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FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN

Opening Doors to Equality and Diversity

"To ensure equal housing opportunity and to educate the community on the value of diversity in our neighborhoods through counseling, investigation, educational programs and preventive trainings."

"Para proteger la igualdad en las oportunidades de vivienda y educar a la comunidad acerca de la importancia de los vecindarios integrados, por medio de consejería, investigación, programas educativos y entrenamientos de prevención."

Fall 2007



"RUNWAY MARIN" BENEFIT FASHION SHOW

Friday, November 9, 2007 - 11:30
 Embassy Suites Hotel



You are invited to join us for a delightful afternoon luncheon of FUN, FASHION AND FOOD in the First Annual Old Republic Title Company "Runway Marin" to benefit Fair Housing of Marin. Don't miss this fabulous show of spring fashions by famous designers. The event is sponsored by Citibank, AT&T, Sterling Savings Bank and The Mechanics Bank among others. For more information, visit ww.runwaymarin.com. See invitation inside. ■

FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN JOINS LAWSUIT AGAINST NATIONAL BUILDER FOR ACCESSIBILITY VIOLATIONS

Fair Housing of Marin joined with fair housing organizations across the country in bringing a housing discrimination lawsuit against A.G. Spanos Companies, a builder of multi-family housing in 16 states. The groups investigated 35 apartment complexes in seven states with more than 10,000 units and found the complexes failed to meet accessibility standards of the Fair Housing Act.

Examples of barriers include no handicap parking spaces, steep slopes, steps instead of ramps, narrow doors and passageways, and inaccessible bathrooms and kitchens. Also noted were environmental controls and electrical outlets beyond the reach of wheelchair users, and inaccessible leasing offices, recreational and entertainment facilities.

We spread the news far and wide so that building professionals are aware of the requirements and have received newspaper, television and radio coverage, including an hour show on "Access Unlimited" on KPFK 90.7 FM radio in LA. ■

THE 2007 POSTER CONTEST "OPEN HEARTS - OPEN NEIGHBORHOODS"



The following artists won prizes in our 2007 Poster Contest: Gracie Ielmorini, Juliana Pereira & Amanda Douglas, Sabrina Caravello & Berkeley Brooks, Gueverly Mendez, Marianna Cabrera, Kristen Haenggi & Lindsay Levine, Lana Marks & Anji Bodony, Will Martel & Adam Libresco, Angel Beltran & Jacinda Price, Desiree Vaughn, Jonathan Dewey, Milton Gallo, Ashley Newman; Staff Prize: Hector Barrios and Zachary Anderson-Jew. The Winners are from the following schools (Grades K-8): Lincoln School, San Domenico School, Kid's Club, Bayside Elementary School, Women Helping All People, Marin Academic Center, Sunny Hills School, Bahia Vista Elementary, and Vallecito School. (More on page 3) ■

JUDY ARNOLD AND SISTER MARION IRVINE TO HEAD FAIR HOUSING'S ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

We are proud to announce that County Supervisor Judy Arnold and Sister Marion Irvine of the Dominican Sisters have agreed to be Co-Chairs of Fair Housing's annual individual fundraising campaign. With Marin Community Foundation cuts a reality, we will not be able to continue some of our programs without your help. Your dollars will be translated into housing counseling, legal seminars, delightful school programs and affordable housing advocacy. No one else in the County is doing this work. Last year we had over a thousand complaints. Watch for our mailing in November and take a personal action for greater social and racial justice in Marin County. Thanks for opening our mail. ■

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It's okay to consider color... as long as it's green.

Judging you by what you look like instead of your qualifications is discrimination. What matters is your ability to pay for housing. It's illegal to consider race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or family status in the sale or rental of housing.

If you suspect unfair housing practices, contact HUD or your local Fair Housing Center. Everyone deserves a fair chance.

FAIR HOUSING IS THE LAW!
 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • 1-800-669-9777 • TDD 1-800-827-8275

No hay problema en tomar en cuenta su color... con tal de que este sea el de su dinero.

La discriminación ocurre cuando lo juzgan a uno por sus aparencias y no por sus capacidades. Lo que importa es su habilidad de pagar el costo de su vivienda. Es contra la ley tomar en cuenta su raza, color, religión, sexo, origen nacional, incapacidad o estado civil al venderle una casa o alquilarle un apartamento.

Si sospecha de prácticas injustas al buscar vivienda, llame a HUD o a su centro local para la vivienda justa. Todos merecemos la misma oportunidad.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COLUMN FALL, 2007

On June 21st, Fair Housing of Marin joined a lawsuit against A.G. Spanos, the fifth largest builder of apartment complexes in the U.S. Our decision grew out of evidence that we found in two Spanos complexes where there were violations of the accessibility requirements of the Fair Housing Act. Our fellow plaintiffs are the National Fair Housing Alliance and fair housing organizations in Atlanta, Georgia, Cocoa, Florida and Napa, California.

Our goal is not to punish Mr. Spanos but to make sure that the required modifications are made to the units so that persons with disabilities will be able to enjoy the apartments to the same extent that able-bodied people now do. We believe that there is a loss to both the community and the individual when a person with a disability is prevented from living with abled-bodied neighbors. The neighborhood is where children learn that not everyone is treated the same.

As you know, Fair Housing of Marin does not file lawsuits often, as the great majority of our cases are mediated. Clients choose what avenue and remedy they want - to mediate, file a HUD complaint or a lawsuit. Nonetheless, Fair Housing stands ready to take legal action when a client wishes to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation or we have strong testing evidence of discriminatory practices. We look for an early resolution of this lawsuit.

I close with a quote from George Washington Carver: "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these." ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

TRAINING SEMINAR

Our popular Fair Housing Law and Practice, a 3-hour seminar for housing industry professionals, will be offered on Thursday, October 18, 1:00- 4:00 PM at the San Rafael Corporate Center, San Rafael. The program is accredited by the CA Department of Real Estate for 4 hours of continuing education units. Pre-registration required. Contact Jane Shandler at jane@fairhousingmarin.com.

STORYTELLER FALL SEASON

Our popular free Storyteller Program for children K to 4, "The Colors of Diversity," returns this fall with Master Storytellers Kirk Waller and Claudia Cuentas. To schedule a performance or for more information, contact Adriana Ames at aames@fairhousingmarin.com.

MAJOR SPANISH TV CAMPAIGN

Look out for our new TV campaign, funded by HUD, to be featured on Univision, KDTV 14. We have created a fabulous commercial to bring the message of Fair Housing to the Spanish speaking community. ■

FOCUS WINI RAGUS

Wini Ragus joined the board of Fair Housing of Marin in 2001 and currently serves as Secretary. She has served with enthusiasm and deep caring in many roles through out the years, giving her time and expertise with a high level of commitment and bringing in her great sense of humor. She has served in the following committees: Human Resources (which she currently chairs), Special Events, and Officer Nomination Committee.



Wini was Senior VP of HR for the last 10 years of her long career with Miller Freeman Publications in San Francisco. Throughout her tenure at that company, she traveled extensively to many offices in the U.S, Europe and Tel Aviv.

Besides FHOM, Wini has volunteered for other organizations like the Job Coach Program where she coached mentally disadvantaged people who sought paid employment. Currently, she is a part of the Masters of Marin Volunteer group, where she matches seniors with volunteer opportunities. Wini has a passion for working with and training people. She loves gardening as well as entertaining and organizing parties. ■

TENANT'S CORNER

Protections for People with Disabilities

How do fair housing laws protect people with disabilities?

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal for housing providers to discriminate against applicants or residents with disabilities or treat people with disabilities less favorably than others because of their disability. Also, housing providers must make reasonable accommodations or allow reasonable modifications for people with disabilities in most cases if they don't impose an undue financial or administrative burden on them.

What is a reasonable accommodation?

It is a practical and feasible change, exception or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice or service that may be necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, including public and common use spaces.

What is a reasonable modification?

It is a physical alteration of the premises that does not interfere with the enjoyment of the unit by the next occupant. ■

2007 POSTER CONTEST FABULOUS COMMENTS FROM POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

- Two girls drew heart shaped shutters, because no one should be shut out of housing.
- Two boys talked about including soccer on their poster because it was an international sport and everyone from all nationalities and genders were welcome. (In their poster, half were boys, half were girls).
- Two girls' drew hundreds of different colored hearts to show lots of love. Their poster says, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."
- One boy said: "Everyone put a piece of their heart into building one house."
- Two girls said: "There was a big heart with all kinds of people in it, and the heart was a door. There are 4 small kids; they are in front of the house because when you're faced with something new, it can be scary, and you like to hold hands with friends." ■

BOARD AND STAFF NEWS

WE WELCOME TWO NEW BOARD MEMBERS:

- Thang Pham is Assistant Vice President at the Wells Fargo Fourth Street branch in San Rafael. Thang, whose family came to the U.S. from Vietnam, previously worked for Wells Fargo in San Francisco and Santa Barbara. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Economics from U.C. Santa Barbara.
- Valrie Joy Williams, who lives in Mill Valley, is a sales and marketing professional and owner of Windfall Financial Group in Mill Valley. Valrie has lived in the U.S. for 34 years, having immigrated from Jamaica, West Indies. She holds an MBA in finance and marketing from Seton Hall University. For the community, Valrie Joy successfully developed funding sources for independent films and children's television.

WE BID A FOND FAREWELL TO TWO RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS:

- Larry Miller, who served as Board President and Chair of our Legal Committee, joined the Board in 1999. Larry was always willing to lend a helping hand. He was active on numerous Board committees and provided free legal advice and assistance many times during his tenure. Larry will continue on the Board's Legal and Finance Committees.
- Yvonne Bush, our Board Treasurer, also joined the Board in 1999. Yvonne brought passion and experience to the Board, having been a victim of housing discrimination herself. Yvonne is a Realtor and a Marketing and Sales Manager. She has been an active member of the Board of Supervisors Task Force on Housing Discrimination, the Marin Interfaith Council, and the Marin African-American Coalition. Yvonne will remain on the Board's Personnel and Finance Committees. ■

2007 POSTER GALLERY "OPEN HEARTS - OPEN NEIGHBORHOODS"



Juliana Pereira & Amanda Douglas, San Domenico School



Guevely Mendez, Kids Club, Canal Area



Angel Beltran & Jacinda Price, Bayside Elementary

A COMMENT FROM MARY JANE BURKE, MARIN COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND MC OF THE POSTER CONTEST AWARDS CEREMONY.

"One of the joys of the Spring is being a part of the Awards Ceremony...I was thinking about what a wonderful world this would be if only we could somehow live with Open Hearts - Open Neighborhoods." ■

FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN 2006-07 FUNDERS

Our heartfelt thanks to the following funders and individuals for their valuable contributions.

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Marin County Community Development
Block Grant Program
Marin County Dispute Resolution Program
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