
◆ Open House ◆

Newsletter of the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County

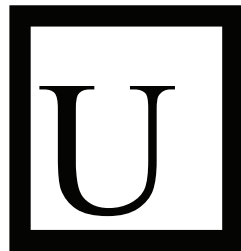
FALL/WINTER 1998

The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County is committed to ensuring equal housing opportunities regardless of race, religion, gender, age, disability, familial status or national origin. We carry out our mission through education & outreach, complaint reception & resolution, advocacy, monitoring of discriminatory housing practices & assistance in finding open & affordable housing.

STAFF

Renee Langley
Executive
Director

Liane Anderson



There are an estimated 43,000,000 people in the U.S. who have been stricken with a disabling condition.

This issue is dedicated to people with special needs and disabilities.

Good News for People with HIV *by Thomas Howard*

The Supreme Court of the United States has granted people with HIV increased protection from all forms of discrimination.

Via a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers people with HIV regardless of whether the individual possesses any symptoms of HIV. Enacted in 1990, the ADA protects people with disabilities from discrimination. Under the ADA, a “disability” is any

physical impairment that substantially limits a “major life activity”.

In reaching its decision, the Supreme Court pegged HIV as a “disability” because of the constraints the virus places upon reproduction. According to the Supreme Court reproduction is a “major life activity” which is severely hindered when an individual becomes infected with HIV.

What does this mean for people with HIV and their fair housing rights????

The Supreme Court’s recent decision has paved the way for the recognition of HIV as a disability under the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act protects people with disabilities from housing discrimination. Like the ADA, the Fair Housing Act defines “disability” as a physical impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Since the Supreme Court has determined HIV is a disability under the ADA, the likelihood is high that the Court would find similarly if

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Fair Housing 101

Disabled?

Wondering about your housing rights? If you answered “yes” to both questions then you’ve come to the right place. So pull up a chair, sit back, and listen carefully as we go over your housing rights and protections...

Firstly, federal law protects people with disabilities against housing discrimination via the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act (Act) was enacted in 1968 and prohibited housing discrimination based only on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.

However, in 1988 the Act was amended to include families with children and people with disabilities as protected classes. As a result, disabled individuals cannot be denied equal housing opportunities.

Under the Act, it is illegal for people with disabilities to be denied housing opportunities because of their disability. In addition, the Act mandates that “reasonable accommodations” be allowed in order for a disabled person to fully

enjoy the premises. An example of a reasonable accommodation is permitting a seeing-eye dog in an apartment complex that normally prohibits pets.

Besides reasonable accommodations, under the Act people with disabilities may also make reasonable modifications to their dwellings in order to derive the maximum benefit from the property. An example of a reasonable modification is the installation of grab bars in a bathroom/shower. Such

Federal law protects people with disabilities against

modifications may be necessary in order for the occupant to enjoy the property as equally as a non-disabled person would.

Besides the Fair Housing Act, disabled people are also protected from discrimination by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Enacted in 1990, the ADA guarantees the civil rights of the disabled and protects them from all forms of discrimination. Although not technically dealing with housing, the ADA ensures that the disabled are not discriminated against in any forum. Thus, the ADA can be used to combat housing discrimination

Thanks to Our Most Recent Interns

The Fair Housing Council would like to extend its deepest thanks to our Spring and Summer interns who have been so valuable to us over the past several months. Their hard work and accomplishments have greatly aided us in our efforts to reach out into the community and combat housing discrimination.

Those special interns are: Mark Moore; Kevin Schmidt; Marcella Travaligne; Thomas

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The Battle Continues against Group Homes

Group homes for the disabled are still under fire as communities fight to keep them out of their neighborhoods.



The disabled encounter many road blocks on their quest for a normal life. The road frequently becomes bumpy as people with

disabilities seek housing. One of the most egregious bars to equal housing opportunities is the conspiring of local governments and their citizenry, fueled by ignorance and prejudice, to block the establishment of group homes in residential areas.

Commonly referred to as "NIMBY" (Not In My Backyard), this opposition cloaks housing discrimination through seemingly "legitimate" means and complaints. For example, neighbors of potential group home sites may couch their opposition in terms of land value concerns. They may claim that a group home would severely lower the value

of the surrounding properties although no such evidence exists.

Pressured by constituents or just acting on their own fears, local governments also discriminate against the disabled. Municipalities often structure their zoning laws to keep group homes

Fueled by ignorance and prejudice, local governments and their citizenry often conspire to block the establishment, of

away from residential areas. Of course these laws never specifically mention or refer to the disabled or group homes. Instead they mask the goal of barring group homes under the guise of land use provisions, occupancy limits, and restrictive definitions of "family".

As a result of such laws group homes are pushed away from the community and forced into more socially isolated areas predominantly inhabited by industry and commercial businesses. Consequently, the disabled residents of the group homes lose contact

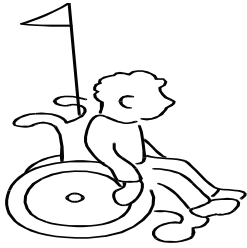
with the community at large. Through no fault of their own, they become pariahs and are denied the same living and social opportunities enjoyed by the non-disabled population.

Fortunately, federal appeals courts have been subjecting local zoning laws to an intense standard of review to ensure that the laws are not discrimination in disguise. With the Fair Housing Act, disabled individuals have been able to enter mainstream society and enjoy the benefits of society that most others take for granted.

Nonetheless, recent developments threaten to unravel the sweater of success sewed by the Fair Housing Act for people with disabilities. In February a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives that, if made law, would severely curtail many of the protections guaranteed to the disabled by the Fair Housing Act. Entitled H.R. 3206, this bill would allow cities to deny or limit housing opportunities to the disabled through various obstacles and restrictions.

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*HELPFUL HINTS CORNER:
Tips for Disabled Persons*



**ACCOMMODATIONS
&
ACCESSIBLE
HOUSING**

- U Edgars Nilenders, architect, and wife Barbara, physical therapist, own and operate **Architectural Rehabilitation Services** in Huntingdon Valley. They redesign houses—making them accessible—for the disabled and elderly.
(215) 663-1448
- U **The Accessibility Center** in Wilmington, DE is a showroom of various types of devices for the disabled as well as devices & tools for houses to make them accessible.
(302) 888-1100
- U **Access Housing Corp.** does custom renovation for elderly & disabled.
(215) 663-5803
- U **Unlimited Access, in Dickson City, PA,** specializes in modifications for home or work focusing on ADA standards, Universal Design guidelines, and installation information. Serving architects, designers, contractors,

private individuals, realtors, property managers, and builders. They have a showroom.
(717) 489-4015

TRAVEL TIPS

- U **“The Accessible Guide for Specialized Ground Transportation”** lists over 2,000 companies & transit systems in the U.S. with services for the disabled. It describes services, hours & fares lists phone numbers, and is divided by state.
1-800-461-4789
www.accessibletransport.com
- U **“Smooth Ride Guides: United States Eastern Seaboard” (FT Publishing, 1996)** includes accessible locations & organizations that help mobility-impaired travelers. Available at bookstores or Seven Hills Book Distr. (513-381-3881)
- U Website www.candy-charles.com has info. about accessible travel. Check out **Emerging Horizons** their accessible travel newsletter
(209) 599-9409

- U **Website <http://www.disability.com>** has a recreation & sports section
- U **New York Travel**
 - **“Access for All: A Guide to NYC Cultural Institutions”** offers info on elevators, ramps, special services, restrooms, etc. 1-888-424-4685
OR (212) 575-7663
 - Metropolitan Transit Authority, Office of Accessible Travel** provides subway maps indicating wheelchair accessible stations.
Call: (718) 596-8585
OR Main # (718) 330-1234
 - **Big Apple Greeter Program** pairs NY residents with visitors and has a Greeter Access Project which welcomes travelers with disabilities & matches them to trained volunteers. It also has a resource list of phone numbers.
(212) 669-2896
www.bigapplegreeter.org
- U **Vermont**
 - **Accessible Adventures** is a tour company geared towards the physically

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Helpful Hints Corner, cont.

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challenged that is based in Burlington, VT. (888-880-0222)

- **Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sport** (802) 583-4283

U **“Virginia Travel Guide for Persons with Disabilities”** describes the accessibility of attractions, lodgings & restaurants statewide. 1-800-742-3935

NEWSPAPERS

U **W.A. & News: Practical Information for People with Disabilities** provides info. concerning purchase & sale of accessible housing, services, assistive devices & other hard to find resources. Available through: Wheelchair Access, Inc. (610) 942-3266

FREE

PUBLICATIONS

You can get the following free publications by calling these agencies:

Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Assoc.
1-800-444-0120

U “Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act”

U “Know Your Fair Housing Rights”

U “A Guide to Planning and Modifying Your Home”

U “Wheeling to Fire Safety”
American Assoc. of Retired Persons 1-800-424-3410

U “The Do-Able Renewable Home”

U “Don’t Move! Improve!”
Fair Housing Information Clearinghouse (for U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development publications)

Get Involved!!!

Volunteer your time.

We are currently looking for new Board members. If you would be interested in serving on the Board, send us a resume or brief letter of interest.

Tax time is just around the corner.

Make your 1998 or 1999 tax-deductible charitable contribution to a non-profit organization serving people with disabilities.

Great Groups to Join

The Pennsylvania Action Coalition for Disability Rights in Housing

(215) 627-7255
Concerned with justice for people with disabilities in housing.

The PA Self Determination in Housing Project

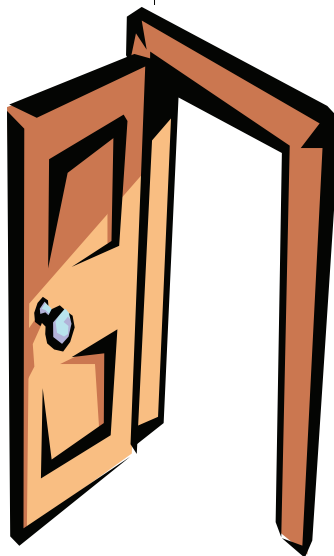
(215) 671-7505
Focuses on homeownership for people with disabilities.

PA Transportation Alliance

1-800-323-6060
Now: “Ride the Bus” campaign

Speaking for Ourselves

(610) 825-4592
Focus: Mental



**LET US
OPEN
THE
DOOR
FOR**

**IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE BEEN
DISCRIMINATED AGAINST WHILE
SEARCHING FOR A HOME, CALL US AT:
(215) 576-7711**

Resource List for the Disabled Community

The following is a list of just some of the agencies in our area that might be helpful to you.

ABLEDATA Hardware Searches 800-346-2742

National library that provides information and referrals regarding disabilities.

Accessible House Plans, NC Cooperative Ext. Services 800-647-6777

Nationwide service that provides information for remodeling homes or building new homes for the disabled. Also provides product information for the disabled.

ADA Technical Information 800-949-4232

Informational center for the Mid-Atlantic Region providing training, information and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act. Training offered to businesses, consumers and state and local governments.

AIDS Law Project 215-587-9377

Provides legal services for people with AIDS/HIV.

Barrier Awareness 610-534-0145

Provides referrals and information regarding housing for the disabled.

Boyertown Area Multi-Service, Inc. 610-367-

6957
Provides emergency food, Meals on Wheels for Senior Citizens, SHARE food program and a food cupboard. Offers energy management programs, rental

assistance and FEMA funds.

Bucks-Montgomery Human Services Center 215-491-9680

Serves the Eastern Montgomery County area. Provides emergency services, food pantry, homelessness prevention, funding for rental assistance, and housing counseling.

CADCOM 610-278-6363

This State funded organization offers emergency food, clothing, household items and referrals to other agencies that provide additional services.

Circle Lodge (Mental Illness) 610-275-1280

Maximum care facility that offers transitional services & housing services. Only serves the Montgomery County area.

Cluster Outreach Center 610-970-5995

Serves the needy of the Greater Pottstown Area through job placement assistance, one-on-one life skills counseling, and emergency services (food cupboard, soup kitchen, clothing, household items and furniture). Also offers rental assistance, housing repair for seniors and home visitations.

Colonial Neighborhood Council 610-828-6595

Offers assistance with job placement, first time homebuying, rental assistance, food distribution, emergency funds for electric and water bills, and Meals on Wheels.

Community Housing Services 215-362-5250

Provides affordable housing and self

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sufficiency
 services for low and moderate income people. Offers rental assistance, lease purchase program and first-time homebuyers program.

Disabilities Law Project 215-238-8070

Provides litigation services for the entire state of Pennsylvania.

Eastern Paralyzed Vets Assoc. 215-381-3037

Non-profit organization that enhances the lives of spinal cord injured veterans by offering health care, research, and civil rights and independence advocacy. They also provide home modification and accessible housing services.

Family Services (HIV/AIDS) 610-272-1520

Provides services for children, adults and the elderly which include counseling, HIV/AIDS prevention, support and housing. Also provides employee assistance and counseling for the developmentally disabled.

Freedom Valley Disability Center 610-353-6640

Provides information and referrals to other agencies that can provide additional services for the disabled.

Friends of the Handicapped, Inc. 215-536-0764

Provides medical equipment for disabled people without medical insurance.

Housing Consortium for Disabled Individuals 215-895-

5689
 Provides fair housing counseling & advocacy, relocation referrals, funds for modification, & special needs counseling. (Philadelphia area only)

Independence Dogs, Inc 610-358-2723

Trains service dogs to help mobile disabled children & adults throughout the nation.

KING Paratransit (subsidiary of SEPTA) 610-275-4444

Provides transportation service in Montgomery County Area for people with disabilities along SEPTA routes.

Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Inc. 215-587-3350

Provides legal services for the physically disabled poor concerning housing and family problems.

MontCo. Assoc. for the Blind 215-661-9800

Provides many services for the blind such as support groups, recreation groups, & referrals.

MontCo Assoc. of Retarded Citizens 610-265-4700

Advocates for the mentally retarded. Also provides services for mentally challenged children ages 0-3.

Montgomery County Housing Authority 610-275-5720

Funded by HUD. Provides federal subsidies for rental assistance and first-time homebuying. Also offers social services for clients.

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Montgomery County Mental Health & Retardation

610-278-3642

Provides services and support to persons with disabilities. Services include job search training, interviewing skills training, family needs assessments, and psychological evaluations. Rental assistance and home visitations also available.

Montgomery County Office of Aging & Adult Services

610-278-3601

Assists low income adults and the families of aging or disabled adults. Utility payments, rent and mortgage assistance is available to those

who qualify under HAP.

**PA Council of the Blind
215-238-1410**

Advocates for the blind and disabled.

**PA Institute on Assistive Technology Hardware
800-204-7428**

Statewide program that provides information and referrals for technology services for the disabled.
Advertisements



PHFA ANNOUNCEMENT
Availability of Accessible Rental Units



On October 1, 1998, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency began its website and a toll-free telephone number to provide information about apartments that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The format is simple: county and municipality in which the unit is located; the name, address and phone number of the development; number of bedrooms; a brief description of how it is accessible (i.e. knock-out cabinets, roll-in shower, etc.); and date of availability.

Apartments need not have any connection with the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency in order to take advantage of this service, and there is no fee for its use. The Agency's sole aim is to provide information about accessible units in an effective manner.

PHFA will keep the information on file for referral to interested callers for a two-week period. At the end of that time, it will automatically be deleted unless development personnel requested an extension. That way, material remains current.

From the requests for such a service received by the Agency, it appears that timely information is what is most needed by persons with disabilities. This is the reason that there will be a limited "shelf life" for referrals.

You may send the information to PHFA by phone, fax, regular mail or e-mail. The phone number for this service is 1-800-822-1174 (within Pennsylvania) or (717) 780-3915. Fax is (717) 780-3905. Regular mail can be sent to PHFA-Information Resources, 2101 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8029, or e-mail the Agency Website at www.phfa.org.

Open Letter on Barriers the Disabled Face

by Loretta Quarmley, Ed. D., Administrator

Carbon-Monroe-Pike Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program

I am the administrator of a county mental health/mental retardation program in three counties in the northeastern part of Pennsylvania. Our agency has been working for a number of years to address the critical housing issues in the pocono region which our agency covers. We are dramatically aware of significant problems in locating affordable housing for our consumers.

One of the major **potential catastrophes is the pending federal legislation H.R. 3206** which would effectively dismantle all of the recent benefits of the 1988 Fair Housing Amendments Act. This is a major issue which I believe Pennsylvania should address in its leadership role on behalf of people with disabilities. This legislation must not be passed in its present form. [The bill quietly died when Congress adjourned its last session; however, it is likely to be reintroduced.] The Fair Housing Act has been very helpful in modifying some barriers facing persons with disabilities and in a number of cases

has made it somewhat easier to establish living arrangements in our communities. Nevertheless, a number of barriers remain.

In our region there is a very large amount of available housing for purchase in the aftermath of a drop in the housing market in the region. In spite of this, there is a **significant lack of affordable rental housing** either as apartment units or freestanding homes. Because of the demand for rental housing, the available units are often rented to higher income individuals, leaving the poor and disabled to occupy substandard housing—units designed for transient occupancy, i.e., cabins, motels, etc., which also are often rundown but available at exorbitant rentals. These usually do not have appropriate kitchens, if any, and are frequently heated by electricity, which in non-insulated facilities is also unaffordable. The efforts of our agency and that of our subcontractors have been toward assisting people in sharing housing so that with more than one

income they are able to manage, although **landlords are reluctant to allow such economies.**

Supported housing in its variety of forms has been invaluable in assisting many of our consumers to maintain effective living quarters. The basic needs in life—housing, clothing, food—are a prerequisite to stability, and treating people for psychiatric problems cannot be effective if our consumers lack the basic necessities. **Zoning laws still present problems.** There are many communities which continue to have zoning stipulations that unrelated people may not live together. Obviously, the **overarching issue in almost [all of] these situations is insufficient income** to afford decent rentals. Our local housing authority has **waiting lists for affordable housing** which are years in length, and they have actually closed lists, taking no new names for Section 8. There are no additional certificates available. All of these

*Good News,
cont.*

(Continued from page 1)

asked about the status of HIV under the Fair Housing Act.

Experts on AIDS law have expressed optimism regarding the future housing rights of people with HIV. According to Ronda Goldfein of the AIDS Law Project of Philadelphia, precedent has been set regarding HIV

which practically guarantees HIV's future classification as a "disability"—the Supreme Court offered a

*Group Homes,
cont.*

(Continued from page 3)

For example, under H.R. 3206 municipalities would be allowed to enforce any type of

occupancy limitation on group homes. In addition, governments would also be permitted to create any zoning regulation for group homes so long as the regulation was "reasonably

required" for the "dispersal of such facilities". These changes would essentially "turn back the clock" to the

In their quest for a normal life, people with disabilities want the same opportunities regarding housing and living as those

*Accommodations &
Accessible Housing*

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 requires that buildings with 4 or more units built after March, 1991 must have certain accessible features & designs such as:

- Uaccessible building entrance;
- Uaccessible & usable public common use areas;
- Uwheelchair-accessible doorways;
- Uaccessible routes inside & outside of building to public areas; and
- Uwheelchair-accessible kitchens & bathrooms—reinforced wall for grab bars; accessible light switches, electrical



ANNUAL MEETING

**WHEN: FRIDAY
JANUARY 22, 1999
AT 12 NOON**

**WHERE: STAZI MILANO
JENKINTOWN TRAIN**

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AWARD OF OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE WILL BE AWARDED TO THE HONORABLE LAWRENCE CURRY FOR HIS COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP ON FAIR HOUSING ISSUES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Help us fight against discrimination... BECOME A MEMBER!!!

The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County invites you to become a member. The Council is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to fighting housing discrimination in Montgomery County. As the only local agency whose sole mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities in Montgomery County, the Council has been working hard for you! By becoming a member, you can help guarantee that fair housing remains a part of your community.

By becoming a member you will receive either: your choice of one of our t-shirts for free **OR** a 20% discount on the upcoming year's seminar sponsored by the Council! We have two styles available. One includes an orange & red heart design with the slogan, "Home is where the Heart is and with Fair Housing, Your Heart can be Anywhere." The other design is green & purple with the slogan, "Happiness Is Fair Housing." Both are printed on a white t-shirt. Members also receive "Open House" the Council's quarterly newsletter.

With your support, the Council will continue providing educational programs to consumers and real estate professionals, advocacy for victims of housing discrimination and access to information on open and affordable housing in Montgomery County.

Your contributions are tax-deductible.

Don't delay...join today!

YES, I'D LIKE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL!

Name or Organization _____

MEMBERSHIP RATES:

Address _____

r Individual (\$25)

r Nonprofit Org. (\$35)

Phone _____ Fax _____

r Corporate (\$50)

Choose One: _____ 20% Seminar Discount

OR

_____ T-shirt (Choose style & size)

Red/Orange (Adult ___ Sm ___ XL) OR Green/Purple (Adult ___ Sm ___ Med ___ L ___ XL)

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

MAIL TO: P.O. Box 578

Glenside, PA 19038

Questions? Call us at (215)576-7711

**Thank you for supporting the fight against
housing discrimination!**



Fair Housing Council of
Montgomery County
P.O. Box 578
Glenside, PA 19038

This Issue is dedicated to people with special needs and disabilities.

1 *This special edition newsletter is* n

**SPECIAL DIRECTORY OF
RESOURCES INSIDE!!!**

Come visit us on our new
website:

[www.fairhousing.com/
fhmc](http://www.fairhousing.com/fhmc)

You will get updates on:

- ◆ fair housing issues &

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