OUR WORK IS NOT DONE

2015 ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

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• 2014 FINANCIAL AUDIT
LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

I’m extremely humbled and honored to have been selected earlier this year as Executive Director of HOME. HOME’s reputation for championing equality made joining this team an easy decision. In HOME’s over 45-year history, our neighbors have come to rely on HOME to stand with them when facing unlawful housing discrimination, resolve conflict between landlords and tenants, educate residents and property owners about their rights, and help families move to opportunity neighborhoods. As fair housing advocates, we’re passionate about the future of our community. Our victories are many, but our challenges persist. Housing discrimination remains a significant drain on community development. Where housing discrimination goes unchecked, the springboards to success are pulled to pieces. Some have asked: would the unrest of Ferguson, MI and Baltimore, MD have happened in integrated, thriving communities? My focus is simple: lead a culture and team committed to advancing successful communities for the 21st century. Thank you for everything you have done to support HOME in our community. We couldn’t do our best without supporters like you! I’d love to hear your thoughts about the future of our mission. Feel free to contact me at jeniece.jones@home-cincy.org or call 513-721-4663.

– Jeniece Jones, MPA, JD

OUR WORK IS NOT DONE

The 2015 Region V Education & Outreach Roundtable brought education and outreach professionals together for two days to share best practices, exchange ideas, and network. This was the first training event that focused exclusively on education and outreach. Many attendees believed this kind of opportunity was long overdue. “It’s nice to get the education and outreach folks together as it seems that this major component of FHIPs and FHAPs is always missing from bigger, nation-wide conferences,” said Brady Ripperger (Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana). We hope this was just the start to a longer conversation about fair housing education and outreach. You can watch the Roundtable documentary and both keynote presentations on our website and Facebook page.

“By hosting the Roundtable, HOME has re-affirmed its standing as one of the leading [FHIPs] in America.”

— G. Michael Payton, Executive Director of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission
CLient STorIeS

LaTonya Springs is a HOME client services specialist and assists members of all protected classes who feel that they have faced illegal housing discrimination.

HOME received a call that management had sent a notice exclusively to families with children. LaTonya asked the client to fax over a copy of the letter, which clearly stated that children could not play anywhere on the property. HOME went out to the property to investigate and found out that adults were still allowed to use the common area, as barbecue grills were set up throughout the complex.

LaTonya contacted the owner of the complex and explained that the new rule qualified as differential treatment and was a violation of the Fair Housing Act. HOME also identified a location that would be ideal for children to play. The manager assured LaTonya that that this rule instituted by the property manager would be rescinded and that children would be allowed to play on the property.

Janet Brown is HOME’s tenant advocate and assists tenants who are having housing problems or are in danger of losing their homes.

Janet’s clients were moving to Ohio from Colorado. They applied to rent a home here in Cincinnati. They gave the landlord a deposit and both parties agreed that the clients would sign the lease upon arrival in Cincinnati. When they arrived, the house was filthy with clothes and junk everywhere. It was so bad that they gave the landlord the keys back, took pictures, and went to stay in a hotel.

The clients contacted HOME about receiving their money back. Janet called the landlord and learned that the landlord already spent the clients’ money to pay other bills. Janet was able to get her clients’ their deposit back in addition to the cost of their hotel stay for the days they had been inconvenienced. The clients were so happy, they want to make a donation to HOME for Janet’s help.

Teresita Lewis is a HOME client services specialist and assists members of all protected classes who feel that they have faced illegal housing discrimination. Teresita is fluent in both English and Spanish.

Teresita’s client first contacted HOME because she was being wrongly evicted for nonpayment of rent. A new landlord had just taken ownership of the four-family building the client was living in and immediately raised monthly rent payments. The client had taken a picture of their on-time rent check and HOME was able to overturn the eviction.

However, upon working with the client, HOME learned that the two Hispanic families, including HOME’s client, were given eviction notices and the two non-Hispanic families were not. The other Hispanic family immediately moved out upon receiving the eviction. HOME investigated by sending testers to apply for the recently available unit. Hispanic testers did not receive a call back and one was hung up on after the landlord asked, “Are you Mexican?”

HOME was able to gather enough evidence of discrimination based on national origin. The client was reluctant to file against the landlord because of their immigration status and was satisfied with getting the eviction overturned. HOME filed the fair housing case in its name, won, and the landlord was required to pay monetary damages and attend fair housing training.

*Educational trainings conducted by HOME

**Of the 2662 calls HOME received this year, 471 were fair housing calls

*1186 improved landlord-tenant and tenant-tenant relations

*Educational trainings conducted by HOME

Janet Brown (L) and LaTonya Springs (R) with HOME clients
**CLIENT STORIES**

**Dotty Hall** is HOME’s housing counselor and assists clients with government housing assistance vouchers move to opportunity neighborhoods. She also works with landlords to help them find such tenants.

Dotty selected several mobility landlords who were honored at CMHA’s Housing Choice Voucher Department Appreciation Banquet in September.

**Raj Shah** has been with the Mobility Program since 1999 and has placed at least 23 units on the program. Most units have been single family homes and are located in low-poverty areas. He has empathy for his tenants and tries to work out any problems that may arise.

**Vanessa Hughes** has been with the Mobility Program since 2007. She manages units in Forest Park, a low-poverty area. She has had some difficult clients but she has shown great patience with and successfully worked out the issues.

**Carol Coaston** is HOME’s client services coordinator and assists members of all protected classes who feel that they have faced illegal housing discrimination.

HOME was contacted by a client who was having trouble with her landlord. The client had a doctor’s statement that indicated her health requires working air conditioning in her apartment. Despite her multiple requests, the landlord never acknowledged the client’s reasonable accommodation and the client’s health was adversely affected.

*156 landlord-tenant or tenant-tenant disputes were referred to Housing Mediation Services*

Carol referred her client to Housing Mediation Services. Carol’s client wished to be able to terminate her lease early, without penalty, if the repairs could not be made. The mediator learned that a new property manager recently took over the client’s apartment building. The new manager was willing to meet the client’s needs and agreed to immediately restore working air conditioning. The landlord assured the client that the apartment could be made to exceed standards to remedy any health concerns.

**THANK YOU 2014 MAJOR SUPPORTERS!**

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Left to right: Dotty Hall, Lisa Isham, Reema Ruberg, Vanessa Hughes, and Joy Gazaway at CMHA's Banquet
HOME won a victory at the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in August when the Court unanimously reinstated the case against the City of Blue Ash and their denial of a young girl’s right to her assistance animal, a miniature horse. This victory is not an end to their struggle but the decision does move Ingrid Anderson and her daughter one step closer to securing their rights under the Fair Housing Act.

HOME and Anderson’s initial lawsuit was filed in February 2014 when the city ordered the miniature horse to be removed due to an ordinance violation. HOME will continue to fight for Anderson and her daughter’s fair housing rights until the end.

*48% of the fair housing discrimination calls HOME received were about disability

*71% of the disability calls had to do with reasonable accommodations

* HOME statistics reported between 1/1/15 and 11/15/15
LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Thanks to a grant from the Cincinnati Bar Foundation, HOME is able to create three consumer education videos. These videos address various fair housing topics and Ohio tenant-landlord law.

Our first video, Return My Deposit, follows a tenant who is having trouble getting his full security deposit back from his landlord.

We want to thank our friends at Numediacy, a Convington, Kentucky-based new media design and production house. Return My Deposit can be found on our website and Facebook page. Keep an eye out for the next two videos in the series.