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## WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?



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.

## Connect with us:



# COMMUNITY PULSE

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*Your Quarterly Housing Connection*

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## AGING IN PLACE

By: Patricia A. Kidd, Esq.

Let's face it, we all get older and have to plan for the changes in our life that will happen as a result of aging. Our home is a source of security and independence and as we age, we all want to remain in our homes.

Many of us fear being placed in a nursing home and are determined to remain in our homes as long as we possibly can. Seniors can effectively plan to remain independent in the future, however it shouldn't be a plan they must create on their own. Communities should take a proactive approach to help ensure our long time residents can age in the home and neighborhood they love. This approach and theory of independence as we age is called "Aging in Place."

Aging in place is the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably regardless of age, income or your level of independence. The concept is a simple one, but requires one to think about how the roles of the community must change as our population ages. Our community leaders should focus on supporting this and work together with the public and private sector to ensure our seniors are taken care of.

## So what should the community focus on?

- Easy access to quality healthcare
- Coordinate Health care and supportive services with housing
- Expand access to services:
  - Meals
  - Shopping
  - Housekeeping
  - Personal care services
  - Senior centers
- Transportation
- Property tax programs
- Affordable home modifications and maintenance to create a sustainable home environment
- Walkability
- The access to services and resources within a 5 minute walk from home
- Medical care, doctors and house calls

While it sounds like a long list, planning and partnering has to start somewhere. It is time to open this dialog with community leaders, local government and other non-profit organizations.

Our community is a wonderful one. We should all have the right to age in place in the neighborhood you love.

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice."

*Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. - 1958*





# WHAT???

## NO KIDS ALLOWED

By Diane Citrino, Esq.

The federal Fair Housing Act was a direct legacy of the national unrest and rioting following the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., becoming law days after his assassination in 1968. The Fair Housing Act (FHA) was intended to promote integration and prevent America from becoming two separate countries, one white and one black. Along with race, color and national origin, the FHA also outlawed discrimination based on religion and sex. The FHA was amended in 1988, 20 years later, to add protection for two more groups that experienced considerable discrimination: people with disabilities and families with children. Today, families with children under 18 years of age (or families where children are expected, such as pregnant women or foster families waiting for a child) continue to experience high levels of discrimination in our community and across the country.

Some of the discrimination against families with children is open and obvious—other types are more subtle. It has been estimated that about 95% of the discriminatory housing advertisements on Craigslist discriminate against families with children, sometimes with ads that blatant-

ly say, “no kids.” Possibly that is because many people do not understand that families with children are protected under the law—after all, we all know someone living in an “adult” community with no children. While certain communities that are for “older persons” do have a limited exemption from the law related to discrimination against families with children, most do not. And since many landlords don’t know about the protection for families with children, they may just come out and put in writing that they are not evicting someone because of race, but because the tenant has a child, or “looks pregnant.” Such open and obvious types of discrimination against families with children typically resolve quickly once the law is pointed out.

Other types of discrimination against families with children lead to limiting choices for tenants in more indirect ways. For example, a mobile home park may have extremely restrictive rules targeting children under 18 that don’t allow them to be outside their home unless accompanied by an adult. Rules such as this may discourage families with children without directly banning them. Another invidious way to limit families with children is to have overly restrictive occupancy limits. While some

occupancy restrictions may govern the number of people permitted in a dwelling, the square footage required is often not used by housing providers who may mandate a limit per bedroom that is much lower than what would be permitted by law. This owner-imposed restriction limits choice for many families, particularly new families with infants or families who must live together as a result of the housing foreclosure crisis. Many families often have a limited amount of money to spend on housing. Most rental housing in the United States is structured as studios, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units. With overly restrictive occupancy limits, families are denied the flexibility to have three of their children sleep together in a bedroom if the housing provider has a two-person per bedroom rule—even if the bedroom is large. Families may be forced to live separately from a grandparent, pay more for housing than they can afford, or choose substandard housing due to landlord-imposed occupancy rules that are too restrictive.

Fair housing is about expanding opportunities for people to live wherever they can afford—not to encounter roadblocks to choice. Discrimination against families with children is a barrier we must all join together to knock down.

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



## CPI Official Fall Checklist

As we slip into the colder seasons, preventative home maintenance is an essential step towards avoiding major plumbing problems. While the oh-so dreadful temperatures are on their way, as a homeowner, you can take the necessary steps to protect your home and your wallet this fall and winter.



- **Check for signs of exposed pipes and leaks.** Signs include puddles of water or watermarks near pipes that run through the foundation of your home.
- **Insulate your pipes** in areas of the home that aren’t heated, such as the garage or parts of the basement. This insulation will prevent dripping condensation, resulting in lower energy and even lower heat bills.
- **Give your water heater a refresh** by flushing out the sediment that has accumulated inside. Not only does this extend its lifespan, it also increases efficiency which can decrease your bills.
- **Clean out your gutters of leaves and debris.** Doing so forms a clear path, allowing thawing ice to drain quickly and efficiently.
- **Shut off and fully drain outside fixtures.** From your hose to your garden fountain, disconnect and make sure there is no water left inside. Frozen water can cause pipes to break, crack or burst.
- **Understand the basics of your water main valve.** Visiting family during the holiday season? If you’re leaving your home for a few days or more, be sure to shut off your water main to prevent leak-related damages.

As you prepare for the winter, use the above checklist as a guide. Hiring a plumber for these simple procedures is worth the expense, as they’ll save you from future emergencies. Scheduling a quick home inspection with a licensed CPI contractor will help identify any small or potential leaks that may develop.

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## Health Department

By Nick Nebelski

In the past if a health and safety issue became apparent in your rental unit, and your landlord fails to act you would contact your local health department. Yet, due to budget cuts and limited funding the health department is no longer providing those services.

Recently the health department announced that they are no longer providing home inspections for health and safety issues. While this is a cause for concern, there are still steps you can take to ensure the health and safety of your rental unit.

Your first step should be to contact our office and discuss your issue with one of our housing counselors. Our counselors have the ability to assist you in determining what your next step should be. If the counselor determines that your issue is a health or safety hazard, they will advise you to contact your city's building department and request an inspection. If the city is unable to do so, we advise you to contact your counselor at FHRC to determine your next course of action.

FHRC's goal is to assist individuals in maintaining the health and safety of their housing to ensure they are not living in deplorable housing conditions.



### Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc. Board of Trustee's Recruitment

#### ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEMBER?

FHRC is looking for passionate individuals to join our Board of Trustees to assist with the strategic planning and guidance of the organization. If you are an advocate for Fair Housing and would like to be a part of an empowering and dynamic non-profit, please contact the agency at:

**(440) 392-0147**

## Keeping Your Home for the Holidays

The wonderful warmth filled holidays are right around the corner with hopes of happiness and cheer. The holiday decorations are already hitting the shelves and the creative holiday commercials are already blasting the air waves. Yet, one subject that many fail to hit on the head during this happy time is finances. I know personally, the holidays, while wonderful and full of hope, always cause me stress due to the effect they have on my checking account. However, I am not alone.

Did you know that in 2014 in Lake County 1,202 individuals experienced eviction? Did you also know that the census data reported that each household has an estimated 2.41 individuals living under the same roof? That is on average 2,896.82 individuals who were displaced from their housing. Imagine how many of those families were displaced because of the hardships of the holidays. With the spirit of the holidays in the air, I know there have been a few occasions that I too have used my rent money to buy presents for my kids and participated in secret Santa's, to be the same as everyone else.

We tend to forget that the holidays are a time of giving, a time to celebrate being alive and give to those in need. Don't sacrifice your mental well-being and shoulders (from carrying the weight of the world) with a need to please everyone and remember there are free ways to give. Let me share some of my creative tricks and tips from a mom of two who has struggled through minimum wage, unemployment and more through the holidays.

Rent comes first. Your children will not care if they received their favorite Hot Wheel set or tablet if they are uprooted from the comfort and safety of their home. Being evicted from your residence is an overwhelming burden that causes yourself and your family scars from the struggle and worry of where you are going next. Pay your rent first and foremost to ensure that you have somewhere to live during the holidays.



My favorite—Layaway!! Layaway has been a secret key to alleviating my financial stress and purchasing toys and gifts for my kids. I recently went to Toys R Us and put the items I know my children want most in Layaway and only have to make a monthly payment to ensure that my children get to experience the joy and happiness of presents on Christmas morning. Layaway is the most brilliant holiday tool in creation for low income families. Sure you may have to stand in line for an hour 2 weeks before Christmas to pick up your gifts- but an hour of my time saves me the burden of running last minute to spend money I don't have on gifts. The best way that I have found to budget for layaway is that I count the amount of paychecks I have until the items need picked up and divide the total price of the items into those weeks and ta da! A weekly or bi-weekly (depending on your pay) minimum payment that is affordable that will give your kids the Christmas of their dreams!!

Be creative! Last year my sister was a college student, I was a struggling mom and my brother had spent his cap for the holidays. We have always done a secret Santa and last year it was looking as though we all could not financially afford it. So I came up with a creatively brilliant idea—let's make each other gifts!! At first my family was hesitant to accept my challenge, but come Christmas Eve when we handed out our

homemade secret Santa gifts you would be amazed at the quality and time each individual took to make each other presents! It was truly better than any store bought gift, that's for sure. We had marshmallow shooters, coasters, cups, photo gifts and more! It truly made each one of us feel as though we gave from the heart.

Last but not least, give yourself. Contact your local church or shelter and see if they need assistance. This is a wonderful opportunity to give back and to teach your children the true value of the holidays and to be kind to one another. One theory I have and try to instill into my children is that there are people out there who have it worse. Remember that by giving yourself and your time you are helping families in need who have far less than you can imagine.

Don't let yourself or your family become a statistic. It is often difficult to budget when you are living pay check to paycheck, however it is possible. Remember that needs come before wants and that there are ways to give your family a memorable holiday without breaking the

By Hollie Nebelski





# ALL STRUNG OUT

By Nicole Saunders

I can vividly remember being a child and driving around with my parents in the winter, looking at Christmas lights and decorations on houses in local neighborhoods. In fact, it made such an impression on me that I have been doing the same thing with my kids every December for the last 15 years. As a home-owning adult you may be starting to feel the pressure to show your holiday spirit and put on a spectacular light display. There is no right or wrong to holiday décor, and this year I'm going to strive to find the right balance between simple- putting in a green porch light, and over the top – "Clark Griswold magnificence".

Walking into the local hardware store can be a bit overwhelming because there are so many options now for lighting, so if you're a beginner, start small. Just a lit tree or two in the yard, maybe some

strands strung around the porch can be tasteful. Each year work your way to something a little bigger, but don't overdo it if you are unsure of what you're doing. Remember the motto, "less is more". Be sure to only use lights with the UL (Underwriters Laboratories) label and be sure you're using lights designed specifically for outdoor use. It might benefit you to buy some outdoor hanging clips and electrical tape while you're there to save yourself a trip back.

Once you make your purchase and bring all your holiday splendor home, it's time to start decorating. Decide where the lights are going and once you have your game plan set, do yourself a favor and plug all your lights in before you hang them. While it may be highly entertaining for the neighborhood to watch you ripping down the brand new strand of lights that don't light

up, you won't be amused and the neighborhood children might learn a few new vocabulary words from you.

Only decorate the places you can comfortably reach, and remember what you put up, must come down. Don't be "that guy" who has his Christmas lights up all year because he didn't want to take them down in the spring. Safety is always a top priority so if you can't get on the roof but the kids are insisting that it needs some lights, call in a professional to do it; no light is worth a trip to the hospital. Finally, save on the electric bill and prevent a possible inferno by making sure to turn off the Christmas lights before you go to bed at night or leave for work in the morning, or just invest in a timer that will do the work for you.

**Happy Decorating!**



# Housing Hollie

**Dear Housing Hollie,**

I currently live in an apartment that told me upon move in that they have a strict no-pet policy. However, over the last 6 months I have noticed that my neighbor has a dog. I brought this up to my landlord and they haven't done anything about it. I don't think that it's fair. What can I do?  
Yours truly,  
Puppy Lover

**Dear Puppy Lover,**

I know that it is often frustrating living in a complex where you feel that your voice is not heard. Yet, please take a moment to consider the reason why some individuals have pets when you are not allowed. There are some individuals who suffer from physical and mental disabilities that are incapable of going about their daily lives without assistance. In some circumstances, individuals require assistance animals to help with those activities. One example is your neighbor could be deaf and require an assistance animal to inform him when someone is at the door. Keep in mind, not all disabilities are readily apparent or visible on the surface. The animals that you see in your apartment complex may not be considered pets; they may perform some type of task or provide some type of comfort to the owners.

You may inform your housing provider who has pets within the complex. However, they may not always provide you with the answer you wish to hear because they are not allowed to express that information or violate the privacy rights of other tenants. A person's disability is their private information and a landlord should never give up that information.  
With the best of Luck,  
Housing Hollie

**Dear Housing Hollie,**

Ohio has horrible winters that often leave my driveway and sidewalks covered in snow. I have called my landlord numerous times to plow the driveway and he has refused to lift a finger. What can I do?  
Sincerely,  
Freezing

**Dear Freezing,**

The winters in Ohio are a little rough and the parking lots and sidewalks need shoveled/plowed frequently. Some tenants are often confused about who's responsibility it is to ensure that the snow and ice does not accumulate on sidewalks and driveways. The first place to look is in your lease agreement. When you sign your lease agreement a landlord will often state if the plowing/shoveling is their

responsibility or yours. If it is your landlord's responsibility please treat it as a repair and provide your landlord with a letter requesting that the snow/ice be taken care of.

If your lease agreement does not state whose responsibility it is then the responsibility reverts to the tenant. The Ohio Landlord-Tenant law states that a landlord has no duty to keep common areas free of natural accumulation of ice and snow such as: parking lots, driveways and sidewalks. Therefore, it is your responsibility to remove the snow/ice yourself or contact a local snow removal company.

Stay Warm,  
Housing Hollie

Want to ask Housing Hollie a question? Submit your questions to [hollie@fhrc.org](mailto:hollie@fhrc.org). For more information visit [www.fhrc.org](http://www.fhrc.org)







## Deaf Seeking Housing in a Hearing World

Discrimination is prevalent within our community, however it is not as overt as when Dr. King was alive. Discrimination today is subtle and less in your face as it was in the 60's. However, one community of individuals suffers greatly in their search of housing due to being deaf. Deaf individuals are contributing members of the community who work for a living, and have to overcome many obstacles to be treated the same as everyone else. They struggle with many barriers in their attempt to gain access to rental housing. Fair Housing has seen firsthand the type of issues they face in an effort to rent a unit.

As technology increases, so does the methods of communication for the deaf community. Most individuals are aware of TTY, yet, TTY is now a thing of the past. Many people are unaware that most individuals in the deaf community use VRS. VRS stands for Video Relay Service. This service allows a deaf individual to connect via web cam and use American Sign Language to communicate with operators or other deaf individuals. This allows deaf individuals to have easy access to communi-

cating with the hearing world and their friends and family. This service is amazing because it allows deaf individuals to place calls to housing providers with the use of a translator.

The number one culprit of discrimination that deaf families face is hang-ups. In a study to determine the extent of discrimination a deaf individual faces on their search for housing, most housing providers mistake the VRS for a sales call or another type of solicitation. Nevertheless these individuals are calling anywhere between 5 to 10 times before they can get a person to answer the phone instead of hanging up. How frustrating do you think that is? Deaf individuals have a different language, a different method of communication and also don't always have the ability to just show up at a place when a phone call cannot be made. This makes it difficult in their search of rental housing. They often have to settle for less than desirable units because they do not have the ability to get in contact with housing providers because of the language barrier. If you are a housing provider, I ask that you make sure the next time you answer a call and think that it's a sales call, double check to make sure an operator is

not contacting you on behalf of a deaf individual.

Another barrier that deaf families face in their search for rental housing is assumptions housing providers make in connection to them being deaf. In one particular instance, we had a housing provider ask if the deaf individual had the ability to walk up stairs. In what way does being deaf constitute being elderly, or physically disabled? It does not; do not make assumptions about a particular individual based on their inability to hear. Most deaf individuals feel as though they are part of a community, a culture and they share their culture with many individuals just like them. They do not consider nor appreciate being labeled as disabled. They are a part of a community of individuals who share a different language. Be careful on making assumptions about the deaf community and appreciate that they have made it this far in the hearing world.

**By: Hollie Nebelski**

## How Cold is TOO Cold?

**By: Regina Barnes**

Fall has officially arrived in Northeast Ohio and winter will follow shortly. The changes in temperature during this time is a concern to many residents as it relates to heating their home. Many residents in apartment complexes where the landlord supplies the heat want to know when the heat will be turned on. For residents who are not in heat controlled environments, the landlord still has to provide the ability to heat the residence, such as a furnace, that will adequately heat the home.

So, what exactly are those guidelines that address how much heat is sufficient so a home is not a health or safety issue? Lake County Municipalities fall into one of two categories; they either have adopted an ordinance that provides guidelines for heating or they follow the guidelines directed by the Health Department.

Everyone has their own definition of what an ideal temperature feels like. Some may feel cold differently and may require additional steps to achieve that ideal feeling of warmth. If the above guidelines have been met in the home, and a health or safety issue is not present, then you may want to incorporate some of the following during the winter season:

- Clean out your heating vents and change furnace filters yearly.
- Reverse ceiling fans to create an updraft and push the heat down into the room.

- Make sure all your windows are tightly closed. Seal windows with plastic as an extra precaution.
- Make sure outside doors are properly sealed. Put a door sweep or roll up an old rug and place in front of the door to keep drafts out.
- Apply weather stripping on windows.
- Close off unused rooms and close the heat vents to keep heat in the used areas of the home.
- Invest in portable space heaters.



***If you need additional information, please contact Fair Housing Resource Center and we will be happy to assist you with your winter weather needs.***



## Your Guide to Heat

### Lake County

The Health Department mandates that the heat has to be adequately supplied and temperatures should not fall below 65-68 degrees when it is consistently cold during the winter months.

### The City of Painesville

During the cold weather months when it is consistently cold and when the heating system is working at its full capacity, the temperature should be at least 70 degrees when read 3 feet off the floor.

### The City of Mentor

Heat must be supplied from October 1 to May 15th. The temperature should read at least 65 degrees in all habitable spaces including bathrooms during the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. of each day with temperature of not less than 60 degrees during other hours.

*( If you do not live in the city of Painesville or Mentor, refer to Lake County.)*





## WINTER IS COMING!

By Nicole Saunders

Anyone familiar with Northeast Ohio weather knows that once November is here, snow is quickly behind and we only have a short window of time to get our house in shape for the seemingly endless cold months ahead. Although we want to enjoy autumn and the last minutes of good weather, it's the best time to take advantage of the moderate weather to repair any damages before the first frost sets in.

While you're outside in the yard shaking your trees to get those last leaves to fall, check all foundations for cracks and caulk around the areas where masonry meets siding, where pipes or wires enter the house, and around the windows and door frames to prevent heat from escaping. Caulking and sealing these areas is a quick and easy job, one that you can even delegate to your children when they're out "raking the leaves".

While those petunia's you planted in the summer were once pretty, they're not anymore. So cut back all those dead flowers and bushes and bag up all the cuttings. Remove air conditioning units from windows or wrap the outside box with a tarp or plastic air conditioner cover to prevent rusting of any vital parts. Drain garden hoses and store them inside. Also shut off outdoor water valves because any water left in exterior pipes and faucets can freeze and expand, breaking the pipes. Make sure all soil is emptied from pots and planters because dirt left in clay pots will freeze

and cause the pots to crack if left outside.

For those who are not afraid of heights, make sure the roof is in good shape by inspecting for missing and loose shingles. Cleveland winter weather can be very damaging on roofs and the roof is your first defense in protecting your home. Without it functioning properly, water damage can occur and this causes deterioration to insulation, wood and drywall, making electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems vulnerable. It's better to deal with repairs in the fall than to have to wear a raincoat in the house in the winter because your roof is leaking. Since you're up there anyway, clean out the gutters and downspouts and replace anything old or damaged. Clogged gutters are one of the major causes of ice dams. And although the icicles may look festive, they can be very damaging and rip down your gutters.

This is also a great excuse to organize your garage. Clean and store summer garden tools, pull out those shovels and snow blowers and make sure that all of your snow equipment is up and running before the first flurry falls. Prepare your yard equipment for storage by draining fuel from all gas-operated equipment such as lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and chain saws.

Now is also a good time to stock up on salt for your walkways and driveways.



Rock salt can damage plants, be harmful to your pets and the environment, and over time may cause your concrete to crack. Instead of rock salt, try a liquid de-icer or ice melters made from calcium-chloride. They won't be as harsh on your surfaces.

Finally, check the supports, stairs, and railings on porches and decks. And because we all know it's inevitable, make sure the handrails can support someone slipping on snow or ice. Clean your porch and deck furniture and cover and store outdoor furniture and grills in a protected area because it will be a long six months before it's time to sit on your porch again!



## Giving Back During the Holiday Season

By Regina Barnes

*"Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." ~ Muhammad Ali*

The holiday season is fast approaching, and Christmas is only a month away. While many enjoy the rituals of shopping, preparing meals for family and friends, or decorating their homes, a lot of county residents are homeless, facing the possibility of homelessness, or worse. The holidays do not have the same vision of family for these individuals. Giving back during this upcoming holiday season is a great way to spread a bit of happiness to the individuals who need it the most. There are many non-profit agencies in the county that can benefit from a bit of "giving".

Here are a few agencies to start with to get your giving juices flowing:

The homeless shelters in the county, such as Project Hope for the Homeless and crisis shelters, such as Forbes House, have an increase in occupants during the holiday season. Consider giving a monetary gift or donating supplies, such as blankets, clothing, toiletries, etc. You may also volunteer your time. Please visit their websites to get a list of items that are needed: [www.projecthopeonline.org](http://www.projecthopeonline.org) and [www.forbeshouse.org](http://www.forbeshouse.org)

The Salvation Army is also a great place to donate. The Salvation Army supplies clothing, food, and provide shelter to those in need. They also provide utility assistance, and have a health care clinic. The Salvation Army "want people who are homeless to have the reassurance that their immediate needs will be met with care and compassion."

Let's not forget our four legged friends during this season of giving. The Human Society of Lake County focuses on the relief of suffering and the prevention of cruelty and abuse to animals. They also strive to inform and educate on the humane and respectful treatment of all living creatures. Donate to your local society to further their mission of providing hands-on care and services to animals each year.

Fair Housing Resource Center's mission is to promote equal housing opportunities for everyone and to advocate for fair housing and diversity within Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula County.

You can also contact our agency to see what other ways there are to help within our community.

These are a few suggestions to get you motivated and in the spirit of giving. The list is endless on providing a helping hand to those in need. Let's make this a great holiday season for families and individuals who would benefit the most.

