

APRIL-MAY 2007



NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

# HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS

## NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH 2007'S MESSAGE:

**“IT’S NOT AN OPTION. IT’S THE LAW.”**

With a strong show of support from communities throughout Western New York, the annual local celebration of National Fair Housing Month began on Thursday, March 29th, with a proclamation ceremony at the downtown Buffalo offices of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). **Sponsored** by the **Erie County Fair Housing Partnership (ECFHP)**, a month of housing related community education activities are planned focusing on this year’s national theme: **“Fair Housing: It’s Not an Option. It’s the Law.”**

HUD Buffalo Field Office Director Stephen T. Banko III welcomed a large gathering of representatives of local governments and community organizations, including Susan DiVita, Chairperson-Elect of the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership, who also represented Town of Amherst Supervisor Satish Mohan; Tasha Moore, Regional Director of the New York State Division of Human Rights; Town of Tonawanda Supervisor Ronald Moline; Erie County Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development William Murray; Cheektowaga Director of Community Development Jerome Gabryszak, representing Supervisor James Jankowiak; Buffalo Fair Housing Officer Frank Perez, representing Mayor Byron Brown; Niagara Falls Fair Housing Officer Willie Dunn and Pastor William Spencer, President of the Highland Avenue Revitalization Committee, representing Mayor Vincent Anello; Bryan Cacciotti, Executive Director of HomeFront Inc., Andrea Mujahid-Moore, Assistant Executive Director of Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME); and Luisa Frazier-Merritt and Beverly Moore of the Buffalo Urban League.

Enacted in April of 1968, one week after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the National Fair Housing Act is one of many laws intended to protect American citizens from housing discrimination. Under these laws, discrimination in housing based on race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, disability, marital status, familial status, military status or sexual orientation is illegal.

Discrimination based on lawful source of income and gender identity and expression is also illegal in some localities.

For more than 25 years, the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership – a non-profit coalition of local, state and federal organizations and agencies committed to equal housing opportunity – has worked to raise public awareness about housing discrimination through community outreach efforts such as **National Fair Housing Day**.

**April 2007:** Throughout the entire month, a 30-minute television program will be carried on both the Time Warner Cable and Lockport Community Television public access channels featuring Scott Gehl, Executive Director of Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) and Andrew Pryshlak, Director of HUD’s Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Division, who will focus on fair housing rights for persons with disabilities as well as how current law addresses the modification of property to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

**Wednesday, April 11th, 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Fair Housing Showcase,**

**Martha Mitchell Community Center, 175 Oakmont Avenue, Buffalo**

Several workshops and panel discussions will be presented throughout the day along with light refreshments. Topics scheduled to be covered include landlord and tenant rights, predatory lending, fair housing for persons with disabilities, and how municipal regulations can create barriers to developing

affordable housing. A special reading of *Dots: A Fair Housing Tale* will be held with the children of the Bethel Head Start program. Admission and parking are free.

**Thursday, April 12th, 6:30 p.m. Free Film Screening of *Flipped*, 5th Floor, Baldy Conference Center, O’Brian Hall, SUNY Buffalo Amherst Campus:**

Learn about low-end real estate speculation and its harmful effects on Buffalo through this compelling documentary film by Michelle Johnson. Admission is free.

**Monday, April 16th, 11:00 a.m. Erie County Affirmative Action Training,**

**West Seneca Town Hall, 1250 Union Road, West Seneca:**

Conducted by HOME, this training session for Municipal Affirmative Action Officers is also open to the public at no charge.

**Thursday, April 26th, 5:30 p.m. HOME Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner,**

**Buffalo Convention Center, Buffalo:**

This event will feature keynote speakers prominent in the fields of fair housing and civil rights and honor organizations and individuals who have made strides in eliminating barriers to fair housing and equal opportunity. Call 854-1400 ext.17 for tickets.

**Thursday, April 26th, 6:00 p.m. Housing Fair, United Way of WNY Headquarters,**

**742 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo:**

Organized by the United Way and HomeFront Inc., the event will include informative exhibits from area housing agencies, banks and realtors. Admission is free.

**Thursday, May 10th, 7:00 p.m. Annual Fair Housing Month Free Movie,**

**Hallwalls @ The Church, 341 Delaware Avenue,**

The award-winning film *I Am Sam* will be shown, accompanied by a special presentation by members of the local Self-Advocacy Association of NYS. Admission is free. Contact Grace Andriette at 847-0650 for more information.



More information about reporting discrimination and fair housing laws is available from a number

of sources, including HOME (854-1400), Neighborhood Legal Services (847-0650), the New York

State Division of Human Rights (847-7632) and HUD (551-5755 x 5600 or on-line at [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).)



**NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES,  
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