

(http://ads.mlive.com/RealMedia/ads/click_lx.ads/ann-arbor.mlive.com/news/1394193318/FrameTile1/MICHIGANLIVE/default/empty.gif/5936706d4331484e385a384142546759)

(http://ads.mlive.com/RealMedia/ads/click_lx.ads/ann-arbor.mlive.com/news/1015225030/ImpactAd/MICHIGANLIVE/default/empty.gif/5936706d4331484e385a384142546759)

Rights group lands \$39.5K settlement after calling out Scio Farms Estates' policies as discriminatory

By AMY BIOLCHINI (/USERS/PROFILE/?UID=78151) County, health and environment reporter

Posted on Fri, Jun 28, 2013 : 5:57 a.m.

In an out-of-court settlement, **Scio Farms Estates** (<http://www.suncommunities.com/scio-farms/>) and its parent company have paid out \$39,500 after a rights group claimed the manufactured home community was enforcing its policies in a way that discriminated against people with developmental disabilities.

(http://ads.mlive.com/RealMedia/ads/click_lx.ads/ann-arbor.mlive.com/news/758066335/StoryAd/MICHIGANLIVE/default/empty.gif/5936706d4331484e385a384142546759)

Scio Farms Estates, at 6655 Jackson Road, in Scio Township, is owned by **Sun Community Homes** (<http://www.suncommunities.com/>), a national organization based in Southfield. Homes in the community can be leased or purchased by tenants.

A complaint lodged against Scio Farms Estates and its parent organization with the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development** claimed the company violated the federal **Fair Housing Act**. (http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/FHLaws/yourrights)

Renaissance Community Homes (<https://www.rchi.org/>), based in Milan, is a nonprofit organization that helps people who are developmentally disabled or mentally ill to find housing and live independently.

Developmental disabilities (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/developmentaldisabilities.html>) typically are long-term and severe issues that can be physical, like blindness, or affect mental ability, like learning disorders. They also can affect them in both ways, like Down syndrome. (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/downsyndrome.html>)

The organization had attempted to house several developmentally disabled adults in homes at Scio Farms Estates in 2011.

The lease applications were denied by Scio Farms twice for two different reasons: The first time because the person signing the lease would not be living there, and a second time, because the payer of the lease (Renaissance Community Homes) would not be living in the home, said **Pam Kisch**, executive director of the **Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan**. (<http://www.fhcmichigan.org/>)

Kisch said the way in which Scio Farms Estates was enforcing their policies made it impossible for people with developmental disabilities to live on the property.

Renaissance Community Homes then contacted the Fair Housing Center, a nonprofit organization that investigates complaints from people who feel their civil rights have been violated in the rental, sale or financing of housing. In the past 20 years, the center has filed about 75 lawsuits and garnered \$1.7 million in settlements for its clients.

After sending several individuals to investigate the policies at Scio Farms Estates, the staff at the Fair Housing Center found several discrepancies in policy application.

In one instance, a woman working for the Fair Housing Center posed as a student seeking a home from Scio Farms and told them her parents would be co-signing the lease, even though they lived out of state, Kisch said.

Scio Farms Estates granted the student the lease, Kisch said.

"(Their policy) was not applied equally," Kisch said.

The Fair Housing Center and Renaissance Community Homes then filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development against Scio Farms Estates.



The manufactured home community Scio Farms Estates in 2005 at 6655 Jackson Rd. in Scio Township.

Alan Warren | The Ann Arbor News file photo

A settlement agreement was signed May 16 out-of-court between the complainants. Kisch said she didn't announce the settlement had been reached until the settlement check had been delivered late this month.

Sun Community Homes was ordered to pay out \$30,000 to Renaissance Community Homes and \$9,500 to the Fair Housing Center, which the organization will use to monitor Sun Community Homes for fair housing compliance during the next year.

They'll also have to develop training for its staff on fair housing issues and to amend its policies.

Sun Community Homes did not respond to requests for comment Thursday.



Tags: Renaissance Community Homes ([/tag/Renaissance Community Homes/](#)), Scio Farms Estates ([/tag/Scio Farms Estates/](#)), Sun Community Homes ([/tag/Sun Community Homes/](#)),



Amy Biolchini covers Washtenaw County, health and environmental issues for AnnArbor.com. Reach her at (734) 623-2552, amybiolchini@annarbor.com (<mailto:amybiolchini@annarbor.com>) or on Twitter (http://twitter.com/amywrites_).

[\(/users/profile/?UID=78151\)](#)