



MIAMI VALLEY FAIR HOUSING CENTER NEWSLETTER

Published by the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc.

FALL 2019

JIM MCCARTHY, PRESIDENT/CEO

Celebrate *THE MOVEMENT 2*

Thanks to all who attended Celebrate *THE MOVEMENT 2* in August and to all the sponsors and silent auction donors who helped to make the event a success.



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Rose Family Foundation

Meet Your Miami Valley Fair Housing Center Board Members

Karen M.R. Townsend, Ph.D. is the president of *KTownsend Consulting*—an organizational development firm offering expertise in the areas of leadership development, 21st century diversity and personal excellence. Dr. Karen works with leaders to create inclusive environments and build strong teams so that they can effectively and efficiently meet the needs of their diverse clients and customers. Her goal is to make sure that professionals at every level have the tools required to live and lead confidently. Dr. Karen is also the founder of *About My Sisters*—an organization “on a mission to empower one million women and girls.” In 2018, her annual conference, *Sister To Sister* celebrated its 25th Anniversary and was recognized as one of the longest-running women’s events in the United States.

Dr. Karen is an advocate for women and has spoken internationally on the topic “Radical Self-care” and why it is important for women to *unapologetically* make themselves a priority. She has written a number of articles on this subject and her first book was inspired by her own quest to find life balance. *It All Started When I Stopped Using Lotion: One Woman’s Journey From Chaos to Calm* encourages women to “Take their **TIME: Time for ME!**” Organizations across the globe are using “The Lotion Book” to support the professional development and career advancement of high potential women leaders.



Karen Townsend, Ph.D.
MVFHC Board Member

A native of Kentucky, Dr. Karen has lived in Dayton for the past thirty years and is actively engaged in the community. In addition to serving on the board of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Dr. Karen is an active member Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Tabernacle Baptist Church and the Kentucky State University Alumni Association. Dr. Karen’s honors and awards include being commissioned to the *Honorable Order of The Kentucky Colonels* in recognition of leadership and community service; being named a *Woman of Influence* by YWCA Dayton and one of the

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Fair Housing Update: Talking to Applicants

Web-based housing listing sites are sometimes a valuable place to find good information. The following is a quote from a Zillow page found at <https://www.zillow.com/rental-manager/resources/fair-housing-guide/>.

“In fair housing terms, discrimination means treating someone differently based on their being part of a protected class. As part of a strategy to minimize the possibility of inadvertent discrimination, consider using a documented and consistent method to screen and accept applicants.

Give everyone an equal opportunity to apply — no matter what they look or sound like — and accept or deny renters based on criteria that are consistently applied and not related to a prospective renter’s status as part of a protected class.

Avoid questions or suggestions that may be perceived as discriminatory. Even a well-intended statement such as, “This unit would be great for a young couple,” or asking a friendly question like, “Are you two married?” can be interpreted as evidence of discrimination. If you ask questions to screen tenants on subjects like credit history or tenant history, ask the same questions of all tenants, and score prospective tenants in a similar manner, without regard to their status as a member of a protected class. Consider how you would feel if asked the same questions. Keep the conversation focused on the property for rent and the amenities. Let the potential renter ask you questions so you can answer factually.”

Information for the article was gathered by John Zimmerman, VP Miami Valley Fair Housing

Fair Housing Update: The Use of Criminal History When Screening Applicants

HUD has a long history of urging housing providers to conduct individual assessments of applicants in order to avoid engaging in conduct or developing policies that have a disproportionate adverse effect on protected classes under the Fair Housing Act. One such guidance is the 2016 joint statement by HUD and the Dept. of Justices called: “Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records by Providers of Housing and Real Estate-Related Transactions.”

The guidance encourages landlords to be consistent in using criminal history restrictions. In fair housing testing of landlords it has been found that some leasing agents would coach white prospects on how to get around the criminal history restrictions their company had in place for all prospects and not give that same service to blacks or Latinos. That violates the best practice of affording all prospects accurate information about the screening process.

It is best practice to have a policy that reads, for example: “Management reserves the right to refuse an applicant who poses a health or safety threat to other residents,” rather than having a blanket ban on anyone with a criminal past or a felony. Another best practice is to implement this sample policy: “XYZ business conducts criminal background checks in order to make informed decisions about all applicants’ suitability for tenancy.”

“Informed Decisions” can use what HUD’s guidance calls “Relevant individualized evidence:” such as:

- the facts or circumstances surrounding the criminal conduct;
- the age of the individual at the time of the conduct;
- evidence that the individual has maintained a good tenant history before and/or after the conviction or conduct; and
- evidence of rehabilitation efforts

To find out more, go online to the MVFHC website at www.mvfairhousing.com/rental and click on the “Links to HUD Policies” at the bottom of the page. This new guidance is at the top of the page.

Information for the article was gathered by John Zimmerman, VP Miami Valley Fair Housing Center from the Department of Justice and HUD.



Karen Townsend Ph.D. Continued from Page 1 ...

25 Women to Watch by Women in Business Networking. She was selected as a 2019 *Dayton Skyscraper*—a distinction given to Dayton (Ohio) residents in recognition of personal and professional achievements, and their commitment to serve as role models for inner-city youth. Most recently, Dr. Karen was appointed to serve on the advisory board for the *Women/Future conference* which is sponsored by the Stevie® Awards—an international association dedicated recognizing outstanding business owners worldwide and she has been nominated for “Woman-owned Business of the Year” by the Dayton Business Journal.

Dr. Karen was honored to be invited to serve on the board of MVFHC because she understands the importance of the organization’s work. “I didn’t realize it at the time, but many of my family members—including my mother—experienced housing discrimination,” said Dr. Karen. “Because they didn’t know what to do, and there was no agency like MVFHC, they suffered needlessly. I am proud to be a member of this board so that I can be a part of providing advocacy and support to the under-served and the under-informed.”

HUD’s Pending Disparate Impact Rule

In an extreme move against a core civil rights protection, Trump’s Department of Housing and Urban Development is proposing a rule that would allow financial institutions, insurance companies, and housing providers to engage in covert discriminatory practices by dramatically weakening disparate impact liability under the Fair Housing Act.



For more than 45 years, “disparate impact” has been a crucial legal tool to fight discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity. This protection means that companies and individuals covered under the Fair Housing Act must choose policies that apply fairly to all people. Some policies that seem neutral in theory can unfairly exclude certain groups of people or segregate particular communities in practice. This protection allows us to identify and prevent harmful, inequitable, and unjustified policies, thereby ensuring that everyone can be treated fairly.

To learn more about this important issue, visit www.DefendCivilRights.org



October 31	Halloween
November 3	Daylight Savings Time ends
November 11	Veteran’s Day—MVFHC office closed
November 28-29	MVFHC office closed for Thanksgiving Holiday
December 24-25	MVFHC office closed for Christmas Holiday
Dec 31-Jan 1	MVFHC office closed for New Year’s Holiday

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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