

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

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Please check our website frequently for updates on fair housing news and events throughout Northeast Ohio

And YOU can help too! Support Housing Justice by supporting the Housing Center.

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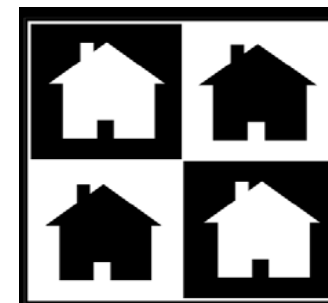
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Autumn 2006

## Inaccessible Housing Still a Problem in New Construction

Finding housing that is accessible for people with disabilities should not be a problem: all multi-family housing built for first occupancy after March 13, 1991, must have certain accessibility and adaptability features.

But that was not the case when Cheryl and George Williams put down a deposit on an apartment at Newport Square in Warrensville Heights, OH.

Cheryl and George lived in a two-story house in Cleveland Heights when, two years ago, George had total hip replacement on his left side which confined him to the first floor of his house and he slept in a hospital bed in the living room. George is also paralyzed on his right side from a stroke twenty years ago.

The Williams sought out another place to live that would be more accessible and easier for George to get around and be more manageable for Cheryl to provide the care needed for her husband.

They put a deposit down on a new 55 and older apartment complex called Newport Square in Warrensville

Heights, OH. Cheryl asked if the unit and the property was accessible and was told it was. However, they noticed when it was being built that there was a step up to the front door, as well as from the garage to the house, which meant that George would not be able to get in to the apartment with his wheelchair. They requested a ramp be put up to the front door, and a temporary one was there when they moved in.

After they moved in to the complex in December of 2005, the Williams noticed that there were other issues with the unit and the property that were not accessible: there is no sidewalk on their side of the street meaning George would have to maneuver his wheelchair over the grass, and the mailboxes, which are located on the sidewalk across the street, are not accessible to him because there are no curb cuts on the street to maneuver his wheelchair up to the sidewalk.

Cheryl and George contacted their councilwoman, Ruby Nelson, who is also a board member of the Cleve-



**Inaccessible front entrance  
at Newport Square**

land Tenants Organization. They put her in touch with our office and we investigated the property and found several violations of the fair housing law.

In May of 2006, the Housing Center filed a complaint against the builders, owners and architects of Newport Square with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Ohio Civil Right Commission. The case is currently under investigation. The Williams have also filed a separate complaint which is also under investigation.

Mrs. Williams is a strong advocate for other tenants as well. She called the office and had a ramp put in for

### Inaccessible housing (continued):

another tenant who made several calls to the office with no success. She also noticed that many other tenants need modifications and sees tenants who are in wheelchairs sitting in their doorway looking out to enjoy the outside because they are unable to maneuver over the step that leads to their back porch.

The Housing Center will have updates on this case and we would like to thank the Williams for bringing this to our attention and advocating on behalf of those who need accessible living areas.



Cheryl Williams by the mailboxes across the street from their apartment which are inaccessible to her husband

### Housing Center awarded HUD grant

The Housing Center was notified in September that it was awarded \$100,000 in funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for education and outreach activities related to fair housing.

The Housing Center considers education and outreach to be an important part of its mission. During the next year, under this grant, we will conduct two half-day conferences on access to housing for people with disabilities; develop and distribute fair housing materials in English, Spanish, and Arabic; conduct three fair housing law seminars for landlords and realtors; educate consumers about their fair housing right through a targeted print advertising campaign; collect and review all the existing municipal occupancy codes in the six-county region; as well as intake and referral of fair housing complaints.

and told another African American tester that the unit had already been rented. Both of these cases are currently being investigated.

A third complaint was filed in August alleging discrimination based on familial status against a local newspaper that printed an advertisement that stated "no kids."

come especially popular since the 1990's. Subprime lending has been blamed for Cuyahoga County's soaring foreclosure rate, which is considered the worst in the country.

There was a related article in the *Plain Dealer* on Sunday, September 17, 2006, titled "Bad loans, bad news for Cleveland". Both of these articles can be found on our website at [www.thehousingcenter.org](http://www.thehousingcenter.org).

#### FAIR HOUSING FACT:

Originally, the Fair Housing Act only prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin in the sale, rental or financing of housing. In 1974, discrimination on the basis of gender was added, and in 1988, the Act was amended to include familial status and persons with disabilities.

### Testing and Cases:

The Housing Center has recently filed three fair housing discrimination complaints with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and/or the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC) as a result of recent fair housing testing.

In August of 2006, the Housing Center filed a complaint against a landlord in the City of Parma

who falsely told African American testers that the advertised apartment was already rented but continued to show the unit to white testers.

Also in August, the Housing Center filed a complaint alleging race discrimination in the City of North Olmsted based on testing when a landlord quoted a higher rent to an African American tester

### Housing Center in the News:

The Housing Center's Executive Director Jeffrey Dillman was featured on WOIO, Channel 19/43 on Wednesday, September 13, 2006, regarding an article in the *Plain Dealer* titled "Race dictates rates for mortgage loans, federal figures show."

Mr. Dillman noted that lending discrimination has changed over time from periods when minority communities were redlined and denied access to credit to the current situation

where these communities are flooded with subprime and predatory lenders.

Discrimination in mortgage lending is a growing problem in Northeast Ohio. The *Plain Dealer* article states that black people in Cuyahoga County were at least 2-1/2 times more likely than white people to have received a high-interest mortgage loan last year, regardless of how much they earned.

These high-interest loans, also called subprime loans, have be-

## Spotlight on the Board: Martha Goble



Martha Goble joined the Board of Directors of the Housing Center in January, 2006 and serves on the finance committee. Recently retired after 14 years as the executive director of Heights Community Congress, Martha is enjoying the nonprofit world from a different perspective. As part of Greater Cleveland Community Shares, she is active on the advisory board and the committee on directors.

In addition to her work with the Housing Center, Martha currently works with the gifts and endowment committee for the Church of the Covenant. Martha received her MSSA degree from Case Western Reserve University. While working in Cleveland Heights she helped

organize the Non Profit Network and for many years managed the highly successful Models for Unity conference that was held yearly at Cleveland State University. Martha believes that nonprofit organizations benefit from collaborating with groups that hold similar values and objectives.

### Board and Staff News:

The Housing Center would like to thank two retiring members of the Board of Directors for their long standing dedication to the Center and work on behalf of fair housing. **The Honorable Peter Lawson Jones**, a Cuyahoga County Commissioner, was a founding member of the board and has served as the Board's Vice President and President. **Carole O. Heyward**, an attorney and professor at the Cleveland Marshall Law school, has been with the Housing Center since 2004 and has served as the Board's Treasurer. Thank you Peter and Carole for

your time and dedication to our mission. The Housing Center would like to welcome **David Brown** as our Fair Housing Intern. David is a senior at Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin School of Urban Affairs studying Urban Planning. He is member of the Ohio Planning Conference of the American Planning Association and is also a member of the City Club of Cleveland. He is avid bicyclist and cross country skier. David will be with the Housing Center throughout the current school year. Welcome David!

## The Housing Center

### Board of Directors:

Sheryl King Benford  
Patricia Burgess, *President*  
Martha Goble  
CARLETON MOORE!  
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Jerome Walcott

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*Director of Research & Investigation*  
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*Education & Outreach Coordinator*  
Hope Farmby,  
*Fair Housing Specialist*  
David Brown,  
*Fair Housing Intern*  
Irving Graves,  
*Office Assistant*

### Mission:

To eliminate housing discrimination and assure choice in Northeast Ohio by providing those at risk with effective information, intervention and advocacy.



### How you can help the Housing Center:

The Housing Center is a member of Greater Cleveland Community Shares, a community-based federation that provides an independent source of funds working to find long-term solutions to a diverse range of social justice issues.

You can donate to the Housing Center through Community Shares workplace charitable campaigns.

Simply specify the Housing Center on the designation line of the Community Shares pledge card. If your employer does not currently offer Community Shares as a part of your workplace's annual fundraising campaign and you would like to learn how Community Shares can be included, please

call their office at 216/361-9920. You can also donate to the Housing Center by sending in a donation directly. Just fill out the form on the backside of this newsletter and send it in to our office.

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**Any donation of \$100 or more will receive a 2007 calendar featuring twelve beautiful murals photographed by Bernard Kleina.**

**Thank you for your continued support of the Housing Center!**