



# MIAMI VALLEY FAIR HOUSING CENTER NEWSLETTER

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JIM MCCARTHY, PRESIDENT/CEO

- ✓ The Miami Valley Fair Housing Center continues to remain closed for walk-ins. The center's staff are operating via phone, email and video conferencing during our normal business hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- ✓ On January 14, 2021, the Ohio Department of Health released information on the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. Visit [www.coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://www.coronavirus.ohio.gov) to learn more about the phased distribution, myths vs. facts and questions and answers.

## MVFHC and woman living with disabilities file lawsuit against Audubon Crossing

The Miami Valley Fair Housing Center (MVFHC) and Latisha Martin have filed a federal lawsuit alleging that the Audubon Crossing Apartments and Woda Cooper Companies engaged in discrimination in violation of federal law.

Ms. Martin has been a resident of Audubon Crossing since April 2019. She uses a power wheelchair for mobility and has limited use of her limbs. Starting in March 1, 2019, Ms. Martin submitted and re-submitted requests for reasonable accommodation and/or modification but faced repeated denials from Woda Cooper. Installation of a door opener was finally completed in July 2020.

MVFHC assisted Ms. Martin in filing an administration complaint with the City of Dayton's Human Relations Council (HRC), a HUD-funded Fair Housing Assistance Program. HRC found probable cause that disability discrimination had occurred against Ms. Martin and that MVFHC had diverted resources and had its mission to eliminate housing discrimination frustrated by Woda Cooper's actions.

The lawsuit asserts that Ms. Martin and MVFHC both merit compensatory damages as well as punitive damages.

## Fair Housing Month Update

April is Fair Housing Month across the nation to commemorate the signing of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Due to COVID-19 and social distancing requirements, the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center will not be holding a Fair Housing Month Celebration and Luncheon this year.

## Meet Your Miami Valley Fair Housing Center Board Members

Angela Brown is the Community Development Manager for the City of Kettering. She has lived in the Miami Valley since 2001, moving from Iowa City, Iowa where she served as an Associate Planner for the city. She has a bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in ethnic studies from Capital University in Columbus and a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning with concentrations in Housing and Economic Development from the University of Iowa.

She remembers early stories her parents told about being discriminated when trying to rent their first apartment together in 1968 as a mixed race couple in Columbus, Ohio. Her parents subsequently sued the rental company, won, and used the proceeds as the down payment on their first house. This fact educated her on the need for fair housing laws. Angela has served on the MVFHC board since beginning her employment with the City of Kettering in 2006. While she began her association with MVFHC as a funder liaison, her overwhelming passion for fairness in lending and fair housing has led her to become a full member in 2019.



Angela Brown  
MVFHC Board Member

## The National Association of REALTORS® adds Hate Speech as a Prohibited Activity

Recently the National Association of Realtors added Hate Speech as a prohibited activity to their code of ethics due to problems encountered in the pandemic. A news article<sup>1</sup> said:

REALTORS® who make discriminatory remarks, on their business or personal social media accounts, can be subject to disciplinary action.

NAR's Professional Standards Committee first developed the new rules this past summer after nationwide social unrest following the death of George Floyd. Local, state, and national REALTOR® associations reported receiving an "unprecedented" number of complaints about members posting hate speech on social media.

The new rules extend Article 10 of the Code, which already prohibits discrimination in professional services and employment practices, to include discriminatory speech and conduct. Article 10 prohibits REALTORS® from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The new Standard of Practice, 10-5, will now state: "REALTORS® must not use harassing speech, hate speech, epithets, or slurs" against members of those protected classes.

Jim McCarthy, President/CEO of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center (MVFHC) said: "I congratulate NAR and the people who brought these problems to light for taking decisive action and re-setting the tone nationally to embrace diversity and uphold fair housing and hate crimes laws. This is especially important in the age of COVID-19 where we have encountered hate speech and actions directed at, for example, Asians, people with disabilities and people perceived to be at risk for COVID-19 in residential housing transactions."

John Zimmerman, Vice President of MVFHC was trained as a hate crimes educator by the Center for the Prevention of Hate Violence at the University of Southern Maine in 2002. MVFHC became a local portal for a program called *Partners Against Hate*, a 5-year project educating school officials and law enforcement to address hate violence. One of the most important goals was to increase awareness of fair housing laws which cover housing-related Hate Crimes. This is significant to the mission of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center because 40% of all hate crimes are committed at homes. Since the inception of *Partners Against Hate* 18 years ago, MVFHC has continued education and intervention activities around hate crimes which violate fair housing laws AND which have become more prevalent in the housing market since the pandemic began nearly 10 months ago.

If you think you are a victim of housing discrimination, email us at [info@mvmfhc.com](mailto:info@mvmfhc.com) or call 937-223-6035.

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from REALTOR® Magazine Live "In 'Monumental Moment,' NAR Cracks Down on Hate Speech" November 13, 2020 <https://magazine.realtor/daily-news/2020/11/13/in-monumental-moment-nar-cracks-down-on-hate-speech>

## Women's Council of REALTORS® Annual Fair Housing Month Celebration

April 1, 2021 beginning at 11:30 AM. [Click here for more information.](#)

Building Leaders Education Program—*Professionalism (collaborating with Realtists) Fair Housing Trends and Resources* presented by John Zimmerman, MVFHC Vice-President.

This 1-hour presentation, sponsored by the Women's Council of Realtors and co-sponsored by the Greater Dayton Realist Association, will kick off the 2021 Fair Housing Month, held annually in April.

The "trends" that attendees will hear about is the rise in hate violence and hate speech over the last 12 months due to social unrest and upheaval and residential housing problems in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The "resources" attendees will receive are demonstrations of web based education on fair housing. The audience will learn how local fair housing advocates, the National Fair Housing Alliance and the National Association of Realtors have all risen to the occasion to deliver tools to those of goodwill to stop the avalanche of hate speech/actions in housing related matters.

This presentation is certified for one elective hour for Ohio Licensees with the Ohio Division of Real Estate.

## Fair Housing Update: Tips for working with people with a hoarding problem

What is hoarding? Compulsive hoarding is:

- the acquisition of, and failure to discard, a large number of possessions that appear to be useless or of limited value;
- living spaces that are sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed;
- the presence of significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding.

Word of Caution: Don't mistake clutter for Hoarding!

From <http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/clutter-hoarding>

“Many people live with a fair amount of mess, but the home is safe to move around in; they can straighten up enough to feel at ease having guests. Rooms are used the way they're meant to...”

So, learn to distinguish between poor housekeeping and a hoarding situation and as a best practice. You might want to contact a social service agency or a fair housing organization for assistance before making a determination on your own.

Why would persons who hoard be covered under fair housing laws?

Someone who is a compulsive hoarder meets the definition of disability under federal fair housing laws because it is a mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities.

What is an example of a reasonable accommodation that could assist a person whose housing is at risk due to hoarding?

If the housing provider is considering eviction of a person with a disability due to the hoarding, a remedy plan can be offered as a reasonable accommodation to preserve the tenancy. This remedy plan could include support services plus an individualized schedule for cleanup and inspections. However, due to the nature of hoarding, it would be practical to make it flexible enough to accommodate any future set-backs. In the end, failure to meet the sanitation and/or building codes could be interpreted as an undue financial and administrative burden for the housing provider which gives them cause for action.

This information was collected by John Zimmerman, VP Miami Valley Fair Housing Center with information from HUD and other sources. Go to [www.mvfairhousing.com/rental](http://www.mvfairhousing.com/rental) to retrieve. Click on *Links to HUD Policies* and look for the Joint Statement on Reasonable accommodations.



February 10

Miami Valley Fair Housing Annual Meeting—MVFHC members will receive an email in the coming days on how to register for the meeting which will be held on Zoom.

April 1

[Women's Council of Realtors Annual Fair Housing Month Celebration](#)—see story on page 2

### MVFHC Mission Statement

The mission of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center (MVFHC) is to eliminate housing discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity for all people in our region, the State of Ohio, and nationally.

Specifically, the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center seeks to eliminate housing discrimination against all persons because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, or any other characteristic protected under state or local laws. In furthering this goal, MVFHC engages in activities designed to encourage fair housing practices through educational efforts; assists person who believe they have been victims of housing discrimination; identifies barriers to fair housing in order to help counteract and eliminate discriminatory housing practices; works with elected and government representatives to protect and improve fair housing laws; and takes all appropriate and necessary action to ensure that fair housing laws are properly and fairly enforced throughout our region, the State of Ohio, and nationally.

### MVFHC Vision Statement

The Miami Valley Fair Housing Center recognizes the importance of “home” as a component of the American dream. We envision a country free of housing discrimination where every individual, group and community enjoys equal housing opportunity and access in a bias-free and open housing market. We envision a country where integrated neighborhoods are the norm, and private and public sectors guarantee civil rights in an open and barrier-free community committed to healing the history of discrimination in America.

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HUMAN  
RELATIONS  
COUNCIL



CITY OF DAYTON

Many people.  
Many voices.  
One city.

MIAMI VALLEY



FAIR HOUSING

# 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Lunch & Learn

**Spend lunch with us on**

**February 23, 2021**

**11:15 AM – 12:00 PM**

***Registration for Zoom Session at:***

**[www.bit.ly/39N1yHv](http://www.bit.ly/39N1yHv)**

- Learn about disability as a protected class under the Fair Housing Act
- Understand how the law provides for “reasonable accommodation”
- Learn about recent COVID-19 related housing discrimination matters
- Obtain resources for making referrals and more information to assist vulnerable residents / your clients.

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**Additional dates include 3/23, 4/27 and 5/25**