

# ***COMMUNITY PULSE***

**YOUR QUARTERLY HOUSING CONNECTION**

**MARCH 2020**

**FAIR HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER**

**BE A BUDDY,  
NOT A BULLY**

**DIVERSITY KARAOKE  
CONTEST**

**NORTHEAST OHIO  
HOUSING CONFERENCE**



# *Fair Housing Resource Center Inc.*

The Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc. is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization that offers several housing programs that benefits residents of Lake County, Ohio. The mission of Fair Housing Resource Center is to promote equal housing opportunities for all persons and to advocate for fair housing and diversity in Lake and surrounding counties through the education and involvement of the public, the governments, and the business community.

FHRC operates a Landlord/Tenant hot-line service to county residents to assist them with their housing rights. FHRC also operates a fair housing intake complaint service for victims of housing discrimination. FHRC is a Housing Counseling agency certified by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and provides homeowner counseling such as foreclosure prevention, predatory lending, home financing and repairs.

## *Meet the Team*

### *Staff*

Patricia A. Kidd, Esq.  
Executive Director

Hollie Rondini  
Program Director

Nicole Saunders  
Testing Coordinator

Christopher Bowles  
Housing Counselor

Donna Stock  
Controller

### *Board*

Jennifer Sheehe  
Board President  
Legal Aid

Larry Rastatter, Jr.  
Board Vice President  
City of Mentor

Cynthia Brewster  
Board Treasurer/  
Secretary  
Individual

Dave Lima  
SURJ/ Move to Amend

Dean Moore  
Individual

Darrell Webster  
Individual

Janet Wetzel  
Progressive Land Title Agency



# Community Pulse

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*Fair Housing Resource Center Inc.*

1100 Mentor Avenue

Painesville, Ohio 44077

P:(440)392-0147 | F:(440)392-0148

Email: [info@fhrc.org](mailto:info@fhrc.org)

[www.fhrc.org](http://www.fhrc.org)





## *Fair Housing News*

### **Internet Certifications of Assistance Animals- Do I have to Accept Them?**

BY PATRICIA KIDD

It is very common for housing providers to receive a request to accept an assistance animal in spite of a strict “No Pet” policy. While most providers are aware that they cannot deny such a request; it is getting more difficult to determine the difference between a valid and invalid request. Even the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) agrees. Recently, HUD has published guidance for housing providers that includes a set of best practices for complying with the Fair Housing Act (FHA). This guidance defines service and other assistance animals, and the criteria for assessing whether to grant an accommodation, and information to help one understand the definition of a disability.

The most enlightening component of the report is that HUD finally took a stand and addressed the issue of “Internet Documentation of Assistance Animals.” HUD noted that the sale of these online certificates have saturated the internet and only added to confusion among housing providers. Therefore, HUD released this memo to help guide housing providers, Individuals with disabilities and the public on what is actually required for a proper accommodation request.

HUD states, “under the Fair Housing Act, a housing provider may request reliable documentation when an individual requesting a reasonable accommodation has a disability and disability-related need for an accommodation that are not obvious. In HUD’s experience, such documentation from the internet is not, by itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a non-observable disability or disability-related need for an assistance animal.” The memo further discusses what is sufficient documentation and encourages housing providers to engage in a good-faith dialogue with the requester prior to denying any request. HUD also clarifies this misconception that the requested animal must have a certificate or individualized training of animals.

Our office encourages all individuals to read this Memo and utilize the best practices provided in the report when making and responding to reasonable accommodation requests and decisions relating to animals. And of course, always call our office if you have any questions or concerns as we are here to help.

FHEO-2020-01 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, January 28, 2020, Assessing a Person’s Request to Have an Animal as a Reasonable Accommodation Under the Fair Housing Act.

<https://www.fairhousingnc.org/document/hud-assistance-animal-guidance-1-28-2020/>

### **AUBURN CREEK EASTLAKE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Willoughby-Eastlake Public Library is hosting one on one Tech Tutor Sessions this winter. One-on-one sessions are available once a month at each library location. Appointments are required in order to attend. Call the library to schedule a 30 minute session. Learn more at: <https://we247.org/tech-tutor/>

### **LAKE COUNTY VICTIM ASSISTANCE SERVICE CENTER**

The Lake County Victim Assistance Program (LCVAP) provides urgent, thoughtful, and quality advocacy services to victims of crime in Lake County. Advocates ensure that victims of crime are treated with fairness, dignity and respect in the criminal justice process. There is a bi-lingual advocate who is available to assist Hispanic victims and their families as well. For more information, call 440-350-2691 during normal business hours (8:00 AM - 4:30 PM Monday through Friday).

### **THE (GEAUGA) SUNSHINE SHOP**

The (Geauga) Sunshine Shop is a resale store offering adult, children's, and work clothes, toys, books, household items, small furniture and more. Proceeds from this shop support Geauga County children and families. The Sunshine Shop is open 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Donations are also accepted during business hours and from 8:30-11:00 a.m. on Wednesday just for donations.



## **DID YOU KNOW.....?**

**By: Chris Bowles**

### **LAKE-GEAUGA RECOVERY CENTER**

LGRC offers a grief support group for parents, spouses, partners, children, siblings or friends of those who have lost their lives suddenly because of drug or alcohol abuse. The Grief Support Group is free, open to the community and meets weekly at the Mentor office located at 9083 Mentor Ave., Mentor, Oh. For further information, contact 440.255.0678.

### **AARP**

is offering free tax preparation assistance Feb. 1 through April 15. To receive assistance from this service, you don't have to be an AARP member, and there's no age requirement to qualify. Tax preparations are done by trained volunteers who must complete training and pass IRS certification annually to assist in tax preparation. AARP offers this service in 6 locations in Ashtabula County, 4 locations in Geauga County, and 10 locations in Lake County. Call 888-227-7669 toll-free to find a location near you.

### **ASHTABULA COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING**

offers a calendar of trips, social and recreational activities, prescription assistance, health assessments, tax preparation, handyman services, insurance consulting, telephone reassurance, HEAP assistance, informational seminars, counseling services, meal programs, estate planning, medical assistance for canines, and information and referrals. Visit <https://www.ashtabulaseniorcenter.com/> or call 440-998-6750 for more information.

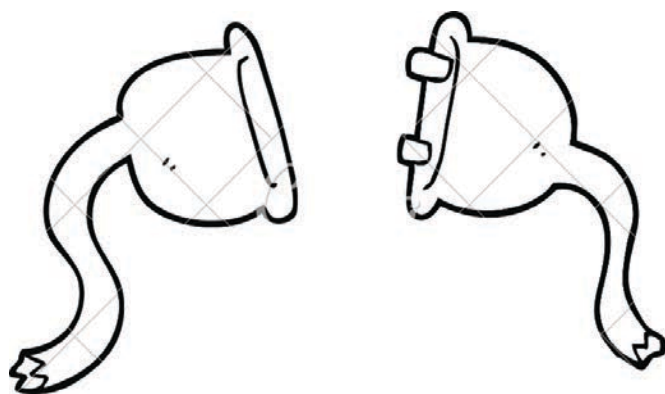


# Saving Money on Your Electric Bill

BY Nicole Munaretto

Who doesn't want to save money? Whether you live in an apartment or a house, there are several ways that both homeowner and apartment dwellers can reduce their energy costs and optimize savings. One simple and effective way to lower your bill is to lower the temperature in your house. When you aren't at home, or when you're in bed sleeping, [energy.gov](http://energy.gov) suggests lowering the thermostat to the low 60s and keeping it at 68 degrees Fahrenheit when you are home and awake. Another way to reduce energy consumption is to turn the temperature down to 120 degrees on your water heater. On average, water heaters use up about 17% of a home's energy use, so lowering the temperature could have a significant impact on your bill over time. By just adding another sweater or a blanket and lowering the thermostat, your "sweater savings" could be substantial.

Another quick fix to keeping the cold out is to seal your leaky windows and doors with weather stripping, caulk, or even plastic wrap. Your curtains can also be used not just as a window dressing but to keep the cold air out. During the winter, south-facing windows receive the most sunlight so keep those curtains open to capture heat from the sun. At night, keep all your drapes and curtains closed as an added barrier to any cold that may be leaking through the windows. By following these few simple hints you can put a major dent in your heating bill and put a little extra savings in your wallet!







FAIR HOUSING RESOURCE CENTER, INC.  
PRESENTS



# DIVERSITY KARAOKE CONTEST



## VALHALLA MARCH

7865 PLAINS ROAD  
MENTOR ON THE LAKE, OH 44094  
7 00 P.M. - 10 00 P.M.  
DRAG SHOW TO FOLLOW

# 14

GO BIG, GO SMALL, WE  
HAVE PRIZES FOR ALL!  
JOIN US FOR A KARAOKE  
CONTEST FOR WONDERFUL  
PRIZES, A NIGHT OF FUN.

LET'S CELEBRATE  
DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY  
THROUGHOUT OUR  
COMMUNITY!

- Contest starts at 7:00 p.m.
- Single or Group Acts Welcome
- 1st, 2nd and 3rd Place Winners
- Dress the part = Encouraged

Contact Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc.  
for questions or more information at  
(440)392-0147



# BE A BUDDY, NOT A BULLY!

*By: Nicole Munaretto*

Being a kid is a tough job. Some are better at it than others, and some just need a little help. With that in mind, the staff at Fair Housing Resource Center decided that we need to promote kindness and inclusive at the ground level - elementary schools. A buddy bench is an easy way for a child to reach out for help in a non-verbal, non-threatening way; simply sit on a bench. This may signal to other children that they are new to school, want to make new friends, or are simply looking for friends to play with.

The idea behind a Buddy Bench started when 10-year old Christian Bucks thought his family was moving to Germany for his dad's new job. While looking at schools in Germany, he saw one school that had a solution for loneliness of the playground - a buddy bench. The idea behind the buddy bench was that if a child was sitting on it alone at recess, it was a signal to other kids to ask him or her to play. Christian never did move to Germany, however he brought the idea to his principal in York, PA and in doing so introduced buddy benches to America.

According to an estimate by the U.S. Department of Justice, every seven minutes a child is bullied. although we can't help everyone, FHRC believes that kindness should start in your own back yard. With that in mind we have decided to embark on a new mission this year. FHRC will be giving out a total of three buddy benches in 2020, one for each county; Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula. Our agency will purchase the bench and assist with the installation into a local community school. We have kept it simple to win: fill out the questionnaire located on our website and nominate your school! You do not need to have a child enrolled in the school district in order to participate. Schools with the most nominations within each county will win. The contest ends on 3/31/2020.

~ KINDNESS. IT COSTS NOTHING,  
BUT MEANS EVERYTHING. ~







## DEAR HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS.....

Dear Housing Hollie;

I am a local senior who is struggling to pay my rent on a monthly basis. I make enough money to cover my rent, however, if any emergency occurs, I find myself stuck between fixing my vehicle or paying my rent. Are there any resources for me?

Sincerely,  
Aging in Place

# HOUSING

Dear Aging in Place,

I understand how difficult it can be to attempt to make your rental payments when you are on a fixed income. Our office currently have our Star Pro-gram which has a senior subsidy for individuals living in Lake County (except the City of Mentor.) You can apply for our program that can provide up to 6 months of subsidy with a monthly utility allowance. In order to qualify you must be 62 years of age or older, live in Lake County, Ohio, make enough money to afford your monthly payments and your land-lord must be willing to sign a new lease agreement. If you meet all these requirements then I highly suggest you stop in our office to pick up an application for assistance.

Sincerely,  
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,

We all know that the winters in Ohio are a little rough and the parking lots and sidewalks needs 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 side-walks 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 your-self or contact a local snow removal company.

Stay Warm,  
Housing Hollie

# HOLLIE



Dear Housing Hollie;

I currently live in an apartment complex. My neighbor has a large dog who barks all hours of the day and night. I have spoken nicely to my neighbor to inform him of my frustrations, but he has not even tried anything to prevent his dog from barking. I have told the landlord numerous times of this issue and the landlord said he will take care of it. The landlord has not done a thing!

Sincerely,

Barked out of my Mind

Dear Barked out of my Mind:

I can understand the frustrations of living next to a barking dog. While noise is to be expected, a barking dog can breach what is called peaceful enjoyment of your premises. All tenants have a right to peaceful enjoyment. Peaceful enjoyment requires a tenant to conduct themselves and to require other persons on the premises with their consent, to conduct themselves in a manner that does not disturb his neighbors' peaceful enjoyment of the premises. If a neighbor is breaching your right to peaceful enjoyment you can write your landlord a letter to resolve this issue. If the landlord fails to resolve the problem you can contact your local city to attempt for force a city ordinance if the neighbor is breaching quiet hours for that specific community.

Sincerely,  
Housing Hollie

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hollie" with a small heart symbol above the "i".





# Stay At Home

By: Hollie Rondini

We are all aware over time that our properties deteriorate and required continued maintenance and updates in order to continue the enjoyment of our home. Most individuals are not in the same position 10+ years later then they initially were when they purchased the property. We often see this with our aging population as well as our disabled and veterans community members.

FHRC has been lucky to partner with the City of Mentor to provide our Stay at Home program to the residents of the City of Mentor. This allows FHRC to provide accessibility modifications to low-moderate income residents who suffer from a severe mobility disability, or a family with a member who has a severe mobility disability. Some individuals may qualify for wheelchair ramps, lifts, adaptation of bathrooms for greater accessibility. All approved homeowners will be required to be subject to a lien on the property in accordance with the City of Mentor.

This program also can assist low-moderate income City of Mentor Veterans with various repairs ranging from outdoor step replacement, property maintenance, steps, handrails, exterior property nuisance and more. All approved homeowners are subject to a lien on the property in accordance with the City of Mentor.

To apply or for more information please contact Hollie Rondini at Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc. at (440)392-0147.





# Northeast Ohio Housing Conference

## IT STARTS WITH HOME



**APRIL 30 & MAY 1, 2020**

Four Points By Sheraton Cleveland-Eastlake  
35000 Curtis Blvd. Eastlake Ohio 44095

This event will provide 3 educational tracks offering the latest discussions and strategies regarding housing issues, including: Affordable Housing, Zoning, Fair Housing, Homeless, Aging in Place, Choice Neighborhoods, and more. For more information contact (440)392-0147.

**\$150.00- 2 Day Conference**

**\$100.00- Day 1 -April 30, 2020**

**\$50.00-Day 2 - May 1, 2020**

**REGISTER TODAY AT [WWW.FHRC.ORG](http://WWW.FHRC.ORG)**





# ARE YOUR TAXES IN ORDER?

BY NICOLE MUNARETTO

*Tax season has arrived! If you have not prepared for it yet there is no better time than now to do so! Being organized goes a long way in making things go smoothly for filing.*



It helps if at the beginning of each year you make a folder and all receipts go into it throughout the year, so it is all in one place when it is time to file. Store this in a safe place, like a file cabinet or drawer, but also keep it accessible so it is easy to get to. If you haven't done that though, make sure to gather all your tax records, such as receipts, cancelled checks, or anything else that would support any income or tax deductions or credits that you are claiming. It is very important to report all your income, which you can find on your W-2's and 1099 Forms.

Once you have gathered all of your information and it is time to file there are several options out there. You can do it alone, and 1040.com is an easy resource for that. It can make the process easy and affordable and, for every tax return filed on 1040.com, including free returns, they will donate \$2 to clean water projects. So not only do you get your taxes done, but you are helping out a good cause! The second option is to buy software and do it yourself. This is geared more towards individuals with simple tax situations. The IRS also offers something called Free File, which is available only on IRS.gov. If you made \$62,000 or less, you can use free tax software to file your federal return.

If you earned more, you can use Free File Fillable Forms, an electronic version of IRS paper forms.

If you are looking at filing multiple forms some tax software may lack the ability of having some of the confusing questions answered. This would be where the third option, meeting with a professional, would be helpful. Seeing a professional will cost but there are quite a few benefits like the time you will save and the accuracy of your forms, and someone is there in front of you to answer any questions you may have. need it.

When it comes time to file, provide all necessary information on your return and attach all required documents and schedules. Make sure that the spelling of your name, your current address, and all social security numbers are correct. When filing your return, the quickest and easiest way to receive your refund is to electronically file your return and use direct deposit. If you owe money, use IRS direct pay from your checking or savings account. One of the most important and smart things to do is to make sure you keep a copy of your filed tax return. This could save so much trouble in so many ways in the event you do happen to need it.

# LOCAL FAIR HOUSING CASE HIGHLIGHTS

FHRC was very busy late last year working on resolving several Fair Housing cases:



## ▼ Case 2

FHRC also recently settled a case against a Lake County landlord for a similar reason as to the one identified above. Here, the housing provider allowed the new tenant to have a service animal, but insisted on an additional \$100.00 a month pet fee. FHRC filed a complaint with HUD and the case was settled by the OCRC, and the owner of the property agreed to receive fair housing training, develop and implement a service, therapy, comfort, assistance animal policy, develop a written tenant screening policy and provide those policies to the OCRC. The owner also agreed to revise the rental application and pay monetary damages.

Fair Housing litigation is expensive - Fair Housing training costs under \$100.00.

## ▼ Case 1

FHRC recently settled a case against a Geauga County housing provider for denying a request for an assistance animal during an apartment search. The owner claimed he understood what a service animal was, but needed to “stick to his guns and absolutely no dogs, no cats and no pets.” The owner also mentioned a disabled woman just viewed the house and asked for a designated parking space because she didn’t walk very well. The owner claimed “this isn’t the place for her... you have to kind of ween those ones out.” FHRC filed the complaint with HUD, which was investigated by the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC). In the settlement agreement, the owners must provide tenant screening policies, fair housing training, revised rental applications, written service animal policies and written rental screening policies along with monetary damages.





REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD

# HIRE

A LEAD-SAFE CERTIFIED  
RENOVATION CONTRACTOR:

1. To help prevent learning disabilities
2. To help prevent behavior issues
3. To help prevent diminished motor skills
4. To help prevent lower intelligence
5. To help prevent hearing loss
6. To help prevent brain damage
7. To help prevent memory loss
8. To help prevent headaches

Today, there are over one million kids who have been poisoned by lead from old paint. Home repairs that create even a small amount of lead dust are enough to poison your child and put your family at risk. If you live in a home or apartment that was built before 1978, make sure you renovate right with a contractor that is Lead-Safe Certified in accordance with the new EPA guidelines for any renovation or repair project. They'll know how to protect your family.



To find a Lead-Safe Certified contractor in your area, visit [epa.gov/getleadsafe](http://epa.gov/getleadsafe) or call 800-424-LEAD.





**They told me to  
"Try someplace else."**

**So I did.  
I called HUD.**



## **Contact us for More information**

**Fair Housing Resource Center Inc.**

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Painesville, Ohio 44077

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