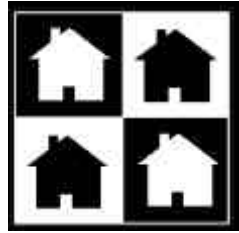


The
Housing



Research
&
Advocacy
Center

news

October 2005

Access to Housing for People with Disabilities Conference a Success!

On September 22-23, the Housing Research & Advocacy Center (the Housing Center) hosted the Access to Housing for People with Disabilities conference at the Wyndham Cleveland at Playhouse Square. This two-day multi-track conference educated over 120 participants from all over the country and offered an opportunity to address important topics that people with disabilities face each day in their search for housing.

Approximately 1.3 million Ohio residents have a disability, and almost 300,000 or 21% of those people reside in Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Ashtabula, and Geauga counties.

The Ohio Civil Rights Commission states that complaints of housing discrimination based on disability now outnumber complaints based on race in Ohio. Nationwide, persons with disabilities also filed the majority of housing discrimination complaints, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

This conference offered an

opportunity to address these important topics with specific tracks designed for architects and builders, social workers and other service providers; lawyers and fair housing advocates.

Among the highlights of the conference were the keynote speakers Michael Allen, from the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, and John Relman, from Relman & Associates, both from Washington, DC.

Mr. Allen spoke on housing people with mental disabilities and was truly an inspiration, citing examples of programs that work and offering his passion and thought provoking view on this topic. Later in the day, Mr. Allen also joined Kathryn Kazol from EDEN, Inc., to speak about strategies for dealing with zoning issues and NIMBYism. Both offered practical "how to" information from their experiences.

Mr. Relman, whose keynote speech was titled "The State of Fair Housing," spoke about the continued prevalence of racial discrimination and how such dis-



**Keynote speakers
John Relman and Michael Allen**

crimination affects everything from educational and employment opportunities to wealth accumulation.

The conference began with our Executive Director, Jeffrey Dillman, giving an overview of fair housing laws.

Other speakers and topics included:

- "Design and Practical Applications of Multi-Family Construction" by John Picard and Ben Bisbee;
- "Reasonable Accommodations and Modifications" by Lisa Gold-Scott and Elaine Gimmel;
- "How Source of Funds Can Impact Design" by Carole Heyward;

(continued on Page 2)

Disability conference continued:

- “Assistance and Companion Animals” by Patricia Kidd and Mary Butler;
- “State Building Codes and Standards” by Jan Sokolnicki;
- “Disability & the Elderly: Issues Involving Continuous Care Facilities” by Susan Silverstein & BJ Brown;
- “Intersections of Race and Disability” by Keith Foster and Max Lapertosa;
- “Barrier Free Design: Going Beyond the Minimum” by William Malleris;
- “Case Management: Keeping People in Housing” by Karen

Addison, Lynn Clark and Denise Streisel;

- “Disability Discrimination: The Ohio Civil Rights Commission Fights Back” by Diane Citrino and Ronnell Tomlinson.

The conference concluded with an interactive session on “Where Do We Go From Here? The Future of Fair Housing for People with Disabilities.”

Thank you to all the conference sponsors and supporters: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Fannie Mae, Shaker Heights Fair Housing

Review Board, Cuyahoga County Bar Association, Continuing Education Program at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, The Lorain County Reinvestment Coalition, and The Fair Housing Resource Center.

Special thanks to all of the speakers and attendees who participated in this conference to make it a success!

Conference materials are still available for \$50.

Contact our office if you are interested in purchasing materials.

Housing Center Awarded HUD Grant to Support Enforcement Efforts

On September 29, 2005, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) notified the Housing Center that it had been awarded a Private Enforcement Initiative grant for fiscal year 2006. Under this grant, the Housing Center will conduct testing for housing discrimination in the areas of housing rentals and sales, as well

as mortgage lending.

Under these tests, pairs of trained testers approach a housing provider or lender and document their treatment. The testers are given scripts to make them identical in all ways except for the criteria (such as race, national origin, disability, etc.) being tested.

After the testers have docu-

mented their treatment, Housing Center staff compare the results and make a determination of whether there is probable cause of discrimination. Where appropriate, cases are then filed with HUD for further investigation.

Recently Settled Cases

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center has settled a number of fair housing complaints in the last year. In December of 2004, the Housing Center filed a complaint with HUD against a landlord in the City of Parma alleging discrimination against families with children and African-Americans. This case was referred by HUD to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC), and was settled in July. The Housing Center received monetary damages, and the landlord is required to attend fair housing training.

In March, the Housing Center filed a complaint with OCRC based on disability discrimination at a rental unit in the City of Lakewood. The case was settled in September, and the Housing Center received monetary damages. The landlord is required to attend fair housing training.

In August of 2004, the Housing Center filed a complaint with HUD alleging discrimination by an owner of a single family home against African-Americans

and families with children. The case settled in March of 2005. The Housing Center received monetary damages, and the owner must attend fair housing training.

In the last year, the Housing Center settled two cases involving complaints filed against owners of multi-family buildings that did not meet accessibility guidelines. The Housing Center recovered monetary damages and attorneys fees in these cases, and the owners were required to make modifications to the buildings to increase accessibility.

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**Spotlight on The Board:
 Sheryl King Benford**



Ms. Benford is the General Counsel and Deputy General Manager for Legal Affairs for the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority. She joined the RTA in April, 2000, and currently supervises a staff of 40 employees who handle litigation, labor issues, worker's compensation, risk management claims, safety, office of equal opportunity and a variety of other areas. She previously worked at RTA as Associate Counsel from 1991 to 1992. As the supervisor of a team of professionals, she directed the closeout of the \$60 million joint development of the Tower City Station project.

Her previous experience includes working as Law Director for the City of Shaker Heights, where she served as a key player in the administrative reorganization of that city and also directed the City's fair housing efforts. Ms. Benford was

also an Assistant Law Director for the City of Cleveland, Assistant Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs for the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University and taught as an adjunct professor for CSU's Levin College of Urban Affairs.

Ms. Benford joined the Housing Center Board of Directors in 2004. She is the proud mother of daughter Dory and son Kevin.

The Housing Center Update Corner...

The staff and Board of the Housing Research and Advocacy Center would like to thank Patricia Mearns, former board member, for her three years of participation on the Board and her continuing dedication to our mission. Patricia is enjoying her time traveling and visiting her grandchildren.

We would also like offer our best wishes and thanks to Vance Novak and Marie Augustin-Glave. Marie was our

summer intern and a great help to the Housing Center working on various projects for our HUD grant.

Vance Novak worked for the Housing Center as our Administrative Coordinator since March of 2003. The staff and Board truly appreciates all of her efforts on behalf of the Agency and wish her the best of luck in her new career.

THE HOUSING CENTER MISSION

To ensure, through research, educational and outreach programs, public policy advocacy and enforcement activities, that all residents are guaranteed equal access to housing.

**THE HOUSING
RESEARCH & ADVOCACY
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A New Era of Housing Justice

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SAVE THE DATE!!

November 10th - Fair Housing Laws - ACLU Downtown Office 6:00pm - 7:30pm

*December 15th - Advanced Predatory Lending and Foreclosure Defense - 6 CLE Credits available
Hilton Garden Inn 8:30am - 4:00pm*

For more information, contact the Housing Center at 216/361-9240

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