



Creating Inclusive Communities of Opportunity

FAIR HOUSING ADVOCATE

Quarterly Newsletter for Toledo Fair Housing Center

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Protecting Our Client’s Right to Seek Opportunity

Standing up for a client’s right to safe and equitable housing, Toledo Fair Housing Center successfully resolved a case through HUD on behalf of a client who suffered racial and disability discrimination. After moving to a new apartment in Oregon, OH, Altovise Cardell experienced repeated harassment from her neighbor that led to a hostile living environment. Assistance was sought from property management R.J. Lloyd and Co., Ltd., who failed to intervene

and refused to grant an early termination of the lease to enable Ms. Cardell to pursue alternative housing. Even though R.J. Lloyd and Co. Ltd. denies Ms. Cardell’s allegations, a conciliation agreement with R.J. Lloyd and Co., Ltd. was reached that includes an undisclosed financial compensation for Ms. Cardell, and incorporates measures to eliminate discriminatory practices that could harm other tenants.

“This case perfectly illustrates why fair housing is so important. Ms. Cardell made the move to Oregon because she wanted a better life for her family,” commented Michael Marsh, President and CEO of Toledo Fair Housing Center. “Discrimination not only took a toll on her well-being, it prevented her from

taking advantage of all the assets that community has to offer. When we protect housing choice, we empower individuals to pursue the American Dream.”

To assist R.J. Lloyd and Co., Ltd. with developing more inclusive practices,

Toledo Fair Housing Center will conduct training for R.J. Lloyd employees, provide guidance in the creation of a reasonable accommodation policy, and perform ongoing monitoring. These components of the agreement

aim to prevent further discrimination from occurring. “The more informed housing providers can be, the better we can protect individuals from enduring discrimination,” continued Marsh. “But it goes beyond housing providers; the entire community plays a role in expanding access to housing opportunities. Public officials have a responsibility to raise awareness of fair housing rights in various sectors of their community, including schools and law enforcement. Toledo Fair Housing Center is a resource to these communities, as we provide training and educational materials. We also offer our partnership to any entity who seeks to build a more inclusive community where individuals can prosper.”

“They returned my call right away – it was a miracle. I could have lost everything. I felt like I had nobody, then after I contacted Toledo Fair Housing Center I felt like I had the whole world by my side.” – Altovise Cardell

Community Joins Effort to Expand Housing Opportunities

Toledo Fair Housing Center and the City of Toledo Department of Neighborhoods partnered to host the Fair Housing Implementation Council kickoff on September 25. Approximately 50 stakeholders from across the community attended, including representatives from local government, nonprofit, and the housing industry, as well as community members and advocates. By forming a collaboration across key sectors, the Council aims to effectively address barriers to fair housing in our community and increase participation in the Fair Housing Action Plan.

Every five years, Toledo Fair Housing Center and the City of Toledo develop a Fair Housing Action Plan. This plan identifies impediment areas that may inhibit one's access to housing of their choice, and outlines action steps to address these barriers. Examples of such barriers include transportation, reentry after incarceration, homeless services, foreclosure, and public policies. "This is a comprehensive strategy to expand housing opportunities in the City of Toledo," explained Michael Marsh, President and CEO of Toledo Fair Housing Center. "Our goal is to broaden this to a regional effort, and we invite other communities in our area to partner with us to develop ways to ensure equal access to housing and, therefore, access to opportunity."



Left to right: Staff Attorney/Senior Compliance Director Leah Mullen, City of Toledo Department of Neighborhoods Representative Bonita Bonds, TFHC President & CEO Michael Marsh, Client Kevin Tucker, and VP/COO/General Counsel Diana Patton

One of the goals of the Council is to advocate for legislative changes necessary to provide protection for source-of-income, currently not recognized as a protected class. While attempting to rent a house with his wife, Mr. Tucker encountered a landlord who had previously refused to rent to a tenant receiving housing assistance and who denied Mr. Tucker the opportunity to rent once she discovered he had previously lived in public housing. "We thought, this isn't right. We're trying to make a better life for ourselves," Mr. Tucker commented. Although an investigation was conducted, Toledo Fair Housing Center was unable to file a complaint because source-of-income is not a protected class. "It's important to recognize that many people have nontraditional means of income: social security, disability or military benefits, child support, or housing choice vouchers (public housing assistance). As long as a person can prove their ability to pay, it shouldn't matter where the money comes from, and they shouldn't be denied the right to housing," explained Marsh.

A regulation issued by HUD in July reminds communities of their responsibility to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing, or proactively take steps to promote diversity and integration. Beyond simply prohibiting discrimination, jurisdictions receiving federal funding are required to actively take steps to develop inclusive policies and overcome historic patterns of segregation. "This partnership represents the City of Toledo's commitment to expanding housing opportunities, and we are grateful for their support," said Marsh. "But in order to achieve broad impact, we need other communities to come to the table."

Year of Accomplishments Highlighted at Annual Meeting

Toledo Fair Housing Center hosted their Annual Meeting on October 14 at United Way of Greater Toledo, which included a brief program recapping the year's activities and accomplishments.

Highlighting some of the year's events, Marsh continued, "To commemorate our 40th Anniversary, a documentary was produced in partnership with WGTE, and a civil rights march was organized to promote equality and dedicate a mural of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We've been able to raise awareness of fair housing rights through education and outreach efforts, including providing training for more than 850 individuals and placing ads that resulted in 20.8 million impressions. Our enforcement activities have been essential to help eliminate unfair practices in the housing industry. These efforts provided direct assistance to more than 1,500 individuals throughout the year, while systemic investigations have uncovered discriminatory practices impacting large populations. Designed to stabilize neighborhoods struggling from the foreclosure crisis, our MLK Inclusive Communities Program provided nearly \$268,000 in funding to assist homeowners with mortgage payments, property taxes, homeowners' insurance, and lien eliminations. This program also featured partnerships with the Lucas County Land Bank and The Ability Center of Greater Toledo to provide 150 roof replacements and 50 home accessibility modifications. Our partnership with the City of Toledo has been instrumental in implementing a strategic plan to address barriers to fair housing across our community."

The event also included the election of board members, and Toledo Fair Housing Center is proud to welcome Cherie Sears of Chicago Title and Tom Gibbons from the Toledo-Lucas County Plan Commission as new board members beginning in 2016. In recognition of her commitment and leadership during 18 years of service on the board, Julia Bryant was presented with a plaque from Michael Marsh.



Board Member Rob Salem, VP/COO/General Counsel Diana Patton, TFHC President & CEO Michael Marsh, Board President Julia Bryant and Vice Chairperson Louis Escobar



Thanking Community Leaders for Supporting the 40th Anniversary

Toledo Fair Housing Center recognizes the importance of community leaders who played an instrumental role in supporting the agency during the 40th anniversary and encouraging participation in April's civil rights march. To honor and thank these individuals, framed posters were presented to key individuals, including Toledo Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson.

Toledo Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson and TFHC President & CEO Michael Marsh

Fighting to Preserve Fair Housing Rights for All Ohioans

In an effort to preserve Ohio's fair housing laws, Toledo Fair Housing Center Vice President/COO/General Counsel Diana Patton traveled to the Ohio State Capitol on October 7 to testify in opposition to SB 134/HB 149. Although this bill has been amended from its original form, it still contains language that would weaken fair housing enforcement by reducing punitive damages, converting punitive damages to civil penalties, and requiring complainants to pay respondents' attorney fees. If passed, these changes would fail to effectively deter the housing industry from committing discrimination, and would discourage victims from pursuing justice. Diana's testimony urged lawmakers to reject the bill and preserve the fair housing laws that have protected Ohioans for decades.

Toledo Fair Housing Center Intern Recognized as Community Volunteer

Chelsea Meister has served as a committed volunteer for the past two years at Toledo Fair Housing Center, generously giving her time to help advance our agency's mission. As a law student at the University of Toledo, Chelsea applies her background to assist the agency with legal cases that combat housing discrimination. Her enthusiasm, warm spirit, and expertise have been an invaluable resource to our efforts in expanding housing opportunities. We're very proud she has been recognized for her accomplishments!

In an article profiling volunteers at local agencies published by Toledo.com, Chelsea was selected as a featured volunteer. The article highlighted the importance of volunteers to support the work of nonprofit agencies. Chelsea recounted how her work at Toledo Fair Housing Center fills her with a sense of purpose, enabling her to impact the lives of those in her community. Read the full story here.

Every year, the Association of Fundraising Professionals hosts the National Philanthropy Day Luncheon to honor local volunteers who contribute their talents to benefit our community. This year's event featured the recognition of Chelsea as an Outstanding Community Volunteer. Chelsea was honored alongside a group of key individuals that exhibit generosity and compassion in striving to transform our community.

Toledo Fair Housing Center proudly operates a robust intern and volunteer program, creating an environment that is rewarding for individuals looking to gain practical experience that will develop their skills while engaging them in meaningful work. The support of these interns and volunteers is essential to enable the agency to build capacity and achieve broader impact while not expending additional resources.



TFHC President & CEO Michael Marsh & Chelsea Meister

Welcome Rob Robinson!

Rob Robinson has joined our team as Director of Development. Rob is known for his commitment to excellence and he has extensive experience in fundraising and community leadership. His enthusiasm, positive energy, and experience are assets he shares with us. Rob and his wife Patricia look forward to starting the New Year with the Toledo Fair Housing Center family. "We are so excited to have Rob join our team. He brings some fresh ideas to our resource development efforts, which will ensure that our agency remains a community resource," Michael Marsh stated.



TFHC President & CEO Michael Marsh & new Director of Development Rob Robinson