
◆ Open House ◆

Newsletter of the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County

Spring 2006 Issue XXIV

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Derek Zecher
President

Carol Peckman
Vice-President

Carole Sheffield
Treasurer

Linda Staroscik,
Secretary

Karen Hanson

Mary-Louise Homicki

Madeleine McMahon

STAFF

Elizabeth Albert
Executive Director

Carolyn Capistrano
Test Coordinator

Rita Fitzgerald
Education and Outreach

105 E. GLENSIDE AVE.
SUITE E
GLENSIDE, PA 19038
TEL: 215.576.7711
FAX: 215.576.1509

www.fairhousingmontco.org

***First Annual Montgomery County
Landlord Reception
Westover Country Club - Jeffersonville, PA
Thursday April 27, 2006
6:00 - 9:00 PM***



Are you a landlord, property manager, or leasing professional? Then you absolutely will NOT want to miss an informational gala planned just for you by the Montgomery County Housing Coalition which takes place on Thursday April 27th at the Westover Country Club in Jeffersonville. The Fair Housing Council, along with other members of the Housing Coalition, have taken the lead in planning this first-ever event. Other co-sponsors include the Montgomery County Department of Housing & Community Development and the Apartment Association of Greater Philadelphia. You have questions - we have answers!

Entitled the "First Annual Landlord Reception of Montgomery County" this combo social event and business/networking seminar is specifically geared to professionals in the rental industry. The intent is to address those tricky questions and concerns that come up repeatedly in our interactions with landlords such as effectively handling problem tenants, satisfying fair housing requirements, and reasonably accommodating people with disabilities. This is a tremendous opportunity to get the answers you need from the experts and network with other landlords. A similar event in Bucks County two years ago was a smashing success.

(continued on page 6)

FAIR HOUSING – IT'S NOT AN OPTION, IT'S THE LAW.

DID YOU KNOW THAT-

You can't steer families with children to certain units or floors in your building or demand that opposite sex children have separate bedrooms?

People with disabilities have extra protections under fair housing laws?

Per capita charges have been found to have a disparate impact on families with children?

Unless a building or community qualifies as housing for older persons as defined by HUD, it may not discriminate based on familial status?

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 with the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, is called the Fair Housing Act. As a landlord or housing provider it is YOUR responsibility to follow fair housing laws. Pennsylvania also has housing anti-discrimination laws that may apply to you. Here is some basic information about the Fair Housing Act:

What Housing Is Covered?

The Fair Housing Act covers most housing. In some circumstances, the Act exempts owner-occupied buildings with no more than four units, single-family housing sold or rented without the use of a broker, and housing operated by organizations and private clubs that limit occupancy to members.

What Is Prohibited?

It is illegal to take any of the following actions based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or handicap:

- Refuse to rent or sell housing
- Refuse to negotiate for housing
- Make housing unavailable
- Deny a dwelling
- Set different terms, conditions or privileges for sale or rental of a dwelling
- Provide different housing services or facilities
- Falsely deny that housing is available for inspection, sale, or rental
- For profit, persuade owners to sell or rent (blockbusting) or
- Deny anyone access to or membership in a facility or service (such as a multiple listing service) related to the sale or rental of housing
- Threaten, coerce, intimidate or interfere with anyone exercising a fair housing right or assisting others who exercise that right
- Advertise or make any statement that indicates a limitation or preference based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, or handicap. This prohibition against discriminatory advertising applies to single-family and owner-occupied housing that is otherwise exempt from the Fair Housing Act.

Additional Protections for people with disabilities:

Landlords must let a person with a disability make reasonable modifications to their dwelling or common use areas, at their expense, if necessary for the disabled person to use the housing.

Landlords can not refuse to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices or services if necessary for the disabled person to use the housing.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY LANDLORD RECEPTION

Sponsored by members of the Montgomery County Housing Coalition, the Montgomery County Office of Housing and Community Development, the Apartment Association of Greater Philadelphia, and the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County

Highlights

- √ Panel of Industry Experts
- √ **Free** legal advice
- √ Get the facts; dispel the myths
- √ Learn about the impact of fair housing laws on landlord tenant relations

PLEASE JOIN US AT THE
WESTOVER COUNTRY CLUB
401 SOUTH SCHUYLKILL AVENUE
JEFFERSONVILLE, PA 19043
610-539-4500

THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2006
FROM 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
HORS D'OEUVRES AND REFRESHMENTS

SPEAKERS BEGIN AT 6:30 PM

SEATING IS LIMITED
RESERVATION REQUIRED
FREE EVENT
DOOR PRIZES!!

Register by returning this form by fax or mail to:

Landlord Reception Committee
105 E. Glenside Avenue
Suite E
Glenside PA 19038
FAX 215-576-1509

Call 215.576.7711, ext. 10 for more information

Names:

Apartment Community:

Address:

Phone Number:

No. of attendees:

FAIR HOUSING EVENTS IN THE REGION

April 6th, 2006

50th Anniversary of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission

9:30 educational forum followed by luncheon

Wyndam Franklin Plaza Hotel

Philadelphia PA

For information Call 215.684.1008

April 7th, 2006

Fair Housing—Its Not an Option—It's the Law,

Celebrating the 38th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act

US Department of Housing and Urban Development

9:00 am to 12:00 noon

Free Event, Courtyard at the Marriott

21 Juniper Street, Philadelphia

April 12, 2006

Delaware Valley Regional Fair Housing Collaborative

Featured Speaker: **Alexander Polikoff**, author of *Waiting for Gautreaux*, followed by panel discussion and book signing

8:30 am to noon

Union League, 140 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA

Free Event, RSVP by April 11, 2006 by Calling 215. 545.6010

April 27th, 2006

Montgomery County Landlord Event

Free Event with industry experts to discuss landlord tenant, fair housing and county housing programs

Westover Country Club

Jeffersonville, PA

6 pm -9pm

Registration Required (see page 3 for more details and registration form)

May 5th, 2006

Suburban Philadelphia—Symposium on Predatory Lending

Local and National Advocates on hand to discuss predatory lending issues impacting homeowners and consumers

Sponsored by Don't Borrow Trouble of Suburban Philadelphia

Valley Forge Convention Center

8:30am —3:30 pm

For more information Call 610.380.7111

In Brief

REPORT ON HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HURRICANE KATRINA SURVIVORS

The National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) recently released a report documenting significant incidence of housing discrimination against African-American persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina. NFHA also announced the filing of five race-based housing discrimination complaints against rental housing complexes located in Dallas, Texas; Birmingham, Alabama; and Gainesville, Florida. These complaints, filed with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), are based on evidence uncovered by testing conducted in seventeen cities.

These are the first in a series of complaints to be filed against apartment complexes throughout the South and Southwest because rental managers denied housing or gave untruthful information to African-Americans who identified themselves as people displaced by Hurricane Katrina. The report is available at www.nationalfairhousing.org.

DISCRIMINATION AT EVERY STEP

A HUD study, *Discrimination Against Persons With Disabilities - Barriers at Every Step*, showed people with disabilities are often discriminated against when trying to rent apartments. Highlights of the study include:

- Deaf people using the TTY system to inquire about advertised rental units were refused service in one out of four calls.
- People with disabilities are frequently denied their requests for reasonable modification and reasonable accommodation
- Both wheelchair users and deaf people using the TTY system received significantly less encouragement to pursue a rental agreement
- Nearly 20 % of housing providers refused to make the reasonable accommodation of providing a designated accessible parking space for a wheelchair user.

IN FIRST EVER RULING, COURT FINDS EVICTION DUE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONSTITUTES SEX DISCRIMINATION UNDER FAIR HOUSING LAW

In *Bouley v. Young-Sabourin*, the ACLU Women's Rights Project co-counseled with Vermont Legal Aid in a case in which the plaintiff was evicted after her husband attacked her and was arrested. The judge ruled that because women are most often the victims of domestic violence, the protection against sex discriminator is applicable. The ruling is important because women who experience domestic violence often become homeless as well. More details of the case can be found at the www.aclu.org.

CRAIGSLIST SUED OVER HOUSING AD BIAS


A Chicago fair housing group has filed a groundbreaking suit alleging that the web site Craigslist published discriminatory advertisements.

The suit is part of an emerging attempt by housing watchdogs nationally to hold online classified sites to the same strict standards as the publishers of print classifieds, such as newspapers.


The suit is potentially significant because it suggests that the rules for an Internet site should be the same as for a traditional publisher, in which every ad should be vetted to conform with the law. But that notion contradicts the way the Internet has blossomed, where informal communities tend to police themselves and free expression is valued.


Among the ads cited in the suit: "Non-women of Color NEED NOT APPLY"; "African Americans and Arabians tend to clash with me so that won't work out"; and "Requirements: Clean Godly Christian Male."


Resources for Landlords


-  www.fairhousingmontco.org – web site of the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County – fair housing information, contact to arrange individual or group fair housing training.


-  www.hud.gov/fairhousing – web site for fair housing and other housing related resources, contains downloadable “equal housing opportunity” logos and HUD fair housing posters.


-  www.phrc.state.pa.us. – PA. Human Relations Commission web site, resource for landlords on PA. Anti-discrimination laws, responsibilities of owners of real property and real estate agents.


-  www.fairhousing.com – the National Fair Housing Advocate, timely news stories on issue of housing discrimination and HUD resources.

-  www.fairhousinglaw.org—the Leadership Council’s website on fair housing laws and PSA materials

-  www.fairhousingfirst—web site for fair housing instruction, resources, and technical support on accessibility requirements

-  www.usdoj.gov—guidance issued by HUD and DOJ about reasonable accommodations for disabled, in FAQ format

-  www.nmhc.org—National Multi Housing Council website—FAQ about disabled

-  [What “Fair Housing” Means for People with Disabilities](#), Bazelon Center, A guide for consumer, advocates and landlords.

-  [Fair Housing Guide](#)—24 page fair housing training guide for landlords and housing providers, 215-576-7711

Landlord Reception—continued from page 1

And thanks to the generous sponsorship of public and private backers, the event is **FREE** for landlords although you must **register to attend**.

Set at the lovely Westover, it begins with a “happy half-hour” of hors d’oeuvres/refreshments and socializing from 6:00–6:30 PM. Then the program starts promptly at 6:30 with presentations by a carefully selected panel of experts who have the answers you want - including an experienced private attorney and a local district justice who both deal extensively with landlord-tenant issues, the director of the Fair Housing Council, a regional representative from HUD, the director of a transitional housing program, and one or two tenants telling their story. We are expecting Senator Jim Gerlach to join us with the latest legislative updates on housing issues. There will also be resource tables choc-full of information to take home as well.

Following the presentations we will open the floor for some spirited discussions and questions from the audience – what’s on YOUR mind? Come enjoy a nice evening while obtaining practical advice about relevant legal issues, best practices, and industry trends.

Stick around until the end and we will have a drawing for great door prizes. Register for this event using the form on page 3– return by fax or mail.



SEE YOU THERE!!

Help us continue the fight against discrimination and exclusion. Make a contribution!

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

CASE UPDATES

Here is a sampling of fair housing cases the FHCMC has recently been involved with:

FHCMC v. Melrose Station and First Montgomery Group. The Council filed a complaint at HUD and in court based upon a series of tests conducted over a 12 month period that found evidence of race discrimination.

Stackhouse v. Zuber Realty, The Council assisted Mr. Stackhouse in filing a complaint at the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission based upon a lease termination due to disability. The case was settled at PHRC and Mr. Stackhouse was able to renew his lease for a 12 month period.

Morgan Properties, Inc. a company who owns and manages apartment communities with nearly 14,000 units in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Maryland, South Carolina, Virginia and Nebraska agreed to change their policy requiring SSN for all applicants, and will now accept alternative forms of identification for applicants who do not have a SSN. The change came after the Council intervened on behalf of an individual from India who is in the U.S. on a work visa but had been denied the opportunity to rent a unit at a Morgan Property because his wife did not have a SSN.

Johnson V. Regina Dougherty, Attorney Art Haywood represented Ms. Johnson in this familial status complaint. Ms. Johnson had been denied the opportunity to rent an apartment because of her 18 month old daughter. Testing conducted by the FHCMC confirmed familial status discrimination. The case eventually settled and the landlord, who owns a small number of units, had to pay monetary damages to Ms. Johnson.



Fair Housing Council of
Montgomery County
105 E. Glenside Ave., Suite E
Glenside, PA 19038

www.fairhousingmontco.org

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1078

In This Issue... *Landlord Reception—April 27th, 2006*

FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL AWARDED THREE YEAR GRANT

The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development recently awarded the Council \$810,000 for a three year Fair Housing enforcement project in Montgomery County and the Philadelphia region. The Council was fortunate to be one of the small number of fair housing organizations across the country to be awarded a three year grant.

Among the activities the grant will fund is fair housing complaint intake and investigations and testing to uncover housing discrimination in the region. The Council also assists individual victims in filing complaints to seek monetary damages and other remedies to fight discrimination.

The Council is partnering with Liberty Resources, Disabled In Action, Ceiba and Accion Comunal Latino Americana de Montgomery County, as well as numerous community based support agencies, to spread the word about housing discrimination and refer complaints for enforcement at HUD/PHRC or in court. The Council will have staff on site at a satellite office at LRI weekly and now offers a toll free hotline - 866.576.1968.