



NEWS FROM HOME

Fall 2010

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Accessibility in New Multifamily Buildings

Discrimination comes in many forms, some subtle and some blatant. Since 1988, the Fair Housing Act has prohibited discrimination based on disability. For instance, a landlord may not refuse to rent to someone because of their disability. However, if you cannot get in the front door because of physical barriers, you are just as effectively denied housing. Recognizing that lack of accessibility was a form of discrimination, Congress established design and construction standards for new multifamily buildings constructed after March 1991. Whether the multifamily building is low-income rental or luxury condominiums, it must meet minimum accessibility standards.

Although the accessibility standards have been in place for 20 years, HOME is finding newly constructed buildings in the Cincinnati area that effectively keep out people in wheelchairs because of structural barriers.

The barriers may be steps at the entrance or doorways inside the units that are too narrow for someone

in a wheelchair to get through. (The standards say the doorways should have at least 32 inches of open space.) Other problems are bathrooms or kitchens that are too small for someone in a chair to use. In luxury buildings, trendy kitchen islands may limit access to appliances.

HOME currently has two cases pending with HUD against the architects and developers of newly constructed buildings that do not meet the accessibility standards. The developers always ask, "Why didn't the building inspectors catch these problems?" That is an excellent question and HOME is working to train local inspectors on the requirements.

However, the question still remains, why after 20 years are architects still designing buildings that keep people with disabilities out?

What's wrong with this picture?



The main entrance of The Lofts in Oakley has steps that make it impossible for someone in a wheelchair to enter. The Fair Housing Act requires that multifamily buildings constructed after 1991 be accessible.

Sexual Harassment Cases

HOME is receiving an increasing number of calls from women who report sexual harassment by landlords or property managers. The women report threats of eviction if they do not give in to sexual demands and men who use the manager's key to walk in on them at late hours with inappropriate behavior. Sexual harassment is a type of discrimination and is illegal discrimination under the Fair Housing Act.

HOME recently assisted several women in filing sexual harassment complaints with HUD against Cincinnati landlord Henry Bailey and Sadison Investments property manager, John Smalls. Anyone who experiences sexual harassment by a landlord or property management company employee should call HOME and talk with a Client Services Specialist.

2010 Annual Meeting

HOME held its 42nd Annual Meeting September 23, 2010, at the Cincinnati Museum Center. Before dinner, guests had the opportunity to visit the Museum's traveling exhibit, "America I Am: The African American Imprint." Keynote speaker was Dr. Gregory Williams, President of the University of Cincinnati. Dr. Williams also signed copies of his autobiography, "Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy who Discovered he was Black."



The hardworking Annual Meeting Committee, HOME Board members Michelle Stacy, Sibcy Cline Realtors; Frank Bowen, Dean of Students, University of Cincinnati, and HOME Board President Harold Jones, State Farm Insurance.



HOME staff members (L) LaTanya Springs, Teresita Lewis, and Bill Hanks



Left to right: Dr. Gregory Williams, President, University of Cincinnati and keynote speaker; Judge Nathaniel Jones, Honorary Co-Chair; Marian Spencer, widow of award recipient Donald Spencer; Celia Irvine, daughter of award recipient Karla Irvine, and Civil Rights attorney Al Gerhardstein who presented the Founders Award.

She Remembered HOME in Her Will

Former HOME Executive Director Karla Irvine passed away earlier this year. Karla suffered through some hard financial times and struggled to find funding to keep HOME's services available to people in housing crisis. There were years when she had to lay off much needed staff because of lack of funding.



She understood better than anyone how shaky the funding is for small nonprofits that rely on grant funding to keep the doors open. Karla was not a wealthy woman, but she had retirement savings that unfortunately she did not live long enough to use. Several years ago she included HOME in her

will and recently we received a \$100,000 bequest from Karla Irvine's estate. The money is being set aside as a contingency fund to insure against the risk of a gap in funding.

Estate planning is important for everyone; we never know what the future may bring. Please consider joining Karla in remembering HOME in your will.



Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame

Karla Irvine, Executive Director of HOME for 27 years, was inducted into the Ohio Civil Rights Hall of Fame in a ceremony at the Statehouse in Columbus. Karla retired from HOME in 2004 and passed away earlier this year. HOME Board member, Marian Spencer, was also inducted in the Hall of Fame in recognition of her life-long work in civil rights.

Housing Discrimination on the Internet

The Fair Housing Act clearly prohibits discriminatory advertising. Newspapers carefully monitor the ads they publish and professional real estate companies review and advise sales and leasing agents on acceptable advertising content. However, with the rise of Internet advertising, some housing providers openly tell the world they intend to discriminate. Even trained agents sometimes get carried away by the informality of Internet communication and start describing what type of person the property "is perfect for," in the process discouraging families who don't meet that profile and violating the Fair Housing laws.

Internet advertising is of particular concern because the Internet amplifies the discriminatory statement, literally sending it around the world, and telling others that it is OK to discriminate. It also effectively screens out and steers people based on their race, religion, and family status. HOME has taken action against people posting ads specifying Christian tenants, ads that say "no kids," and one person who advertised on Craigslist that "I don't allow blacks in my house."

Fair Housing Outreach Available

Phil Spangler is the new Fair Housing Outreach Worker. He is a recent graduate of the University of Cincinnati, College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning, and is an AmeriCorps Public Ally. Give him a call if you are interested in a presentation on housing rights. Phil is available to speak to consumer groups, in classrooms or parent meetings, and at case worker staff meetings. He will address the specific concerns of the audience, whether it is housing for people with disabilities or discrimination against families with children. Call him at 513-721-4663



Philip Spangler
Public Ally

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Your United Way Agency Partner

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