

Fair Housing News

Serving the City of Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh,
Montgomery and Northampton Counties

Spring 2014

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Parkland View Apartments in Upper Macungie Township Agrees to Correct Federal Fair Housing Act Violations

Alterations Will Result in More Accessible Housing for People with Disabilities

On March 7, 2014, the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia ("FHCSPP") and the developers, designers and management of Parkland View Apartments entered into an agreement to increase accessibility for people with mobility impairments at the 378 unit apartment community in Upper Macungie in Lehigh County.

Developer Kushner Real Estate Group, S/K Cetronia Associates, LP, Majic Pennsylvania Corp., and Minno & Wasko, Architects & Planners, P.C. signed an agreement that will result in extensive alterations to Parkland View Apartments. FHCSPP will also receive \$55,000 to cover a portion of the costs incurred to bring about the agreement.

In 2011 and 2012, FHCSPP conducted an investigation funded by a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Fair Housing Initiatives Program grant that uncovered Fair Housing Act violations effectively precluding wheelchair users and people with other mobility impairments from renting nearly all first floor units at Parkland View Apartments. FHCSPP documented buildings with steps leading to entrances and excessively high thresholds impeding access for people with physical disabilities or mobility impairments. Inside the apartments, FHCSPP found electrical outlets at inaccessible locations and elevation changes making the patio inaccessible. FHCSPP also discovered numerous Fair Housing Act violations in Parkland View's clubhouse, mailroom, pool, computer room, fitness room, sidewalks and parking lots.

"FHCSPP applauds the developers, designers and management of Parkland View Apartments for their cooperation in coming to an agreement to make the changes necessary to comply with the requirements of fair housing law. The retrofits will increase housing opportunities for people with disabilities in the region and make accessible all of the wonderful amenities Parkland View Apartments offers its tenants" commented FHCSPP Executive Director, James Berry.

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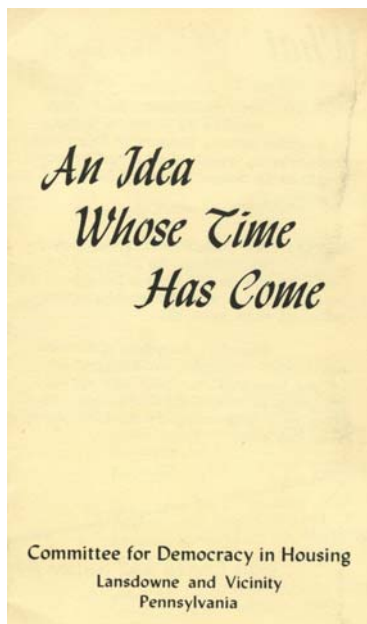
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2014 Marks 46 Years of Fair Housing



1950's brochure calling for the passage of the Federal Fair Housing Act

April 11, 2014 marked the 46th Anniversary of the passing of the Federal Fair Housing Act, and fair housing groups across the nation celebrated this momentous occasion. Founded twelve years prior to the existence of the Fair Housing Act, the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia ("FHCSP") will mark its 58th year of promoting freedom of housing in November 2014. Today, FHCSP stands proud as the nation's oldest fair housing council.

In 1956, before the days of fair housing legislation, a handful of residents of eastern Delaware County banded together to provide non-financial encouragement and support to African Americans seeking to buy homes in the area, and to sellers who became victims of racial violence because of their commitment to open housing. Margaret Collins, a Quaker and a native of Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, was a pioneer in fighting housing discrimination in the region and lobbying for fair housing legislation.

In 1956, Margaret Collins founded her own real estate firm named Friends Suburban Housing, Inc. Born to a family of privilege, she observed her segregated, all-white, upper class neighborhood and felt that it was unjust that minorities did not have the opportunity to reside in such a neighborhood. Although faced with immense challenges in her endeavor to promote integration, she stood firm in her beliefs and did everything in her power to help minorities find housing and to lobby for fair housing legislation. In addition, she worked closely with the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia, toward the same goal of providing equal housing opportunity for everyone.



Margaret H. Collins, pictured with Friends Suburban Housing Inc.'s first customers in 1956 - retired teachers and sisters, Clayda and Lucile Williams.

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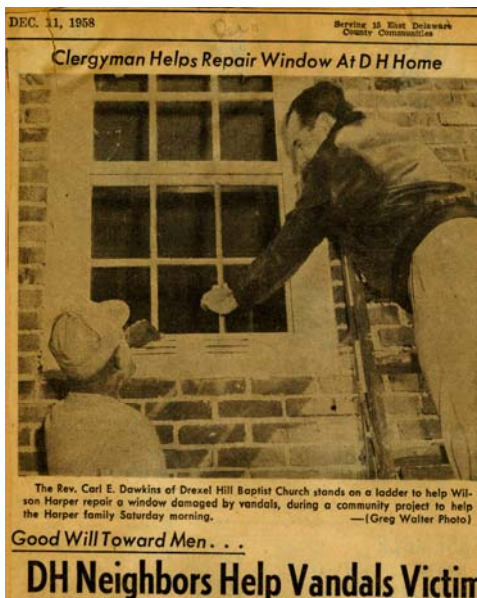
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Ms. Collins was faced with immense challenges in her endeavor to promote freedom of housing in the region. She often showed houses in all-white neighborhoods to African American families at night to avoid harassment from the neighbors. She attempted to join the Main Line Board of Realtors three times in order to access a comprehensive list of property listings in the area, but was rejected each time. She was convinced that the rejection was based on the color of her clients; therefore she sued the board for illegal restraint of trade, and won.

Although Ms. Collins was highly regarded as a pioneer in advocating fair housing within the region, she did not regard herself as such, stating that, "I wasn't any pioneer – the black person was the pioneer". Ms. Collins civil rights work inspired what is today the oldest fair housing organization in the United States – the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia.



FHCSP developed one of the first testing programs in the Country and regularly picketed noncompliant communities and landlords



FHCSP members collected funds to repair damage and volunteered time and talents to welcome homeowners into communities in the face of hostile opposition

Unfortunately, there is a continuing need for FHCSP's work in 2014. African-Americans continue to be the victims of housing discrimination, albeit often in more subtle forms than decades ago. Single mothers with children, immigrants, and people with disabilities often face discrimination in securing rental housing, insurance and lending. They are often unaware or unprepared to assert their legal rights. Systemic issues such as exclusionary zoning also have a discriminatory effect that is beyond the abilities or resources of individual consumers to redress. Having a long-standing, rich history in the region, FHCSP is proud to have lent a hand in advocating for equal opportunity rights in housing alongside Margaret Collins and the other supporters who fought hard for the passage of fair housing laws.

What Is Fair Housing?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that each year 2.5 million people are victims of housing discrimination.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National Origin
- Sex
- Disability
- Familial Status (Presence of children under 18 in a household, pregnant women or anyone securing legal custody of a minor child)

The Fair Housing Act covers all housing related transactions, including:

- Rentals
- Sales
- Mortgage lending
- Homeowner's insurance
- Advertising
- Zoning & Land Use
- Appraisals

If you or someone you know feels victimized by housing discrimination, contact FHCSP at:

Phone: 267-419-8918
Toll Free: 866-540-FAIR (3247)
information@fhcsp.com

FHCSP can help investigate your complaint and assist you in determining what action should be taken.

Who is FHCSP?

Established in 1956, FHCSP is the oldest fair housing council in the nation

FHCSP Mission

To educate and advocate for equal access to quality, affordable housing for everyone in Eastern Pennsylvania

Counties Served

Bucks
Chester
Delaware
Lehigh
Montgomery
Northampton
Philadelphia

Services

FHCSP is a Qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organization as designated by HUD, and additionally provides education for both consumers as well as the housing industry

FHCSP Testing in the 1960's: Historical Reflections

fighting for democracy in Vietnam.....

suffering from democracy denied at home

Last Saturday, April 22, a Negro couple tried to rent an apartment here at CAMEO COURTS, Chester Pike in Glenolden.

They were like any other homeseekers with one exception -- the husband is an Army Major, bound for duty in Vietnam.

He was trying to find a place for his wife and child to stay while he is serving his country.

CAMEO COURTS turned him down. They said nothing was available.

A short time later, a white man came asking for a similar kind of apartment. Unknown to the management, this white man was a "checker" for a local fair housing group.

CAMEO COURTS offered the white man an apartment. They even accepted a \$10 deposit from him.

The Negro couple filed a complaint with the state Human Relations Commission. The Commission is investigating, and will probably eventually find in favor of the Negro couple.

But it is probably already too late. The couple needed the apartment immediately. The Vietnam duty will not wait while justice is served.

AS AMERICANS, WE ARE ASHAMED THAT SUCH TREATMENT WAS
GIVEN THIS SERVICEMAN. WE THINK IT IS UNJUST THAT
WHILE HE DEFENDS DEMOCRACY ABROAD, HE IS DENIED
THE BENEFITS OF DEMOCRACY AT HOME.

Join our protest!

Let Cameo Courts know how YOU feel!

Sponsors: Lansdowne-Upper Darby Area Fair Housing Committee
Fair Housing Council of Delaware Valley
Housing Committee, Darby Area Branch, NAACP

Parkland View Apartments Agrees to Correct Federal Fair Housing Act Violations
(Continued from page 1)

The Fair Housing Act design and construction requirements apply to “covered multifamily dwellings” designed and constructed “for first occupancy” after March 13, 1991. Covered multifamily dwellings are all buildings containing four or more dwelling units if the buildings have an elevator and all ground floor units in buildings containing four or more units, without an elevator. This includes housing that is for rent or for sale and applies whether the housing is privately or publicly funded. In order to be in compliance with the Fair Housing Act, there are seven basic design and construction requirements that must be met:



- 1) **An accessible building entrance on an accessible route;**
- 2) **Accessible public and common use areas;**
- 3) **Usable doors (usable by a person in a wheelchair);**
- 4) **Accessible route into and through the dwelling unit;**
- 5) **Light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls in accessible locations;**
- 6) **Reinforced walls in bathrooms for later installation of grab bars; and**
- 7) **Kitchens and bathrooms must be designed and constructed so an individual in a wheelchair can maneuver in the space provided.**

“Despite the fact that accessibility requirements have been in place for over 22 years, we continue to see violations like those at Parkland View Apartments throughout Southeast Pennsylvania” commented Megan Bolin, FHCSPP Outreach & Communications Coordinator. Between 2005 and 2013, FHCSPP conducted investigations of 38 new construction apartments and condominiums in Southeast Pennsylvania and found that 18 communities (47%) did not meet the minimum standards required under the Fair Housing Act.

Mr. Berry pledged that FHCSPP would continue to correct violations one community at a time if needed, but is calling for a broader approach to tackle this problem. “It’s unacceptable that enforcement of this requirement is left in the hands of a small nonprofit” Mr. Berry commented. “The homebuilding industry needs to fully understand their responsibility to comply with accessibility requirements and municipal government officials must use their authority to reject plans that create barriers for people with disabilities. The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry’s system to ensure accessibility compliance in the construction of multi-family housing obviously does not work and needs to be overhauled in order to identify potential violations before housing is built” added Mr. Berry.

FHCSPP was represented by attorneys Glenn Schlactus and Michael Allen of the Washington, DC based law firm Relman, Dane and Colfax, as well as, Rocco Iacullo of the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania.

IMPACT

Since its inception, FHCSPP has eliminated discrimination at

47,393
housing units

“Thank you for all you have done for me. You were there for me during a tough time. It’s really great to know that there is a Council out there like yours that cares about making sure everyone is treated fairly.”

- Discrimination Victim

In 2013, FHCSPP conducted

53
trainings and education events for

1,691
individuals

“Thank you very much for your presentation. This was the first time that Fair Housing was presented in a clear and concise way!”

- FHCSPP Training Participant

Support FHCSP

The Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia is eligible to receive designated United Way funds through the Donor Options Program. Agency code:

#5182



Please Donate!

Sign up to receive the Fair Housing News and other e-mail updates from FHCSP.

Contact:
bolin@fhcsp.com
 to request electronic newsletters and updates on the latest fair housing cases and news.

FHCSP Welcomes New Members to Board of Directors

FHCSP's Board of Directors has elected four new members to the Board of Directors. They join current board members: Lisa Gaffney (President), Jennifer Perry (Vice President), Stephanie Cehelsky (Treasurer), Frankie Baughn (Secretary), Nelson Acevedo, Michael Bannon, Joel Johnson, AICP, P.H.M, and Elizabeth Moreira, Esq.

Nicole D. Cogdell is a Community Liaison for the Mayor's Office of the City of Chester. Nicole is also a Community Liaison to Chester-Upland School District and a technical advisor for Brother's of Concern, a nonprofit committed to anti-violence programs for young men. Nicole was the lead plaintiff in an employment discrimination lawsuit against Wet Seal and in 2013, she received the National Client of the Year award from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

William H. Hall, IV, Esq. is a Housing Manager for Clarifi. Will worked previously as a Law Clerk for Philadelphia Legal Assistance providing legal help for homeowners facing foreclosure and delinquent property tax litigation. He also worked as a Law Clerk for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission investigating insider trading allegations, broker fraud allegations, and public pension fund liabilities.

Mark Levin, Esq. is Chief Counsel of Regional Housing Legal Services, a nonprofit corporation which provides legal representation and technical assistance to nonprofit corporations developing low income housing. Mark specializes in the development of low income rental, owner and cooperative housing using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnerships, PennHOMES, Supportive Housing, Shelter Plus Care and a variety of other federal, state and local funding programs.

Erin Smist is the Government Affairs Manager of the Suburban Realtors Alliance. Erin is responsible for coordinating public affairs and support for all SRA's corporate, legislative and political activities. Erin is also responsible for municipal ordinance analysis and coordinating grassroots outreach efforts in Chester and Delaware Counties.

Welcome Nicole, Will, Mark and Erin!

The board has also regretfully accepted resignations from members Debbie Cooper and Kristi Dennis. Both have provided outstanding leadership to FHCSP since 2007. Thanks to both Debbie and Kristi for their dedication—we wish them success in their future endeavors. FHCSP is grateful to all past and current board members for their support and commitment to furthering equal housing in Pennsylvania.

Annual Message from FHCSP Board President

Reading the news, it is not hard to find an article or column espousing the importance of education and the need to increase funding for our schools and teachers. The same concept applies to fair housing. In the past year, the Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia (FHCSP), has spent a great deal of its time and resources on educating design professionals, housing providers, government officials and social service agencies as well as the general public on fair housing issues.

While the concept of fair housing and its underlying tenets have remained the same, the methods of delivering this material have evolved. Using available technology, FHCSP is now able to connect to the community through webinars leading to both greater participation and the ability to reach out to a wider geography. It is not hard to imagine that this capacity will continue to expand in the near future based on the strong demand for these sessions and the quality of FHCSP's trainings.

In addition to education and training, the FHCSP staff and board have embarked on a process of rebranding the organization. Essentially, this process entails working with the staff, board members and key stakeholders on synthesizing the core mission and functions of the organization so that this information can be effectively communicated to the public. It was an intense process which forced the participants to carefully consider FHCSP's public image and factor in the future direction and goals of the organization. I want to thank the staff for all the additional effort required for this rebranding initiative as well as the board and stakeholders who devoted time as part of the focus groups.

Jim Berry and his staff of four make operating the FHCSP appear effortless. Of course, securing a variety of funding sources, administering grants, conducting trainings and enforcing fair housing complaints is anything but easy. The dedication and diligent work of the staff has made FHCSP one of the premier fair housing agencies in the country. The board plays a major role in this success as well. My fellow board members bring compassion and a wide variety of skills enabling FHCSP to take on new challenges while still meeting daily organizational tasks. The hours of expertise donated by the board may not always be acknowledged but it is evident in the smooth functioning of FHCSP. I am pleased to be part of such an esteemed and committed group of volunteers.

Without the support of both our governmental and private funders, the FHCSP would not be able to address the still too prevalent menace of discrimination. We value these partnerships. Your support allows us to focus on innovative approaches to combating discrimination and to expand our services to new areas. We look forward to another successful year.

Lisa Gaffney
President, FHCSP Board of Directors

**Volunteer to Fight
Discrimination:**

Become a Fair Housing Tester

FHCSP is in need of fair housing testers to assist with investigating complaints of discrimination and uncovering illegal housing practices. FHCSP conducts testing investigations in the City of Philadelphia and Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery and Northampton Counties.

As a trained tester, you will be called on to help identify possible instances of discrimination in housing, which will contribute to the health and wholeness of the community, and you will be paid for your efforts.

For more information and an application contact:

Emma Ward-Williams
ward@fhcsp.com
(267) 419-8918 x3



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The Nation's Oldest Fair Housing Council
Founded in 1956

Local Funders Support Fair Housing Education Programs

FHCSP would like to take an opportunity to thank our local funders for their generous support of our efforts to expand and enhance our education programming and consumer outreach strategies in 2014. Look for big changes from FHCSP in 2014 as we continue to spread the word about consumer rights protected by fair housing.

*U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Delaware County Office of Housing and Community Development
Montgomery County Department of Housing and
Community Development
Citizens Bank Foundation*

**Lower Merion Township Building and Planning Department,
Community Development Division**