

North Dakota Fair Housing Council

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BOARD OPENINGS

The North Dakota Fair Housing Council (NDFHC) is seeking applicants for vacant Board of Director positions. If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact Amy at 1-888-265-0907 or 701-221-2530. There is a short application to be completed for Board review. The Board meets quarterly and member travel expenses are reimbursed if they live outside of Bismarck, ND.

The NDFHC has been fighting housing discrimination in North Dakota since 1995 and in 2003 also began providing services in South Dakota. Federal and/or state fair housing laws state that it is illegal to discriminate in the rental, sale or financing of housing due to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, presence of children, age (40 and over) and status with respect to marriage and public assistance.

In North Dakota, discrimination in housing

most often occurs to people with disabilities, families with children and minorities. In 2003 in North Dakota, the NDFHC assisted in filing 25 complaints of housing discrimination due to discrimination against 47 protected classes. The NDFHC also initiates lawsuits on behalf of aggrieved individuals when necessary.

MAYOR'S TOWN HALL MEETING HELD

On July 21st, 2004 in Bismarck, the Bismarck Mayor's Committee on Human Relations and the North Dakota Fair Housing Council sponsored the second in a series of Mayor's Town Hall Meetings on race and national origin discrimination. The meeting was very well received despite such a busy time of the year. The event received over 35 endorsements from local and state organizations.

Additional meetings may be held depending upon interest and funding.

A SIGN OF ANOTHER TIME: 'FOR WHITES ONLY'

By Mike Burkett, *West Valley View* staff writer

(PHOENIX-July 14, 2004)

An official with the Arizona Attorney General's Office said her department hadn't encountered such a sight in 50 years.

The director of the federal Housing and Urban Development's Phoenix field office said, "We've never seen

anything like it. I'm amazed, just amazed."

Both were reacting to a pair of signs placed in front of an upscale Waddell home.

The first reads: "For sale by owner."

The second reads: "4 whites only."

The owner of the home did not return repeated telephone calls. But his sign is getting him plenty of attention.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office, which enforces the federal Fair Housing Act and other related statutes, dispatched a photographer to take pictures of the home Monday afternoon, according to Ann Woodley, litigation sections chief of the Civil Rights Division.

And Rebecca Flanagan, director of the HUD Phoenix field office, told the *West Valley View*, "This is blatantly illegal under the Fair Housing Law. HUD will pursue once a complaint is filed. We ... will be in touch with local Fair Housing agencies, Arizona Attorney General and the Phoenix Fair Housing Center."

But first, as Flanagan said, a complaint from a neighbor or passerby must be filed. Until then, neither the Attorney General's Office nor HUD can do anything.

As of midday Tuesday, however, no complaint had been filed.

A sign of another time
Ironically, July 2004 marks the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the nation's most comprehensive civil rights law.

The Fair Housing Act, which was added to the Civil Rights Act

in 1968, was designed to eliminate discrimination in housing based upon an individual's race, color, religion or national origin. The Act was amended in 1974 to prohibit discrimination based on sex, and amended again in 1988 to include the prohibition of discrimination based on handicap or familial status.

In Arizona, according to state law, "A person may not refuse to sell or rent after a bona fide offer has been made or refuse to negotiate for the sale or rental of or otherwise make unavailable or deny a dwelling to any person because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status or national origin."

The statute further states that "A person may not discriminate against any person in the terms, conditions or privileges of sale or rental of a dwelling, or in providing services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental, because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status or national origin."

But before either of these laws can be enforced, a complaint must be filed by someone who is offended, someone who believes such discrimination isn't right, someone who feels discriminated against.

That hasn't happened.

"I haven't seen the sign, but I've heard about it," said Donald Miller, who lives down the street from the home. "It sounds like he might be a little prejudiced. But it doesn't bother me."

"I think it's stupid," said another neighbor, Annie Bosley. "This is 2004, not the 1960s. But it's his house. We can't tell him not to." *Mike*

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DISCRIMINATION IN NORTH DAKOTA

Have you experienced discrimination in North Dakota or know of someone who has? If so, the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition (NDHRC) would like to speak to you. The NDHRC is currently interviewing people in North Dakota who have experienced discrimination to document those experiences. Specifically, the NDHRC is focusing on discrimination occurring to people in the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender community, people of color (including Native Americans and New Americans) and people with disabilities.

The NDHRC is seeking this information to document those experiences to present to the North Dakota Legislature in 2005. The NDHRC is seeking to determine the level of satisfaction of the performance of the North Dakota Department of Labor's Division of Human Rights, the need for a North Dakota Commission on Human Rights, the need for hate crimes legislation in North Dakota and the need to add protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity to the North Dakota Human Rights Act.

For more information, please contact Michael Brown, North Dakota Human Rights Coalition, PO Box 1961, Fargo, ND 58107-1961. Phone: 701-232-2554. Fax: 701-237-0562 Email: michaelbrown@ndhrc.org

UPCOMING MEETINGS OF INTEREST

Upcoming meetings of interest in North Dakota:

August 5, 2004: North Dakota Immigrant Access Forum at the Holiday Inn in Fargo, ND. For more info, contact Anna Spradlin at 303-844-7902.

November 5-6, 2004: North Dakota Human Rights Coalition 2nd Annual Conference. "Human Rights: The Economic Impact of Discrimination." Location: Best Western Ramkota Hotel, 800 South Third Street, Bismarck, ND 58504. For more info, visit www.ndhrc.org

WEB SITE

Be sure to visit the North Dakota Fair Housing Council web site at: www.ndfhc.org

The site contains a large volume of information on fair housing, disability issues, advertising, related links and much, much more.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The North Dakota Fair Housing Council is seeking volunteers to assist in gathering information on alleged discriminatory housing practices. Volunteers are paid a stipend for their time and services and receive training. Please contact Stacy at 1-888-265-0907 or 701-221-2530 if you are interested or want more information.

CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION CHARGED WITH DISCRIMINATING AGAINST PEOPLE WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS

On May 13, 2004, the Justice Department sued a Chicago-area condominium association charging that the association requires residents who use wheelchairs to enter the building through its rear service entrance, even though the

front entrance is fully accessible and the rear entrance abuts a loading dock and garbage dumpsters. The case was originally filed by the parents of a boy with a disability living in the condominium. The Justice Department's suit, which includes a claim that the association has engaged in a pattern or practice of discrimination against persons with disabilities, seeks monetary damages for the plaintiffs and requests that a civil penalty be imposed, along with an order enjoining the association's policy.

"The law demands fair treatment in housing for individuals with disabilities," said R. Alexander Acosta, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "Forcing residents who use wheelchairs to enter their home through the back door is demeaning and far less than they deserve."
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/newsltr0604.htm>

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