

FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF WASHTENAW COUNTY



PO BOX 7825 • ANN ARBOR, MI 48107 • (313) 994-3426

\$32,500 Settles Race Discrimination Case

Sharon Lewis and Tyrone Tillison have accepted \$32,500 to settle a race discrimination suit against Williamsburg Village Apartments in Lyon Township, Michigan.

In April, 1995 Lewis, a white woman, contacted Fair Housing Center Cooperating Attorney Michael J. Steinberg about her housing discrimination claim. Steinberg referred the case to the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County for investigation. Lewis planned to share the apartment

with Tillison, her African-American boyfriend and their five-year-old son Phillip.

On the day Lewis moved in (Tillison was to join her ten days later), according to the law suit: manager Elizabeth Bell asked Lewis what nationality her "husband" was. When Lewis asked why, Elizabeth Bell responded that Lewis' son Phillip was "kind of dark." Lewis told Bell that her boyfriend (Phillip's father)

(Continued inside)



Sharon Lewis, Alissa, Phillip and Tyrone Tillison

Camelot Settlement Goes to Fairchild & FHC

The Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County and Margaret Fairchild (formerly Margaret Shannon), settled their law suit against Camelot Apartments in Ypsilanti Township for \$36,500. Fairchild, who accepted \$15,000, told the FHC she was very pleased with the settlement. "I didn't care about the money, I just wanted them to

learn that they can't treat people like they treated me." The settlement also included \$2,500 (plus interest) for the Fair Housing Center and \$19,000 in attorneys fees.

Fairchild contacted the FHC in April 1993 to report that she was denied a one-bedroom apartment and told that state law requires a child to have his

or her own bedroom. At the time Fairchild was a single parent with one child and could not afford a two bedroom apartment.

The Camelot Apartments application contained the printed statement: "one person or one couple per bedroom." Testing conducted by the Fair Housing Center supported the

claim of discrimination against families with children.

According to the suit, Camelot Apartments denied Fairchild and her then four-year-old son the opportunity to rent a one bedroom apartment and also "made, printed and published notices and statements with respect to the rental of the

(Continued inside)

OCTOBER 1996

Cases Filed

Pryor v Woodland Meadows

Carol Pryor, a woman with a disability, contacted the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County to report that she needed a second hand rail installed on the stairs in her Woodland Meadows townhouse. When the landlord failed to provide the rail, Pryor asked to be let out her lease. According to

Pryor, Woodland Meadows said she could break her lease. Pryor told FHC staff that she was later billed for over \$3,000. Cooperating Attorney Tinamarie Pappas of Rose, Weber and Pappas filed the case in Washtenaw County Circuit Court. The case is assigned to Judge Timothy P. Connors.

Schwabb v Pattengill

Alissa Schwabb rents a condominium at Pattengill Condominiums in Ann Arbor. Schwabb went to the City of Ann Arbor Human Rights Department to report harassment and an eviction based on familial status. Schwabb lives with her three children ages eight, eleven, and thirteen. The Ann Arbor Human Rights Department staff conducted an investigation and referred the case to the Fair Housing Center.

Cooperating Attorney Richard McHugh and co-counsel Michael Gatti, from Legal Services of Southeastern

Michigan are defending Schwabb in the eviction proceedings and have filed a counterclaim in Washtenaw County Circuit Court alleging violations of the Federal Fair Housing Act and the Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. The complex is managed by Charles Reinhart Company. Schwabb is suing Reinhart along with the Pattengill Condominium Association Board President, a Board member and a resident. The eviction case and the fair housing claim have been consolidated and are assigned to Judge William Shelton.

(Camelot Settlement continued from page 1)



Margaret Fairchild with son Thomas, in 1993 at the time the case was filed.

dwelling that indicate preference, limitations and discrimination based on familial status."

Fairchild and the FHC were represented by Fair Housing Center Cooperating Attorneys Sarah J. Stitt and Steve Dane of Cooper, Walinski & Cramer. Filed in Federal Court, the case was

assigned to Judge George La Platta.

This is the first time the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County has joined a fair housing suit. The 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Havens Realty Corp. v. Coleman* upheld the right of fair housing organizations to sue under the Federal Fair Housing Act.

(Lewis/Tillison continued from page 1)

was Black. Elizabeth Bell then told Lewis that Phillip's father could not live at Williamsburg Village Apartments and that there were no Blacks in the area. Bell then told Lewis that only two people were allowed in a two-bedroom apartment.

A few months later Lewis received a letter from owner Richard Perry threatening to evict the Lewis/Tillison family unless Tyrone Tillison moved out. Testing conducted by the Fair Housing Center supported Lewis' claim of discrimination based on race. White testers

were told about available two bedroom apartments while African-American testers were told that no two bedroom units were open.

Michael J. Steinberg filed suit on behalf of Lewis in U.S. District Court. The suit alleged violations of the Federal Fair Housing Act and Michigan Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. The case was assigned to Judge Denise Page Hood. Total FHC-Washtenaw aided settlements now exceed \$270,000.

You are Invited...

FHC Annual Meeting

Tuesday October 29, 1996

6pm - Dinner

7pm - Membership Meeting,
Board of Directors Election

Wesley Room of the First Methodist Church
602 E. Huron at State St. Ann Arbor, Michigan

*The FHC needs testers,
especially MEN ages 18-35.*

FHC Sponsors *Pledge Against the Klan*

When the Ku Klux Klan announced they were coming to Ann Arbor on June 22, 1996, the FHC asked community members to pledge money to civil rights organizations for every minute the Klan had a presence at City Hall. The longer the Klan stayed the more money would go to support civil rights.

At the rate of over \$82 per minute we raised over \$2,800. Many of you generously

sent in more money than originally pledged. The funds went to support the Ann Arbor Community Center, NAACP and the Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County.

When the next hate group comes to town we'll need more than *The Pledge*. The Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice is organizing toward a creative, community-wide response to racism. For more information call ICPI at 663-1870.



Thank you to Kristine Seifert and Tobi Hanna-Davies. Each pledged \$10.00 a minute. The Klan stayed 47 minutes—making each pledge worth \$470.00.

Thank you to the following people and businesses!

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| aut BAR | Donna Estabrook | Karla Lopez | Susan Priller/Alan Grover |
| Lisa Bardach | Janine Easter | April Lasker | Ellen Rabinowitz/
Dave DeVarti |
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| Common Language Bookstore | Rebecca Kanner | Rev. Kenneth and Jane Phifer | Laura Spencer |
| Francis and Shirley Daly | Herbert Katz | Linnie Philpot | G. Keith Taylor |
| Tobi Hanna-Davies | Jan Katz | Deborah Pilutti | Rev. Lewis W. Towler |
| Patrica Vereen-Dixon | Lawrence Kestenbaum | D.D. Pippins | Jonathan Weber |
| Joan Doman | Pam Kisch | Cynthia Pletz | Monica Weinheimer |
| Mary Beth Doyle | Chris Kolb | Richard Plewa | Christa and John Williams |
| Judith Duboff | Marek Krzyzowski | Peggy Plews/Tim Benjamin | Lloyd and Nancy Williams |
| Grace and Peter Duren | Marian Krzyzowski | Blanche Price | Janet Wright |
| Johan and Frances Eliot | | | Derek Yip-Hoi |

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Thank You Linda Willis



Intern Linda Willis answers the phone at the FHC office. Linda worked with FHC staff over the summer and is now back in school working on a Masters degree in Social Work at the University of Michigan.



The Fair Housing Center Needs Testers

As the number of fair housing complaints grows, our need for testers also increases. If you or someone you know would like to be trained as a tester please contact the Fair Housing Center at 994-3426.

FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF WASHTENAW COUNTY

PO Box 7825
Ann Arbor, MI 48107

Don't Miss Our Annual Meeting Tuesday, October 29!

See inside for details

