

# fa=r HOUSING CENTER

of SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN

we provide  
advice,  
advocacy,  
conciliation,  
attorney referral,  
and  
community  
education

september 2009

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Serving Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe and Washtenaw counties

## FHC Expands to 3 New Counties

Thanks to a new grant, the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan (FHC) now provides services in Ingham, Jackson and Livingston counties. The 3-year grant funded under the *HUD Fair Housing Initiatives Program - Performance Based Funding Component (FHIP-PBFC)* allows us to formally expand our enforcement area. We started by hiring Jasmine Cooper, our new Assistant Coordinator of Investigations, adding a toll-free number, and running ads in six area newspapers. To accommodate our growth we needed more space. So, after 17 years on the 3rd floor of the Legal Services building, we moved in April 2009 to our new office in the Kerrytown area of Ann Arbor. The new grant began in December of 2008.

**The Fair Housing Center wishes to thank all of the members and friends who came out to our Grand Opening on Friday, May 15th 2009. We had a wonderful time welcoming you to our new office. We are especially grateful to our guest speaker of the evening, Assistant Attorney for the US Department of Justice, Judy Levy. Deep appreciation to *eve-the restaurant, Everyday Wines, Sparrow Market and Produce, and Zingerman's Creamery* for helping to provide a delectable spread for our guests.**



Photos from the FHC Open House, listed top to bottom: 1) Clifford Schrupp, Executive Director of the FHC-Metropolitan Detroit, and Judy Levy, Assistant Attorney for the Department of Justice; 2) Ruth Kraut, Special Projects Coordinator FHC, and Jasmine Cooper, Assistant Coordinator of Investigations FHC; 3) FHC Board Member Paul Haynes and his wife, FHC member Janet Johnson-Haynes.

## cases settled

### Abrams v Adams

Ypsilanti

Mitch Abrams and Sue Dible accepted \$20,000 to settle a familial status discrimination case against the owner of an apartment building in

Ypsilanti, Michigan. Mr. Abrams contacted the Fair Housing Center to complain that his family was not accepted as tenants in the apartment building known as "Scott's House Apartments" located at 116 Perrin Street near Eastern Michigan University. Mr. Abrams and Ms. Dible suspected discrimination. Testing by the FHC produced evidence that supported their claim of discrimination. At the time of the complaint, their six-month-old son, Logan had a medical condition that prompted them to seek smoke-free housing. Scott's House Apartments are advertised as "non-smoking." Initially Ms. Dible and Mr. Abrams asked the FHC to contact the owner and settle the case without litigation. The owner, John W. Adams, told FHC staff that if he rented to families with kids "all my students would move out" and "all I have is students in there." When negotiations failed, the family opted for litigation. FHC Cooperating Attorney Jonathan G. Weber filed the case, which was assigned to Federal District Judge Victoria A. Roberts. Testing for this complaint was funded in part by Washtenaw County.

**Court: Federal Settlement: \$20,000**



Logan Abrams, Sue Dible, Mitch Abrams, and Mitchell Abrams.

### Simpson v Arbor Apartments

Ann Arbor

"...because we have only 1 bedroom apartments, there are no children." This illegal ad was found on the website of Arbor Apartments after Dawn Simpson told the FHC that an Arbor Apartments' agent said that she and her toddler son could not share a one-bedroom apartment. Testing evidence supported the claim of discrimination based on familial status. The FHC found that on multiple occasions the rental agents told testers that the City of Ann Arbor prohibits a parent with a child to rent a one-bedroom apartment.



Dawn Simpson and son Zander Davis

Testers were told "they [the units] aren't big enough, and no children are allowed. It's an Ann Arbor ordinance;" "it's pretty quiet because there are no kids;" "they [the units] are all one-bedrooms so there are no children or dogs;" "we have a no-children policy." Ms. Simpson accepted \$15,000 to settle the case against Allmand Properties--owners of Arbor Apartments. The case was filed by FHC Cooperating Attorney Jonathan G. Weber. Ms. Simpson's case was assigned to Federal District Judge George Caram Steeh. Testing for this complaint was funded in part by the City of Ann Arbor.

**Court: Federal Settlement: \$15,000**

## membership drive

### Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan

You can also donate on our website through: **Network for Good.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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( ) **New Member** -yes, I want become a new member of the Fair Housing Center!

( ) **Renewing Member**

( ) \$40 (membership level)

( ) \$100 (sustaining membership)

( ) \$250 (leading membership)

( ) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Senior citizens or the unemployed may request a waiver/reduction in dues from the FHC Board.

**Your Donation Is Tax Deductible**

### **Newby/Drummonds/FHC v Woodcrest Condominiums**

Monroe

**For the second time**, the Woodcrest Condominium Association and managers Barbara and Allan Diedrich are being sued for alleged violations of state and federal fair housing law. This time prospective condominium buyer James Newby, sellers Sarah and Joshua Drummonds, and the FHC have filed a discrimination suit based on race, familial status, age, and disability against Woodcrest and the Diedrichs. In 2007 Mr. Newby contacted the FHC after the Woodcrest Condominium Board of Directors denied his application. Mr. Newby had already been approved for the mortgage. The lawsuit alleges that Mrs. Diedrich made comments about her perception that Mr. Newby was disabled and that they did not want him there. The Drummonds never found another buyer. The complex, located on John Anderson Court in Monroe, Michigan, was previously sued for housing discrimination in 2000. In that case, pursuant to a consent decree with the US Department of Justice, the defendants attended five years of fair housing training with the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit. The case was filed by FHC Cooperating Attorney Jonathan G. Weber and assigned to Federal District Judge John Corbett O'Meara.

**Court: Federal**

**Status: Open**

### **FHC v Town & Country Apartments**

Pittsfield Township

In 2005 the Fair Housing Center received a complaint of race discrimination and testing supported that claim. When the complainant decided against pursuing the case, the FHC Board of Directors voted to act as plaintiff. Town & Country Apartments was also sued in 2003 for discrimination based on race. After the 2003 case settled, FHC Cooperating Attorney Steve Tomkowiak wrote to opposing counsel suggesting fair housing training for the staff of the 97-unit apartment complex located near the corner of Packard and Carpenter Road. His letter stated:

*"I was not exaggerating when I indicated to your office some time ago that the testing results in the above case were the second worst instance of fair housing violations I have seen in over ten years of handling fair housing and fair lending cases involving testing evidence."*

Based on the recent testimony of the owners at deposition, no fair housing training was ever provided to any Town & Country rental agents. Mr. Tomkowiak filed the case in Federal Court on behalf of the Fair Housing Center in January 2007. The case is assigned to Judge Avern Cohn.

**Court: Federal**

**Status: Trial begins September 8, 2009**

## fhc news

### **FHC Welcomes Assistant Coordinator of Investigations**

We are pleased to announce the hiring of Jasmine K. Cooper as the Assistant Coordinator of Investigations at FHC as of March 2009. Jasmine is a cum laude graduate of Eastern Michigan University, where she majored in African-American studies.

After college, she worked with Change to Win's Retail Pharmacy Campaign. While fighting for the fair treatment of pharmacy workers, she investigated redlining and discriminatory practices against low-income communities as perpetrated by one of the largest companies in that industry. In addition to her work at the FHC, she is pursuing a doctoral degree in African-American studies at Michigan State University. Jasmine lives in Ypsilanti, with her husband DuJuan Jackson.



*Jasmine K. Cooper, personal photo*

### **FHC Intern**

In 2008, University of Michigan law student Liz Elkiss worked as an intern for the FHC. Liz contacted us after taking a course on fair housing law and policy taught by Judy Levy and Saul Green. While interning at the FHC she

helped investigate sexual harassment cases. One case is currently in litigation. After graduation she worked as the Regional Get-Out-The-Vote Director for Oakland County, Michigan for the Obama campaign. Liz is currently working in Washington, DC as an attorney at the law firm Hogan & Hartson.



*Liz Elkiss, personal photo*



## Housing Advocates Training, Lansing, October 6 & 8

This two day training in Lansing features information on fair housing, landlord/tenant law, housing subsidy programs and a welfare policy seminar. This is a fantastic resource for anyone working as an advocate. For more information, visit our website at [www.fhcmichigan.org/hat](http://www.fhcmichigan.org/hat) or call us toll-free at **(877) 979-FAIR**. Registration is required.

## FHC = Good Investment in Justice!

Since 1992 the Fair Housing Center has investigated over 2,000 fair housing complaints with total settlements and conciliations of over \$1,400,000. Our services are offered free of charge. Supporting our work at the FHC is a good investment in justice--for every \$1 used to run the FHC, \$0.78 cents has been recovered in FHC-aided settlements. Right now we have hundreds of files that need our attention. While we can't make any promises to these families, we try to investigate every case. *You can help us take on this important work by making a tax-deductible donation to the FHC today.* Your support will help provide the testing, research, advocacy, advice, and attorney referrals needed to assist victims of illegal housing discrimination. *Thank you.*



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### Did you know?

The top three types of complaints at the FHC are related to:

- Race
- Disability
- Familial Status

## board of directors

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 Kristen J. Cuhran, *Coordinator of Investigations*  
 Jasmine K. Cooper, *Assistant Coordinator of Investigations*  
 Ruth L. Kraut, *Special Projects Coordinator*

Photography by Kristen J. Cuhran, unless otherwise noted.