



# FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN

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615 B Street, San Rafael, CA 94901 ▼ (415) 457-5025 ▼ TDD: (800) 735-2922 ▼ Fax: (415) 457-6382  
www.fairhousingmarin.com ▼ fhom@fairhousingmarin.com

## FAIR HOUSING OF MARIN LAUNCHES ACCESSIBILITY FUND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Contacts: Nancy Kenyon, Executive Director Tel: (415) 457-5025**  
[nancy@fairhousingmarin.com](mailto:nancy@fairhousingmarin.com)

On April 1, Fair Housing of Marin will launch a new three year program, entitled the Spanos Accessibility Fund, designed to help individuals with disabilities who need one-time funding help for modifications or other assistance to make new or current housing accessible. As one of 5 Fair Housing groups in the United States receiving this Fund, Board President Fariba Zolnasr stated how proud the organization is to be part of a national agreement that will benefit thousands of people with disabilities, both locally and across the country.

The Fund is made possible by a grant from the A.G. Spanos Companies, a major national housing developer. Under the agreement, Fair Housing of Marin will receive \$50,000/year for three years to give to persons with disabilities in Marin and Sonoma counties. Examples of improvements include door ramps, door widening, grab bars, lighted door bells for the hearing impaired, security deposits, one-time first month's rent, moving expenses, etc. Priority will be given to extremely low to low-income applicants.

Michael Spanos, Executive Vice President, A.G. Spanos Companies, commented: "The people of the A.G. Spanos Companies are pleased to participate in this important work with Fair Housing of Marin, the Marin Center for Independent Living, and the Disability Services & Legal Center. "We



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hope that the result of our efforts will be improved access to quality housing for Marin and Sonoma County residents with disabilities."

Eli Gelardin, Marin Center for Independent Living Executive Director, will administer the program in Marin County. He noted: "On the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans for Disabilities Act, access continues to be a barrier to people with disabilities in Marin and throughout the Bay Area. This disability fund will improve the independence of our senior and disabled community and will serve as a model for future housing developers as we continue to strive toward universal design."

In Sonoma County, where the program will be administered by the Disability Services & Legal Center (DSLCL), Attorney Adam Brown observed: "We applaud the efforts of Fair Housing of Marin in securing this grant. People with disabilities represent the poorest segment of our population with unemployment rates higher and poverty rates greater than any other sector of our society. Consequently, people with disabilities face tremendous obstacles finding safe, affordable, and accessible housing. These grant monies will help ensure that Sonoma County residents with disabilities secure the assistance they need to get a secure roof over their heads and way to safely get in and out of their homes."

In addition to the new Fund, Fair Housing of Marin serves people with disabilities in many ways, such as in the creation and negotiation of reasonable accommodations for people with physical and mental disabilities. This section of federal Fair Housing law expressly requires that property owners agree to a reasonable accommodation that would make housing available to such individuals. Fair Housing has achieved many positive outcomes with these efforts and, in fact, recently hosted a sold out, all day conference on Reasonable Accommodations.

Applications for assistance should be made to the (MCIL) 710 Fourth St., San Rafael, phone: 459-6245 in Marin County and the Disability Services Legal Center (DSLCL), 980 Hopper Ave., Santa Rosa CA 95403; phone: 707-528-2745 in Sonoma County.

Fair Housing of Marin provides counseling, investigative services, mediation, and legal or administrative referrals to persons experiencing housing discrimination. There is no charge for these services; Spanish is spoken. Fair Housing of Marin also offers advice and seminars for the housing industry, to help housing providers fully understand fair housing laws. Individuals with questions are encouraged to call Fair Housing of Marin at (415) 457-5025 or visit its website at [www.fairhousingmarin.com](http://www.fairhousingmarin.com).

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