



COMMUNITY PULSE

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Your Quarterly Housing Connection

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High Five SCOTUS

By: Patricia Kidd

June was a month filled with victories for civil rights activists. First the U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark opinion ruling same-sex couples can marry nationwide thus establishing a new civil right. Where once

same sex intimacy was a crime in many states and gays and lesbians were prohibited from most government employment, barred from military service, excluded under immigration laws, targeted by police, and burdened in their rights to associate, they are now seen as having equal dignity in the eyes of the law. Today, the Constitution protects the right of same-sex couples to marry.

June also marked another landmark decision regarding the effectiveness of the Fair Housing Act's "disparate impact" theory of liability. This theory is a legal doctrine under the Fair Housing Act which states that a policy may be considered discriminatory if it has a unequal "adverse impact" against any group based on race, national origin, color, religion, sex, familial status, or disability when there is no legitimate need for the policy.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld this legal theory that ensures that banks, landlords, and other housing providers use policies that apply fairly to all persons. Even policies that seem neutral in theory that exclude or segregate particular communities in practice. The protection under the

Fair Housing Act allows us to recognize and prevent harmful and unfair policies so that everyone is treated fairly. If the Supreme Court had ruled the opposite and eliminated this protection, the following could have happened:

*A bank could charge a large deposit fee for those seeking home mortgage loans. With this high barrier, seniors, veterans or persons with limited means would be forced to take on risky and costly loans or not have access to financing at all.

Now, the Supreme Court acknowledges the Fair Housing Act's continuing role in moving the nation toward a more integrated society," as Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in his majority opinion.

June was a busy month full of anxiety awaiting the Supreme Court's ruling on these issues followed by celebration and victory as history was made. There is still much to be done in the area of civil rights but it was a good summer!

U.S. Supreme Court 2014 Term Opinions:
[Texas Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs v. Inclusive Communities Project, Inc.](#),
[Obergefell v. Hodges](#)

"The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people."
- **Martin Luther King Jr.**

Fighting Violent Forms of Housing Discrimination

By Diane Citrino, Esq.



The recent racist graffiti on a garage door in the quiet Liberty Greens neighborhood of Painesville in June provide a sad reminder of why fair housing laws are still needed—even in 2015. The fair housing laws of Ohio and the United States protect people from intimidation and harassment in their homes such as cross burnings on the lawn, firebombing on the porch,

mutilated dolls in the mailbox, nooses left on the bushes. These blatant messages of discrimination because of someone's sex, national origin, race, religion or other protected class are explicitly covered as violations of law. When perpetrators are caught, they can face criminal and civil penalties, including being sued for money damages.

A person's home should be their castle, their sanctuary. It is more stressful to move your home than to change jobs. If someone is being harassed at home, it can paralyze him or her and cause acute psychological distress. Housing discrimination in a neighborhood can also tear the fabric of a neighborhood or community. Sometimes, an incident of housing discrimination can be the spark that ignites a riot. Other times, it can be a catalyst for a community to come together.

The community of liberty Greens when "no N-word" was scrawled on a garage door of a new resident before the family even moved in, rallied together. The community quickly painted over the vandalized door. A welcoming basket was made and given to the family.

Money was raised for a block party to welcome the new family to the area. And when the vandals are caught, justice will be sought using the fair housing laws of Ohio and the United States. Patricia Kidd, executive director fo the Fair Housing Resource Center said "We all speak with on voice that our community does not bow down to bullies. Our work is to have a community that is open and welcoming to all. Let's work shoulder to shoulder and get it done—together."



Attorney Diane Citrino is a partner at the women-owned law firm of Giffen & Kaminski, LLC, Attorneys at Law, based in Cleveland, Ohio.

Agency Updates

To better serve the community Fair Housing Resource Center Inc. will be changing their hours. The hours will be effective starting **August 10, 2015.**

New Hours of Operation:

Monday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Thursday: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Friday: Closed

This will allow us to serve our clientele before and after work. Please be patient during this transition.



Mid Year Bugs

By Regina Barnes

Summer time means school is out and that comes with thoughts of family barbecues, trips to the amusement park, and lazy canoe trips down the Cuyahoga River. Summer also comes with unwanted pests; bed bugs, fleas and mosquitos.

Fleas

The heat and humidity of summer-time provides a perfect environment for fleas to thrive. The most common flea encountered is the cat flea. While this flea normally feeds off of cats, dogs and rodents, if its preferred host is not present, it will feed on humans or any warm-blooded body.

Inspecting living areas, and finding what is considered “hot spots” of breeding areas is key to eliminating them. Remove clutter from areas of the home to limit where fleas can hide. Shampoo or steam clean your carpets on a regular basis. Keep your pets living area clean. If possible, keep pet inside and limit your

pets contact with other animals.

Never solely rely on chemical controls. Excessive contact with pesticides effect your animals and the people who take care them. Also, do not allow children in contact with treated surfaces or animals before these surfaces have thoroughly dried. Flea collars coated with chemicals are the least effective in controlling fleas and may cause irritation.

Mosquitos

Summer time and these pesky bug-gers seem to go hand in hand. While the threat for mosquitos carrying diseases has been reduced in the US, there are still some that they can transmit, such as strains of encephalitis.

Making areas a less likely breeding ground for mosquitos is key to reducing the population. This can be accomplished by not allowing water to stagnate in old tires, birdbaths or containers. Also keep swimming pools clean and chlorinated.

If you find that there is an excessive amount of mosquitos in your area, a local mosquito control agency

should be contacted to address the issue.

Bedbugs

For a long time, bed bugs were out of sight, out of mind. Today, bed bugs have again become a problem in a lot of cities throughout the US. Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease, but no one wants to be excessively bit by these insects either. Bed bug bites are itchy and some people may be allergic to them. Bites may also lead to minor infections, or trigger stress and anxiety in some people. While bed bugs do not arise from poor hygiene or an unkempt house, excessive clutter can make a perfect place for them to hunker down and go unnoticed.

If you find that you have bed bugs, the key is to address the issues immediately. Bed bugs over time have developed a resistance to pesticides, so it is best to allow an experienced exterminator to treat infested areas. Experienced pest control professionals will examine infested areas to determine the extent of the infestation and develop a plan of action on how to successfully treat and eliminate the problem.



Keep the Cold Air Inside!

By Nicole Saunders

Keeping your home comfortable is just as important in summer as in winter. By keeping up with window and door maintenance, you will not only maximize your comfort in the heat but minimize your air conditioning bill! It's easier to apply caulk and weather-stripping in the summer while the weather is warm, than in the winter with the arctic winds blowing in. While you are in your yard, take a walk around the exterior of your home and check for gaps, cracks or other potential issues around windows and doors.

Here are a few more quick tips to help keep your house cool this summer:

- Check the operation of all your doors and windows, including the garage doors
- Check the weather-stripping around them and replace as necessary
- Check the frames for evidence of rot – this is a good month for those repairs with either an Epoxy based system, or a complete replacement
- Check for loose or cracked

caulking and replace it – don't just cover over it

- Cracked windows, or missing glazing should be repaired or replaced

Remember, this will also prove to be beneficial for the winter months when you want to keep the warm air in! Happy caulking!

Need Assistance With Your Rent?

Are you or someone you know having difficulties paying rent? Do your bills keep snowballing while you are constantly robbing Peter to pay Paul? Fair Housing Resource Center has a program for low-income families that assist with rental payments when you are delinquent on rent. However, with any program there are a few qualifications in order to receive our assistance. Below are some of our requirements:

- Must have income into the household to afford your future rental payments.
- Must have a temporary documentable hardship in the past six (6) months that have caused you to fall behind on your rent.
- You must be a resident of Lake County; however, we cannot fund the City of Mentor.
- You cannot qualify if you have received any of our financial Rental assistance in the past.

This is a wonderful program for individuals who can normally afford to pay their rent, yet have had some temporary issue that has prevented them from making their payments in a timely manner. If you or someone you know is delinquent on rent and need assistance please contact our office at (440)392-0147.



So you're selling your house....

By Nicole Saunders

While selling a house can be a daunting task, it doesn't have to be one to give you nightmares. I recently sold a house and purchased a new one, in one month's time, and learned a few helpful things along the way. And while I'm in no hurry to do it again anytime soon, it wasn't a completely horrible experience. So here are a few of my home selling tidbits:

The first step is to find a realtor that you like and trust. While this might sound easy, unfortunately it's not, so don't be opposed to trusted friend recommendations to steer you in the right direction.

After you find the realtor you should meet with him/her and go through the house, room by room. The realtor should point out what items need to be repaired/fixed, and what needs to be removed. Let's call this "staging." If strangers are going through your house you want to de-personalize each and every room; take down those pictures of the kids, put your toothbrush in the drawer, pick those towels up off the floor, and while I can appreciate a good bagel, take the food off your

counter and put it in a cupboard! You want any potential buyer to walk into your home and want to make it theirs. Having your personal items out and not cleaning up can deter a potential buyer because some people have a hard time seeing past the clutter; you want to make it as easy as possible for them to imagine their belongings in your home.

De-personalizing and staging might entail removing some furniture to make the room appear larger than it really is. That's okay, too. You're moving anyway, so think of it as getting a jump start on packing!

Don't forget the outside! Mow the lawn, put some mulch down, buy some cheap annuals from the local gardening center to give your yard some color. Burn those leaves in the backyard that you piled up from your spring cleaning weekend in April. First impressions are lasting impressions and if someone pulls into your driveway and sees an uncut lawn, chances are they will go into your house with a wary eye.

Last but not least, keep up with it. Imagine that you will have someone



walking through your house every night; it will force you to keep the house clean, dishes washed, beds made, and clutter at a minimum. The first three days we had our house on the market we had at least two showings each day. You will not get a lot of warning and most likely will be at work, so if someone can only come in at 2pm on a Wednesday, you don't want to say no. Show it to as many people as possible. By keeping the house clean and "show-ready", you can avoid having to say no to any potential buyer.

Yes, you will definitely have to put in some hours to make the house appealing to buyers, but at the end of the day it will pay off. We sold our house in 4 days...if we can do it so can you!

How May We Help You?



Attorney General DeWine Warns of Rental Scams

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine today warned consumers to beware of phony listings for apartment and house rentals.

In the past year, the Ohio Attorney General's Office has received more than a dozen complaints about potential rental scams. Consumers who lose money report losses ranging from \$500 to \$5,500.

"Anyone who goes online to find an apartment or a house should watch for scams," Attorney General DeWine said. "If you're asked to wire a deposit before you've even seen the property or met the landlord, it's likely a scam. You also should check with your county auditor to see who truly owns the property before making any payments."

In a typical rental scam, a con artist steals information from a legitimate real estate listing and reposts it as a place for rent on Craigslist or another website. Using information pulled from the legitimate listing, the scammer will list the

property's address and photos of the place.

The advertised rent is often low, and the potential renter is told to send a few hundred dollars (or more) to secure the rental. Typically the payment must be sent via wire transfer or prepaid money card. Once the money is sent, it is nearly impossible to track or to recover.

To avoid rental scams, consumers should keep the following in mind:

- Be skeptical of ads offering below-market rates on houses or apartments. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.
- Search your county auditor's website for a record of who owns the property. Be aware that scam artists may pretend to be the true owner.
- Don't trust potential "landlords" or property owners who say they had to leave the country quickly for business or missionary work. Scam artists often make these claims.
- Don't send money until you've had a face-to-face transaction, including actually viewing the property. Also talk to neighbors to get a better understanding of the property

and the neighborhood before making any payments.

- Beware of requests for wire transfers or prepaid money cards as payment methods. These are preferred methods for scammers, because once the money is sent it is nearly impossible to recover.
- Copy and paste an image from an online listing into a search engine to determine if it has appeared elsewhere online.
- If available, read and follow the scam prevention tips provided by any house or apartment-searching websites you use.

Real estate agents and sellers can help protect themselves and their listings by following these tips:

- Consider not listing the complete address of the property online.
- Watermark your photos.
- If you find a fraudulent posting based on your listing, notify the website where you found it so that the post can be flagged and removed.

Consumers should report potential scams to the Ohio Attorney General's Office at www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov or 800-282-0515.

The Silent Discrimination

By **Hollie Nebelski**

Many individuals find that looking for affordable rental housing within our community is a challenge in itself. However, the deaf and hard of hearing community faces extraordinary difficulties when seeking housing. Qualified individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing find that when they use assistive communication technologies to inquire about unit availability, they are often hung up on, dismissed, or asked invasive questions directed towards their physical and mental well-

being. Many individuals find that the landlords have fewer units available and have difficulty scheduling appointments.

This is an on-going issue that has an affect on our community. The deaf and hard of hearing population are the same as everyone else, just slightly different communication technologies are required. It is a problem all in itself that is hurting the deaf and hard of hearing community, as well as the community as a whole.

If you or someone you know has experienced difficulty finding housing please do not hesitate to contact our office at (440)392-0147 or email at info@fhrc.org. Every individual has a right to equal housing choices.



Dear Housing Hollie

Dear Housing Hollie:

I moved into my current unit over a year ago. When I moved in my A/C worked wonderfully. However, recently my air conditioner decided to call it quits. I have informed my Landlord to no avail to get it repaired and he refuses to do so.

Sincerely,
Burning Up



Dear Burning Up:

When appliances break it tends to cause discomfort in your home. However, don't fear, a landlords duty is to maintain appliances in a fit and habitable matter. If your landlord provided the appliance, then it is his duty to maintain the appliance. I suggest that you write a letter to your landlord requesting the repair to be made within 30 days and keep a copy of the letter. If the landlord fails to make the repair, then take a copy of the repair letter up to your local court house to attempt to put your rent in escrow. Contact Fair Housing if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,
Housing Hollie

Want to ask Housing Hollie a question? Submit your questions to hollie@fhrc.org. For more information visit www.fhrc.org

Contact us for more information

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Connect with us:

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WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

Meet The Staff

Patricia A. Kidd, Esq.
Executive Director

Regina Barnes
Housing Counselor

Hollie Nebelski
Program Manager
Education and Outreach
Coordinator

Nicholas Nebelski
Foreclosure Prevention Manager
Testing Coordinator

Nicole Saunders
Housing Assistant

Donna Stock
Controller

Our Board

Larry Rastatter, Jr.
Board of Trustees President
The City of Mentor

Cynthia Brewster
Board of Trustees Vice President
Individual

Janet Wetzel
Board of Trustees Secretary
First American Title

Darrell Webster
Board of Trustees Treasurer
Individual

Raymond F. Sack
City of Wickliffe

Bonnie Boyd
Howard Hanna



Discrimination is treating people differently because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or familial status.

Please call FHRC if you feel you have been discriminated against.

UNLESS YOU REPORT HOUSING DISCRIMINATION, IT WON'T STOP.



*Fair Housing Resource Center Inc. is currently looking for dependable, proactive and enthusiastic individuals to volunteer to serve on our Board. If you or someone you know is interested please contact Patricia Kidd at (440) 392-0147.