



# Housing Research & Advocacy Center

# News

Fall 2011

## The Housing Center: Coming Soon to an Event Near You!

The Housing Center staff are very excited whenever we are able to connect in-person with the residents of Northeast Ohio. In September alone, staff members and volunteers distributed fair housing materials and information to over 200 people while tabling the Lakewood Community Festival and the Tremont Arts & Cultural Festival. The Housing Center also served as the member organization representing Community Shares at the *Case for Community Service Day*, connecting with both the students and staff of Case Western Reserve. In October, staff attended the

Homeless Veterans Outreach Kick-off at the Wolstein Center Annex. Attending community activities such as these allows the Housing Center to reach out to community members, discuss our work, answer questions, and advance our mission to promote and advocate for fair housing rights.

The Housing Center is planning to attend several more local events throughout the coming year. Look for us at the next event in your community or let us know if there is an event you would like us to table in your neighborhood!



### Impact:

#### Complaints Filed for Discriminatory Advertisements

Over the past few months the Housing Research & Advocacy Center filed more than a dozen complaints with HUD based on discriminatory language used in advertising. The Housing Center staff diligently monitor various print and web based listings of available housing in order to identify possible cases of discrimination. In addition to ads stating, "NO CHILDREN," local property owners have recently publicized units with two or three bedrooms as best suited for a "single person or couple." Such units likely would accommodate a higher number of tenants, based on local occupancy codes. You can find local occupancy codes on our website under "Publications."

Ads, that either explicitly state that "NO CHILDREN" are welcome or those that express a preference will be given to applicants without children; violate the Fair Housing Laws and the protection of Familial Status. The Housing Center hosts educational trainings for real estate professionals and landlords which address best practices in advertising property. Please visit our website or call our office for a complete listing of upcoming trainings.

#### Education Outreach Initiatives Grant Awarded

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently awarded the Housing Center an Education and Outreach Initiatives Grant for 2011-2012. Mandy Melman, Fair Housing Community Educator, serves as the project manager.

The Housing Center uses this grant to build new community partnerships, advertise in a wide variety of publications, and promote fair housing in-person to the residents of Northeast Ohio. One of the strategic priorities of this project is to provide fair housing education to members of the community who are English language learners and recent immigrants to the United States.

In addition to working with adults, the Housing Center will pilot an education program to teach local students about the history of fair housing and fair housing rights.

# The Next Three Years: Strategic Plan Focuses on Expanding Research, Education, and Advocacy

The staff and Board of Directors recently completed the organization's new strategic plan. With the generous financial support of The William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation and the expert facilitation of Laurie Zuckerman of Zuckerman Consulting Group, Inc., the Housing Center set ambitious goals for the future. The plan will be used to direct growth and ensure the Housing Center's ability to provide services that meet the fair housing needs of Northeast Ohio.

The Housing Center is proud to be recognized as a leader in fair housing research and education, and we look forward to increasing programs and services during the next three and a half years. The goals set forth in the strategic plan will expand the scope and audience of our fair housing reports and will enhance programming to impact even more people and communities. In addition, the Housing Center will work to collaborate with a broad-based coal-

tion of organizations and individuals who advocate for, enforce, and affect local, state, and national fair housing laws.

The strategic planning process was also an opportunity for the Housing Center to revisit and update its mission statement. Staff and board members collaborated to revise the mission statement to succinctly reflect the strategic focus of the Housing Center. Planning sessions were dedicated to discussion, drafting, and refinement of the statement and vision. The updated mission is as follows:

To promote fair housing and diverse communities, and to work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio by providing effective research, education, and advocacy.

Thank you to everyone who made this incredible process possible!

## The Housing Center Welcomes New Employees

**Leigh Craigmyle** is the Housing Center's new Fair Housing Specialist and is responsible for intake and management of fair housing complaints, inquiries and filings. She assists in the investigation and resolution of fair housing complaints and works closely with the Executive Director and Associate Director on the Housing Center's enforcement work, including testing and ad monitoring, advocacy, training, outreach, and research projects. Prior to joining the Housing Center in 2011, Leigh served as Intake Counselor at Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Agnes Scott College and is fluent in Spanish.



**Mandy Mehlman** has been hired as the Fair Housing Community Educator. Her responsibilities include creating and presenting fair housing/fair lending curriculum to students and the community, working on marketing initiatives, and building collaborative community relationships. Mandy earned her MSW with a concentration in Program and Community Development from Washington University in St. Louis, a Masters of Education from Lehman College, and a Bachelors of Arts in Spanish from Hiram College. While in graduate school, Mandy worked with The St. Louis Science Center; The Students-In-Transition Office of the St. Louis Public Schools; and The Concerned Citizens of Precinct 12, East St. Louis. Before joining the Housing Center, Mandy was a teacher in New York City, served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala, coordinated a public library homework help center and led English conversation classes for a multi-lingual group including Spanish speakers.

**Doris Honsa** joined the Housing Center this fall. She brings a wealth of experience in fair housing, fair lending and community advocacy. Her work with the Cleveland Fair Housing Board, Education Strategies for Sustainable Homeownership, the Cuyahoga Community Land Trust, and Living in Cleveland Center (LiveCleveland!) have prepared her for her new responsibilities as Special Project Assistant. Doris earned an MS in Urban Studies from Cleveland State University.

**Jillian Watson** is the Housing Center's new Fair Housing Intern. She is responsible for ad monitoring and assisting with research projects. Jillian was an effective Course Assistant for a data analysis class and a student leader for Discover Cleveland, a community outreach program. She is a graduate of Baldwin-Wallace College and is studying for an Masters in Urban Planning, Design, and Development at the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University.

**WELCOME TO ALL!**

## Housing Research & Advocacy Center

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### Board of Directors:

Patricia Burgess, President

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Carrie Pleasants, Associate Director

Darlene English, Education & Outreach  
Coordinator

Krissie Wells, Fair Housing Research  
Associate

Zach Crafton, Test Coordinator

Leigh Craigmyle, Fair Housing Specialist

Mandy Mehlman, Fair Housing  
Community Educator

Doris Honsa, Special Project Assistant

Jillian Watson, Fair Housing Intern

Irving Graves, Office Assistant

### Mission:

To promote fair housing and diverse communities, and to work to eliminate housing discrimination in Northeast Ohio, by providing effective research, education and advocacy.

### Values:

Equality, Respect, Honesty, Attention, Acceptance, Commitment, Dedication, Knowledge, and Understanding

Thank you to everyone who joined us at Elements Bistro on September 15th to welcome Hilary King as the new Executive Director of the Housing Research & Advocacy Center!

# News in Brief

## Housing Center Named as Greater Cleveland Community Shares' Member Organization of the Year

The Housing Research & Advocacy Center was awarded the Community Shares Member Organization of the Year Social Justice Award at the Community Shares Power Lunch and Annual Meeting on June 28, 2011. The Housing Center was recognized by its peers for making notable and significant contributions to building a stronger local community and advancing social justice over the past year.

Patricia Burgess, President of the Board of Directors, and Hilary Mason King, Executive Director, accepted the award on behalf of the organization. The Housing Center was thrilled to receive this special acknowledgement for the work we do to advance fair housing in the region. We look forward to continuing these efforts into the future, assuring equal opportunity in housing for all.

## Training Local Landlords, Realtors, and Residents of Transitional Housing

The Housing Center hosted various trainings during recent months. Staff trained realtors in Solon, presented at the Lakewood Landlord Seminar featuring Mayor Michael Summers, and partnered with the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) and the Cleveland Tenants Organization (CTO) to train residents

of transitional housing centers. Real estate agent and landlord trainings focused on fair housing laws and best practices in advertising. All trainings cover reasonable accommodation and reasonable modification for persons with disabilities. Please visit our website for upcoming trainings.

## Greater Cleveland Fair Housing Consortium

The Consortium met at the Housing Center in September to discuss emerging fair housing issues. Staff member Krissie Wells presented a report on a conference she attended at John Marshall Law School titled, "The Disconnect between Crime and Discrimination in Housing." Following her presentation, attendees discussed the repercussions of the disparate impact of criminal background checks on African

American males seeking housing in Northeast Ohio. Hilary King introduced the concept of visitability, which makes it possible for people with mobility impairments to visit the homes of family and friends living in new construction. Our November 19th discussion will further explore issues and potential solutions. Guests are welcome to join the conversation!

## Save the Date! 7th Annual Fair Housing Celebration

On Thursday, April 12, 2012, the Housing Center will hold its 7th Annual Fair Housing Celebration at The Gallery at Trinity Commons.

This year the Housing Center will feature local artist Julia Kuo. Ms. Kuo authors the blog *100 Days in Cleveland*, which celebrates beautiful and unique locations in the greater Cleveland area. You will have a chance to win one of our elegant raffle baskets or purchase Ms. Kuo's artwork.

April is Fair Housing Month in Northeast Ohio, and as such, the Housing Center will honor local advocates who promote fair housing in the community. Please look for your invitation in the upcoming months and join us!

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**Fall 2011**

A charter member of



**Upcoming Events and Information:**

*7th Annual  
Fair Housing Celebration  
Thursday, April 12, 2012  
5:30—7:30 p.m.  
The Gallery at  
Trinity Commons  
2230 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115*

For up-to-date information on local and national fair housing news,



Find us on Facebook

"Like" the Housing Research & Advocacy Center on Facebook

Please visit  
[www.thehousingcenter.org](http://www.thehousingcenter.org)

For research and reports on:

- State of Fair Housing in NEO
- Community Lending Factbooks
- Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Ohio Mortgage Lending
- Payday Lending in Ohio

**Who is Protected?**

Federal and/or state fair housing laws prohibit discrimination in housing related transactions based on any of the following protected classes:

- Race/Color
- National Origin/Ancestry
- Sex
- Disability
- Religion
- Familial Status
- Military Status

**Where to Go for Help?**

If you think you have been a victim of housing discrimination please contact the Housing Research & Advocacy Center for assistance.

You may also contact:

- The Ohio Civil Rights Commission at 1-888-278-7101 or [www.crc.ohio.gov](http://www.crc.ohio.gov)
- HUD at 1-800-669-9777 or online at [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

**What is Prohibited?**

It is illegal to do any of the following based on someone's membership in a protected class:

- Refuse to rent or sell
- Refuse to negotiate
- Make housing unavailable or otherwise restrict choice
- Set different terms, conditions or privileges for sale or rental of housing
- Provide different housing services or facilities
- Falsely deny housing is available
- Persuade owners to sell or rent
- Deny anyone access to or membership in a facility or service related to the sale or rental of housing
- Discriminate in mortgage lending and insurance