



Fair Housing Gazette

The newsletter of the Fair Housing Project
of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc

"Making a difference in peoples lives"

Fall 2007



Our Mission

To provide outreach, education, advocacy and enforcement of all federal, state and local housing laws to ensure that no Palm Beach County resident is denied access to housing based upon his/her race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, familial status, age, and/or sexual orientation.

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TRAINING FOR CASEWORKERS WHO HANDLE THE NEEDS OF THE DISABLED

In September, the Staff of the Fair Housing Project of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. conducted a "Fair Housing Disability Training".

The event was held at the Bistro Restaurant Ten Zero One in the Marriott-West Palm Beach, FL. Directors, managers, case handlers, and other staff members from local area agencies whose primary focus is addressing the needs of the disabled participated in the training. The premise of the training was to familiarize these case workers with the fair housing laws regarding the disabled and to provide them with useful information that would help them to better serve their clients on a daily basis. It was also an opportunity to network with these agencies and to reveal the full range of services provided by the Fair Housing Project.

Housing Advocate, Ricardo Collier, provided information about taxes and protections afforded those with disabilities under the U.S. Tax Code. Legal Aid Staff Attorney, Stephanie Carden, spoke about social security disability and services that Legal Aid provides under its Ryan White Project. Program Manager, Carlton Smith, gave an overview of the Fair Housing Act and discussed an individual's rights under federal, state, and local fair housing laws, specifically, protections for the disabled. Nina Holland, from the Palm Beach County Office of Equal Opportunity, captured the audience with her presentation on accessibility issues. Supervising Attorney, Tequisha Myles, provided information regarding reasonable accommodations and discussed recent cases and legal issues.

At the conclusion of the presentation, attendees were asked to navigate a pre-planned route through the restaurant and hotel while using a wheelchair, cane, guide cane, walker, or crutches. They had to open doors, travel up and down a ramp, negotiate the rise and fall of the flooring, and had to figure out a way to go up and down steps. At the end of the day, the case workers received very useful information and

also gained a greater appreciation for what a person with a disability has to deal with on a daily basis.

CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN: MAKING HOUSING WORK FOR EVERYONE

In this period of dwindling housing opportunities and the ongoing need as well as demand for accommodating shelter, we find ourselves searching for solutions that adequately address the issues of such a diverse society. The concept of Universal Design may be a viable option to address these needs.

The Principles of Universal Design were developed by The Center for Universal Design in collaboration with a consortium of universal design researchers and practitioners from across the United States, namely, Bettye Rose Connell, Mike Jones, Ron Mace, Jim Mueller, Abir Mullick, Elaine Ostroff, Jon Sanford, Ed Steinfeld, Molly Story, and Gregg Vanderheiden. Funding for the project was provided by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Following are the Seven Principles of Universal Design along with the guidelines to each principle:

PRINCIPLE ONE: Equitable Use. The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities. **GUIDELINES:** Provide the same means of use for all users: identical whenever possible; equivalent when not; Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users; Provisions for privacy, security, and safety should be equally available to all users.

PRINCIPLE TWO: Flexibility in Use. The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities. **GUIDELINES:** Provide choice in methods of use; Accommodate right-or left-handed access and use; (continued on page 2)

