ensure equal housing opportunity for seniors throughout Kent County.

The full report can be downloaded from our Resources/Publications page on our website at www.fhcwm.org. To inquire about printed copies or training on this topic, please contact our office.

Local Fair Housing News

Traverse City, MI - In May 2013, the Center received a complaint from a client and her adult granddaughter alleging unlawful discrimination on the basis of familial status. The client and her granddaughter lived in a two-bedroom apartment within an 18-unit apartment complex in Traverse City, MI. The client’s granddaughter was expecting her first child in August 2013. The client alleged that her landlord, after learning of the pregnancy, had told her that they would all have to move out of the complex after the baby was born because, as the landlord stated, “we can’t have babies here”. The landlord allegedly then began repeatedly asking the client when she would be moving out, and also told other residents that the client would be moving after the baby was born.

The Center’s investigation and casework supported the client’s claim of familial status discrimination and a case was ultimately filed with the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. The landlord answered the complaint by alleging that she operated a senior community and was thus allowed to discriminate against children. However, investigation revealed that, although most residents were seniors, the landlord had only recently begun stating an intent to operate as housing for older persons, doing so insufficiently, and also that the landlord did not have any age verification procedures. Further, investigation revealed that the landlord had illegally discriminated against families with children in order to achieve the proportion of seniors within the complex.

The case settled in October 2013, allowing the client, and her granddaughter and her newborn son, to stay in the apartment. The landlord must provide compensation to the client and her granddaughter, comply with fair housing regulations, and attend fair housing training.

In Memoriam

The FHCWM has lost two long-time supporters and mentors. Cliff Schrupp, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit, passed away on September 11, 2013. Cliff paved the way for the fair housing movement in Michigan, was a nationally recognized expert, and trained many FHCWM staff.

Mike Chielens, a former member of the FHCWM Board of Directors and Executive Director of Legal Aid of Western Michigan, passed away on November 2, 2013. Mike was on the Board for almost 20 years, and served as a strong partner and advocate. The FHCWM is thankful to have called Cliff and Mike mentors and friends.



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...FHCWM Notes & News...

Advertising a Property? Showing a Home? Fair Housing Best Practices for Advertising

Housing professionals play a key role in fair housing and equal opportunity. How such professionals promote and sell housing, mortgages, or insurance affects more than the real estate market.



When done fairly, it can support diverse and welcoming neighborhoods, and it gives everyone equal access to the full range of housing options. This access is protected by the Fair Housing Act and other state and local laws, which make discrimination illegal in housing transactions including rental, sales, etc. No one may be discriminated against based on his or her disability, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, marital status, or age.

Examples of possible discrimination:

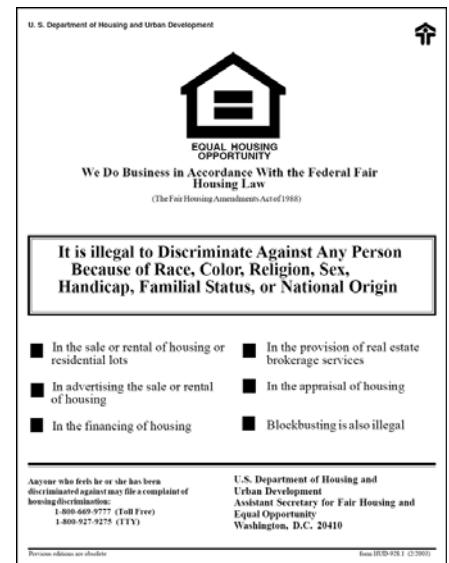
- Refusal to rent or sell based on any of the protected classes
- Advertising as “adults only” buildings or communities
- Offering different rates or specials based on a protected class
- Suggesting to potential residents that the neighborhood is not “right” for them
- Writing an ad that says a home is “perfect for newlyweds” or “not suitable for children”
- Depicting residents of only one race in website photos, advertisements, and other materials

When advertising a rental, sale, or financing of residential real estate all advertisements should include the Equal Housing Opportunity slogan, statement, or logo. This logo, statement, or slogan tells everyone that the property is open and available to everyone under the Fair Housing Act. The logo is available in a

variety of sizes and formats on the HUD website at <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/library/bookshelf11/hudgraphics/fheologo>. For more guidance, a memorandum issued by former HUD FHEO Assistant Secretary Roberta Achtenberg on January 9, 1995 (available on the “Publications” page of our website) contains HUD’s existing policy guidance on advertisements under Section 804(c) of the Fair Housing Act.

Even with the Fair Housing Act and other laws in place, achieving fair housing can be a complex task. The Center seeks to prevent housing discrimination in the first place, and believes everyone — especially real estate agents, lenders, insurance agents, and landlords — can play a role. Here are a few best practices to keep in mind when advertising:

- All ads should be free of words, phrases, symbols or visual aids which indicate or convey any preference, limitation, or discrimination based upon race, national origin, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, familial status, marital status, source of income, height, or weight.
- Use caution with discounts or promotions. For example, student discounts should apply regardless of age or familial status.
- The directions used in the advertisements should be free of reference to any landmarks or areas that could imply an unlawful discriminatory preference.
- Any logos used in the advertisements should be free of unlawful discriminatory preference.
- Include the Equal Housing Opportunity logo, slogan, or statement.
- Prominently place the HUD-approved fair housing poster in the office or model unit. Contact the Center for a free copy in English or Spanish.



- Ads should describe the property and not describe person(s). Focus on the physical attributes of the property and amenities.
- The ads should use human models and model graphics in a nondiscriminatory way. Are both sexes and/or children being adequately represented? Are minority populations represented in reasonable proportion to their populations in the metropolitan area? Are models or model graphics of children and minorities being used for all and not just some properties advertised? Are the model and model graphics clearly definable as representing minority and majority populations, and are the minorities being used in equal social settings?
- The “Publisher’s Notice” should be included at the beginning of each Real Estate section of the newspaper.
- When in doubt, don’t use a particular word or image, or contact the Center to ask about it before running the ad.

Make it fair—we can help! The Center reviews any materials or advertisements to assist in compliance with Fair Housing Laws.

Save the Date! Upcoming Fair Housing Events

27th Annual Fair Housing Luncheon & Workshop Series

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Please mark your calendars for this exciting educational event, which will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids. As always, we will have a variety of comprehensive morning workshops as well as a luncheon featuring a keynote speaker. Please contact the FHCWM at (616) 451-2980 or (866) 389-FAIR if you are interested in receiving information about or sponsoring this event!

Fair Housing Book Club

The Fair Housing Book Clubs will be discussing The Casual Vacancy by J.K. Rowling in Grand Rapids and Holland in the New Year. Please stay tuned to our website for meetings dates. You may also 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 the Fair Housing Center office (20 Hall Street SE, Grand Rapids) or the Disability Network Lakeshore office (426 Century Land, Holland). Bring a lunch, a friend and join the discussion!

Fair Housing Trainings

The Fair Housing Center of West Michigan offers fair housing trainings, including, but not limited to, Fair Housing & Advertising, Fair Housing Training for Rental Professionals, Fair Housing & Maintenance and Fair Lending sessions. Costs vary depending on the type of training. Trainings run between 1-3 hours and include a comprehensive packet of reference materials as well as certificates of completion.

Some sessions are held at the Fair Housing Center 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 Center hosts regular **tester trainings**. Testers are volunteers that play the role of a homeseeker and receive a small reimbursement in return for their time and services. In order to accommodate differing schedules, trainings will be offered both during business hours and in the evening. For the specific training dates, to register, or with any other questions, contact Gabe Chapla at (616) 451-2980 or gchapla@fhcwm.org.

www.fhcwm.org
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