

Fair Housing Update

Fair Housing of the Dakotas

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CELEBRATING THE PASSAGE OF THE FAIR HOUSING ACT

In April, 2008, people across the country will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the passage of the Federal Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act was originally passed in April, 1968 and stated it was illegal to discriminate in the rental, sales or financing of housing due to race, color, national origin and religion. The Act was later amended to also protect people from discrimination due to gender, disability and familial status.

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD) is finalizing plans to celebrate this anniversary. Workshops will be held in April, we will be issuing a press release on the historical significance of the Act's passage and other events may also be scheduled. Check our web site for updates.

The Federal Fair Housing Act was originally passed in 1968 to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who had worked for years for passage of such a law. Unfortunately, only upon a week of Dr. King's assassination in April, 1968 was the Fair Housing Act finally passed.

FAIR HOUSING WORKSHOPS

In 2008, the Fair Housing of the Dakotas will again be conducting its highly evaluated "Fundamentals of Fair Housing" workshop series. See the enclosed flyer for the workshops scheduled for April-June, 2008 across North and South Dakota.

Additional workshops will be scheduled for July-September and materials

distributed with the April newsletter.

UPCOMING TRAININGS ON ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

March 10, 2008: Partners in Policy-making will be sponsoring a workshop "Bringing Accessibility Home" on March 10, 2008 from 9:00 am-12:00 pm at the Best Western Doublewood Inn in Fargo, ND. This interactive session will explore how to bring accessibility into the home. Discover the key elements to consider, standards to use, and opportunities to make it happen using the local community. The workshop is open to the public and free of charge but registration is required. For more information or to register, visit www.arcofbismarck.org or call 701-258-7949.

May 6, 2008: The Fair Housing of the Dakotas will be assisting HUD's Fair Housing Accessibility First Program in conducting a "Fair Housing Accessibility Training" in Sioux Falls, SD at the Sheraton. The workshop will be held from 9:00 am-5:00 pm with registration opening at 8:30 am. The training has been approved for continuing education credits for architects and will be taught by an architect who specializes in Fair Housing Accessibility design and construction requirements. The workshop is open to the public but registration is required. Visit www.ndfhc.org for registration info or see the enclosed flyer.

2007 FAIR HOUSING REVIEW

In 2007, the Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD) completed its thirteenth

Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD) is a non-profit organization serving North and South Dakota with a mission to work to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunities for all. The FHD provides assistance to individuals pursuing legal rights and remedies related to fair housing, offers housing assistance and counseling, provides community education, promotes community involvement and performs research in the area of housing.

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year of fair housing work. Despite being a small non-profit, we have worked extremely hard during this time to educate the public on fair housing laws and also assist people with their fair housing rights. The FHD was incorporated in 1994 as the North Dakota Fair Housing Council to assist North Dakota residents. In 2005, the organization branched into South Dakota and changed its name to the Fair Housing of the Dakotas to reflect its duties in both states. Much, much work remains in both states; however, staff have made a concentrated effort to do more education and outreach in South Dakota because of the newness of the issues in that state. An overview of our 2007 activities follow:

Contacts: In 2007, the FHD received 1,712 contacts from North Dakota residents regarding housing disputes and/or questions. This was a slight decrease from 2006. Fargo made up the bulk of those calls with 475 contacts followed by 399 contacts by Bismarck residents. For South Dakota in 2007, the FHD received 355 contacts from South Dakota residents regarding housing disputes and/or questions. This was a slight increase from 2006. Most contacts were received from Sioux Falls residents followed by Rapid City residents.

Allegations: Of the 1,712 North Dakota housing contacts received by FHD staff, 133 contained allegations of housing discrimination due to race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability, familial status, age (40 and over) or status with respect to marriage or public

assistance. This was a slight increase from 2006. In South Dakota, of the 355 contacts received by FHD staff, 69 contained allegations of housing discrimination due to race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability or familial status. This was a slight decrease from 2006.

Complaint Filing: The FHD assisted North and South Dakota residents or filed on behalf of the FHD, 35 complaints of housing discrimination with the North Dakota Department of Labor's Human Rights Division (North Dakota filing office) or with HUD's Denver Office (South Dakota filing office).

Mediation: The FHD also assisted in mediation in lieu of complaint filing on 4 cases involving North Dakotans and 5 cases involving South Dakotans. These were typically cases involving requests for reasonable accommodations or modifications for people with disabilities which were able to be worked out due to the FHD's assistance. As a result, complaint filing did not need to occur.

Workshops & Trainings: In 2007, the FHD conducted 5 open-to-the-public workshops in North Dakota which were attended by 381 service users, social service staff, attorneys and housing providers and conducted 4 open-to-the-public workshops in South Dakota which were attended by 325 service users, social service staff, attorneys and housing providers. The FHD also assisted with an accessibility workshop which was attended by over 40 individuals and was asked to speak on fair housing issues at 12 workshops/trainings/confer-

ences which were attended by an additional 449 attendees.

Outreach Mailings: In 2007, the FHD conducted 3 mailings to North Dakota communities reaching 10,073 households and 13 mailings to South Dakota communities reaching 16,625 households. These mailings included information on fair housing, the services of the FHD and a listing of our free-of-charge publications. These mailings have proven to be a very effective educational tool.

Publications: The FHD staff distributed 9,824 publications to North Dakota residents and 3,017 publications to South Dakota residents. Distribution is based upon requests to our office and does not include materials distributed at workshops or conferences.

Other Educational Activities: The FHD also conducted a number of other efforts to educate the public on fair housing. This included distributing a quarterly newsletter on fair housing news, publishing public service announcements on fair housing and other efforts.

More details on the work of the FHD will be available upon the release of the FHD's 2007 Annual Report.

NEWS FROM HUD

HUD'S Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) has introduced, "Franklin, the Fair Housing Fox" FHEO's First-Ever Fair Housing Mascot! Designed to appeal to children and their parents, Franklin, the Fair Housing Fox, will encourage the public to



"Dare to Be Fair" by promoting the message that "Fair Housing Is Not an Option; It's the Law." When children visit Franklin at www.hud.gov/kids, they will be able to obtain easy-to-understand Franklin Facts about the Fair Housing Act and learn how fighting housing discrimination is everyone's responsibility. Parents and kids can also email Franklin at Franklinthefair-housingfox@hud.gov if they have questions. Parents are encouraged to use HUD's kid's Website to get tips on how to talk to their children about housing bias.

HUD SETTLES DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT:

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced that it has reached a \$10,344 settlement with the owners of an Ontario, California townhouse complex for allegedly violating the Fair Housing Act. The family, among other things alleged that Hollie Meeks, resident manager of Ontario Townhouses, harassed Hispanic families and subjected them to different terms and conditions. HUD's investigation found that Meeks, an employee of Ontario Townhouse Limited Partnership and Edgewood Management Corporation, overcharged rent, refused to do repairs, and yelled at Hispanic residents because they did not

speak English. Upon receiving a notice of rent increase, one family requested help from Meeks, but she demanded more documents, harassed, yelled and threatened them with eviction. "Residents of Ontario Townhouses should be able to enjoy their homes without being harassed because of their national origin," said Kim Kendrick, HUD's Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "We are pleased that the owners of this development are taking steps to eliminate the kind of behavior that unlawfully violates the rights of hardworking families." Under the settlement agreement, Ontario Townhouse Limited Partnership and Edgewood Management Corporation will pay \$10,344 to one family and terminate Meeks. The owners of Ontario Townhouses will also provide oral interpretation services, display and maintain fair housing posters in English and Spanish, and have the new resident manager and other staff participate in a fair housing training course.

HUD SETTLES DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT:

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development announced a settlement agreement with two Las Vegas landlords for alleged violations of the Fair Housing Act. Sun and Chris-

tine Young, owners of Summer Place Apartments voluntarily agreed to pay \$75,000 to several tenants; to cease discriminatory practices against families with children; and to stop refusing to make reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities. Under the agreement, Summer Place Apartments will: (1) Pay \$75,000 to families who were adversely affected by the owners' discriminatory practices (included in the \$75,000 is \$35,000 to a woman who was evicted because she had a child under the age of 18); (2) a total of \$10,500 to three individuals whom the owners tried to evict because they have children; (3) Provide \$29,500 to create a fund to compensate other persons who show they were denied housing going back to December 1, 2005, because they have a child or were pregnant; (4) Stop advertising Summer Place Apartments as an "Adult Community;" and (5) Stop denying applicants with children the opportunity to rent based on their familial status. The agreement is voluntary and is a full settlement of the disputed complaint. Summer Place and its agent admit no wrongdoing.

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Fair Housing of the Dakotas

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**We've Moved! Please note our
new mailing address!**

**This Newsletter is also available
at www.ndfhc.org in pdf format**

FAIR HOUSING

The Federal Fair Housing Act makes it illegal to discriminate in the rental, sale or financing of housing due to a person's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, familial status and disability. North Dakota state law also protects age (40 and over) and status with respect to marriage and public assistance. South Dakota state law protects most of the federal protections and also protects due to creed and ancestry.

For information on filing a housing discrimination complaint, contact the Fair Housing of the Dakotas (1-888-265-0907), the ND Dept. of Labor (1-800-582-8032) or HUD (1-800-877-7353).

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The FHD is seeking volunteers to assist in gathering information

on alleged discriminatory housing practices. Volunteers are paid a stipend for their time and services and receive training. Please contact Stacy at 1-888-265-0907 or 701-221-2530 if you are interested or want more information.

WEB SITE & PUBLICATIONS

The FHD web site located at www.ndfhc.org has several publications online regarding fair housing. Choose our "What is Fair Housing" link to view the list of publications online. Publications are also available through postal mail by completing our Publications Form available in this newsletter or by contacting the FHD.

The web site also includes updates on upcoming events or trainings, state legislation of interest, past newsletters, press releases, and numerous web links to other

organizations.

DISCLOSURES

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