

After 15 years, Miami Valley Fair Housing Center's mission remains unchanged



Vice President John Zimmerman, Miami Valley Fair Housing Center



The exterior of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, located at 21-23 E. Babbitt St.



MVFHC paralegal Nicole Wilson (left) and Enforcement Coordinator Anita Schmaltz discuss work in the office. Contributed photos by the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center staff

‘Everyone has an equal right to housing opportunities, and that is what we are all about.’

By Kathy Tyler
Special Section

When the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center became a nonprofit organization 15 years ago, the mission was to eliminate housing discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity for all people in the greater Dayton region.

During the past 15 years, the mission has not changed. Some of the terminology has changed and a new problem has arisen. But through education, assistance and cooperation, the MVFHC recognizes the importance of “home” as a component of the American dream.

“I have been working for the county since 1980 and I have seen all kinds of changes,” said Judy Mott, community development manager for Montgomery County and a member of the MVFHC Board of Directors. “We have the best staff and the best program I have recalled seeing since I have been with the program. Fair housing is not a popular subject. It is not isolated to the inner city or one ethnic group over another. This is hitting all levels of our population.

“Housing and fair housing issues are a little different,” Mott said. “We will always have what I call ‘not-in-my-backyard’-people. But what I have seen is most of the communities are much

more open to accepting a more diverse population with housing. The MVFHC staff has taken a more pro-active roll. They do training sessions; work with the Dayton area Board of Realtors, apartment association and other organizations to educate people. It’s been a lot of retraining. Everyone has an equal right to housing opportunities, and that is what we are all about.”

The MVFHC provides assistance to people who request an investigation into a situation when they think or feel that their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability was the basic motivation for differential treatment given by anyone associated with their search for hous-

ing. Professional counseling and guidance are also available to individuals who encounter discrimination in the search for housing, including informing the consumer of options under FHAA and providing support for the consumer while going through the process of asserting housing rights.

While confronting discrimination issues are an important part of MVFHC mission, predatory lending has also fallen into the fair housing category.

“Our general focus remains on discrimination in housing practice but in the last six to seven years we have been involved with predatory lending

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6