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# ◆ Open House ◆

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Newsletter of the Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County

FALL 1999

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The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County is committed to ensuring equal housing opportunities regardless of race, religion, gender, age, disability, familial status or national origin.

We carry out our mission through education & outreach, complaint reception & resolution, advocacy, monitoring of discriminatory housing practices & assistance in finding open & affordable housing.

## STAFF

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Executive Director

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PICTURE OF LILY

## *WELCOME LILY CHUN* *The Council's new Assistant Director*

The Fair Housing Council is happy to introduce our newest staff member, Lily Chun. We're excited to have Lily as our first Assistant Director.

Lily holds a B.A. in psychology from Rutgers University. After completing her studies, she returned to her native Glenside and began working for the Crime Prevention Association of Philadelphia. There, she headed the Asian American Community Outreach program providing citizenship, naturalization, ESL and GED services to new immigrants. She also directed the Early Childhood Resources and Training Center. Lily worked for the Association for five years before deciding to take on a new challenge.

Lily has been busy getting to know everything and everyone. She says she's finally feeling settled in, she's already learned a lot and she's glad to be a part of an important cause. So far, what she enjoys most is helping out with complaint investigations (and discovering all the hot lunch spots in Glenside--places we never knew existed).

We think Lily's a great catch and we're glad to have her aboard.

## *CRIME DOWN IN AMERICA? NOT SO FAST...*

### *A Message from the Executive Director on Hate Crime in Our Communities*

*We've all heard the good news about declining crime rates in cities across the country. The bad news is hate crime is up (see the 1998 PA Uniform Crime Report). As we rejoice over a safer America, we can't overlook the escalating assaults on innocent people some feel to be the wrong color, religion, sexual orientation and so on. Though African Americans remain the largest group victimized by hate crime, no one should feel left out. The preferred list of targets is growing. Hispanics and Asians report being targeted more often. There was a time when young children were off limits when it came to hate crime. That's changed too as we saw in the recent Los Angeles shooting at a JCC day care.*

*I recently visited a community group serving Montgomery County's Hispanic population. I asked the staff what life is like for Hispanics in Montgomery County and if they feel free to live here. The staff reported that there are areas of Montgomery County their clients won't even consider moving to for fear of harassment and physical harm. Their fears may be founded considering that most hate crime occurs where we should feel the safest--in or near our own home.*

*But back on the bright side...it's a new day for law enforcement officials everywhere. Police departments are taking hate crime much more seriously than in past years. They're training their ranks on identifying and reporting hate crime incidents. Recently, in Jasper, Texas, prosecutors successfully sought the death penalty for two white supremacist wannabes involved in the racially motivated dragging death of James Byrd, Jr. Closer to home, prosecutors put away a group of hooligans who destroyed a home in South Philadelphia in an attempt to prevent an African American family from moving in.*

*It'll take more than law enforcement efforts, however, to tame this beast. The police handle thousands of hate crimes each year but thousands more are never even reported to law enforcement. Let's not wait for horrible incidents like those in Texas, Littleton, Colorado, L.A. and Illinois to happen here in Montgomery County before we spring into action.*

*How can you help? Start some dialogue right in your own community. Form a "good neighbors" group welcoming newcomers to the neighborhood. Make it known to insiders and outsiders alike that intolerance won't be tolerated in your community. If you hear of someone who is being intimidated or their property vandalized, call us--we may be able to pursue civil penalties against the offenders in addition to criminal prosecution. And most importantly, talk to your children about people of other races, religions, etc. Most hate crimes are committed by young white males whose parents are often shocked to learn that their child was harboring hateful feelings.*

*We've learned so much about preventing car theft, purse-snatchings, date rape and a host of other crimes. The adjustments we've made in our attitudes and behavior has helped us avoid those situations which helps to bring the crime rate down. There's no reason we can't do the same to fight hate crime.*

## *PROJECT WELCOME: Outreach to Immigrants*

The Fair Housing Council together with Community Housing Services received a grant from the Emma Lazarus Foundation to conduct a housing rights awareness campaign for immigrants living in or wishing to live in Montgomery County. We called it Project Welcome. We specifically targeted the Hispanic, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese communities.

We focused on community outreach in numerous ways. We kicked off our campaign with an immigration luncheon that was held for immigrant service providers. The luncheon was a success with about 30 people in attendance representing ethnic newspapers and community groups, immigration law firms, interpreter services, the INS, the PA Human Relations Commission and other entities.

We also placed

public service announcements and advertising in the non-English language and ethnic media. We were hoping to inform as many people as possible about their housing rights.

In an effort to reach out to the individuals, community workshops were held across the county. As well posters and flyers were distributed to libraries and social service agencies serving the targeted communities through counseling and advocacy. The posters and flyers were designed in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese.



distributed to libraries and social service agencies serving the targeted communities through counseling and advocacy. The posters and flyers were designed in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese and Chinese.

**Please contact us if you are an agency serving immigrants and would like us to do a fair housing rights workshop for your staff and clients OR would like to receive posters in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese or Chinese.**

## *Fair Housing Month Events a Success*

The Fair Housing Council in conjunction with the Delaware Valley Fair Housing Partnership sponsored a week-long series of events in celebration of April being Fair Housing Month. Thanks to everyone from the community, the celebration was a smash!

### **MONDAY, April 19th**

a "Fair Housing Rights" literature handout at SEPTA transportation hubs during AM rush hour

### **TUESDAY, April 20th**

a Fair Housing Training for service providers

### **WEDNESDAY, April 21st**

Fair Housing Training for landlords and realty professionals

### **THURSDAY, April 22nd**

informational workshop for community residents

### **FRIDAY, April 23rd**

Fair Housing Training for Attorneys

### **SATURDAY, April 24th**

First Time Homebuyers Workshop

### **SUNDAY, April 25th**

Neighbors for Diversity: Segregation in the Suburbs

## *WISH LIST*

Addy Sugarman's birthday donations

Small Refrigerator

## 1999 "April Is Fair Housing Month" Poster Contest Goes Countywide

### PICTURE OF POSTER CONTEST

*The winners and judges from the Elkins Park contest are from the left: (front) Rory Perner, 1st; Manoj Vyas, 3rd; Hallee Wirtshafter, 2nd; (back) State Representative Lawrence Curry; Adelaide Sugarman; Mari Fielder; & Anne Rubin.*

This year the "April Is Fair Housing Month" poster contest was expanded into three schools. The participating schools were: Elkins Park School (Cheltenham Township); Colonial Elementary School (Plymouth Township); and Salford Hills Elementary School (Upper Salford Township).

In an effort to expand into more communities throughout the county, the Fair Housing Council collaborated with the Montgomery County Association of Realtors on the project. The collaboration actually had a two-fold purpose: (1) to reach out to more children; and (2) to work together with the real estate community to combat housing discrimination. The joint effort was a success!

The poster contest is held to promote awareness and intolerance of housing discrimination. In kicking off our campaign three realtor volunteers held interactive class chats on discrimination and fair housing during February at the individual schools. They were: Anne Rubin of Century 21 Lublin-Beck for Elkins Park School; Connie Brady of Danella Realty for Colonial Elementary School; and Paul Barndt of The Barndt Agency for Salford Hills Elementary School.

The kids then created posters about housing discrimination and a judging and awards ceremony was held in each of the schools. On April 19th a countywide contest was held in the offices of the Montgomery County Asso-

ciation of Realtors to determine the overall winner. The winner was Rory Perner of Elkins Park School. The winning poster will be made into a t-shirt to promote fair housing.

The winners from the individual schools were: Rory Perner, Elkins Park School; Frank Sambrick, Colonial Elementary School; and Jacie Kendall, Salford Hills Elementary School.

T-shirts will be made available sometime in the future and can be ordered through the Council's office by calling (215) 576-7711.

# SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: *Dispelling Common Misconceptions*

## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

The federal Fair Housing Act and the PA Human Relations Act prohibit discrimination in housing based on familial status (families with children including children under the age of 18 living with parents or legal custodians; pregnant women; and people securing custody of children under 18.)

**MISCONCEPTION #1**  
Opposite sex children living together must have separate bedrooms.

It is commonly believed that children of the opposite sex must have separate bedrooms when living in the same household. In fact many apartment complexes and condominium associations have written policies stating just that. Some in the application process even request the gender of applicants' minor children and impose restrictions on the sleeping arrangements of the minor children.

**THE TRUTH**  
Housing providers cannot mandate that boys and girls have separate bedrooms.  
The result of opposite sex/separate bedrooms policies can be devastating on families with children—forcing them into

larger apartments at a greater expense or limiting the field of available apartments unnecessarily. For example, families with a boy and a girl are forced into looking for a three bedroom apartment, not a two, or forced to look elsewhere when only two bedrooms are available.

**Except in government-subsidized housing,** opposite sex/separate bedrooms policies are against the law and should be reported to the Council, PHRC, or HUD.

**MISCONCEPTION #2**  
Families

with children must live in specific buildings of an apartment complex, in specific sections of a building, or on the first floor of a building.

Often apartment complexes and buildings have designated areas set aside for families. They promote their facilities as having singles and families separated out.

Advocates for such policies argue that the policies are nurturing and benefiting the family community by having other families nearby and child-friendly facilities at hand. They argue as well that policies are

based on the safety and welfare of the children.

Steering families away from one community or complex and towards another is common. Sometimes complexes outrightly dissuade families from living in their complex altogether.

**THE TRUTH**  
Housing on the market must be made available equally to all persons including families with children.

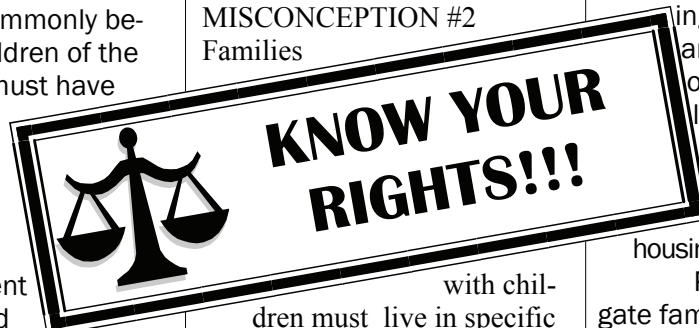
Segregation policies greatly affect families with children because they limit the housing that is available to families. They preclude families from the other housing opportunities that are available to the rest of the world. Such limitations have the effect of forcing families into substandard housing, too expensive housing or homelessness.

Policies that segregate families with children are against the law and should be reported to the Council, PHRC, or HUD.

**MISCONCEPTION #3**  
Housing providers may inquire about pregnancy and childcare arrangements.

The question "are you pregnant" is widely seen on applications and asked during initial interviews. As well it is common practice for property managers to tell applicants and current tenants that they will need a bigger apartment once the baby comes. Going hand in hand, landlords have

*(Continued on page 6)*



## Setting the Record Straight, cont.

*(Continued from page 5)*  
been asking about childcare arrangements to insure that the children will be supervised.

### THE TRUTH

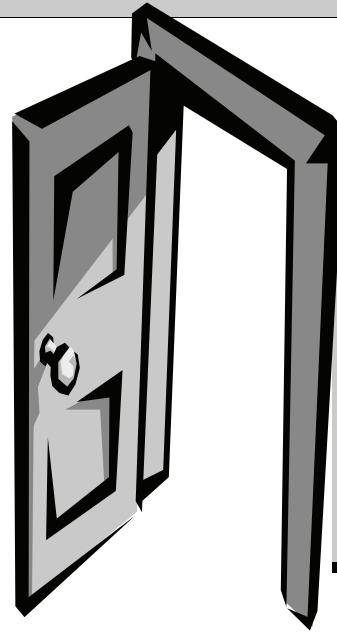
Housing providers cannot ask an applicant or tenant if they are pregnant nor about their childcare arrangements.

Children under one year of age may “room in” the same bedroom as the parents. There is no need to consider larger accommodations until the child is a year.

Childcare arrangements are the responsibility of the parent(s) and have no bearing on the application

process nor housing situation.

Inquiries regarding pregnancy and childcare are against the law and should be reported to the Council, PHRC, or HUD.



**LET US  
OPEN  
THE  
DOOR  
FOR**

**IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED AGAINST WHILE SEARCHING FOR A HOME, CALL US AT:  
(215) 576-7711**

## OFFICE CHAT

PICTURE OF JOSIE

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW FAIR HOUSING BABY!**

We are pleased to introduce the youngest member of our fair housing family, Josie Anderson—born April 15th to Liane Anderson our Education & Outreach Coordinator and her husband John. Josie was welcomed home by her brother, Danny who is 3.

**WELCOMING OUR NEW BOARD**

## OFFICE CHAT

### MEMBERS

**Arthur Haywood, Esquire**  
Partner, Lord & Haywood  
Specializing in real estate & civil rights

**Carol Sheffield, Esquire**  
Sole Practitioner  
Certified in estate planning & administration

**Pamela Croke, Esquire**  
Special education attorney & former FHC Office Manager

**CONGRATULATIONS TO FORMER INTERN, MARK MOORE**

Since working with us in 1998 Mark Moore passed the bar exam, had a new baby, finished a clerkship with a judge in Camden County and landed a new job with the Philadelphia District Attorney’s office. What a year!!

## OFFICE CHAT

**THANKS TO OUR INTERN, SARAH**

Sara is a senior at Bates College in Maine studying creative writing. She carried out several research projects for us and helped with our outreach to police chiefs in Montgomery County regarding housing-related hate crime.

PICTURE OF SARAH

## Help us fight against discrimination... BECOME A MEMBER!!!

The Fair Housing Council of Montgomery County invites you to become a member. The Council is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to fighting housing discrimination in Montgomery County. As the only local agency whose sole mission is to ensure equal housing opportunities in Montgomery County, the Council has been working hard for you! By becoming a member, you can help guarantee that fair housing remains a part of your community.

By becoming a member you will receive either: your choice of one of our t-shirts for free **OR** a 20% discount on the upcoming year's seminar sponsored by the Council! We have two styles of t-shirts available. One includes an orange & red heart design with the slogan, "Home is where the Heart is and with Fair Housing, Your Heart can be Anywhere." The other design is green & purple with the slogan, "Happiness Is Fair Housing." Both are printed on a white t-shirt. Members also receive "Open House" the Council's quarterly newsletter.

With your support, the Council will continue providing educational programs to consumers and real estate professionals, advocacy for victims of housing discrimination and access to information on open and affordable housing in Montgomery County.

**Your contributions are tax-deductible.**

### *Don't delay...join today!*

**YES, I'D LIKE TO BE A MEMBER OF THE FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL!**

Name or Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Choose One: \_\_\_\_\_ 20% Seminar Discount

OR

\_\_\_\_\_ T-shirt (Choose style & size)

Red/Orange (Adult \_\_\_Sm \_\_\_XL) OR Green/Purple (Adult \_\_\_Sm\_\_\_Med\_\_\_L\_\_\_XL)

*MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: FAIR HOUSING COUNCIL OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY*

*MAIL TO: P.O. Box 578  
Glenside, PA 19038*

*Questions? Call us at (215)576-7711*

**Thank you for supporting the fight against  
housing discrimination!**



Fair Housing Council of  
Montgomery County  
P.O. Box 578  
Glenside, PA 19038

email: fairhous@libertynet.org

**In This Issue...**

Setting the Record Straight: Common Misconceptions about Families with Kids



New fair housing t-shirts have arrived...and they're great!! Like in years past, we have taken the design from the winning poster of the "April Is Fair Housing Month" Poster Contest and made it into a super t-shirt.

The design, created by Rory Perner, a 6th grader from the Elkins Park School, contains the slogan "Welcome to Happytown: A Fair Housing Community" .

The slogan is coupled with a progressive drawing of a diverse neighborhood. The t-shirts are \$15 and are available in: S, M, L or XL.

**TO PLACE YOUR ORDER,**

**Mail a \$15 check to:**

**Fair Housing Council of MontCo.  
P.O. Box 578, Glenside, PA 19038**

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