



Creating Inclusive Communities of Opportunity

# FAIR HOUSING ADVOCATE

Quarterly Newsletter for Toledo Fair Housing Center

## Paving the Way to Justice

**T**oledo Fair Housing Center's public courtyard is located in the heart of downtown Toledo, a highly visible and frequent pass-through for pedestrians and business professionals on their way to their destination. An attractive and usable green space within our urban core, the courtyard has been recently reconstructed to serve as an inviting gathering space for our community.



The agency hosted the Courtyard of Justice Grand Re-opening on August 25. The event was an opportunity to unveil the newly renovated public courtyard and showcase the commemorative bricks and benches that have been purchased by generous community supporters and inscribed with names or special messages. Guests gathered for a relaxing evening, enjoyed wine and cheese, and heard stories about how Toledo Fair Housing Center is impacting our community.

"We are grateful to all the individuals and organizations who have generously purchased bricks and benches to enhance our new courtyard," commented Michael Marsh, President and CEO of Toledo Fair Housing Center. "Every brick and bench helps lay the path towards fairness and equality, furthering our efforts to protect housing choice for every member of our community. This support is essential to build inclusive communities of opportunity, where more people have the chance to thrive and pursue the American Dream."

### Missed Our Event?

There's still an opportunity to view our new courtyard!

Join us for **Courtyard Connections:**

**Thursday, September 15, 5-6:30 p.m.**

*Wine & Cheese Served*

**Thursday, September 22, 5-6:30 p.m.**

*Wine & Cheese Served*

**Thursday, September 29, Noon-1 p.m.**

*Lunch Served*

**Thursday, October 6, 8-9 a.m.**

*Breakfast Served*



Photo Courtesy: Rico Neller, *La Prensa*





# There is No Place Like HOME



**T**oledo Fair Housing Center hosted their second annual fundraiser celebration There Is No Place Like Home on August 11 at the Pinnacle in Maumee. The happy hour event was part of the Pinnacle's Twylite Thursday series, with a portion of proceeds benefitting Toledo Fair Housing Center. More than 100 community members

gathered for a fun evening and showed their support for protecting housing rights.

The lively event featured appetizers, cash bar, and networking, and entertainment provided by DJ Moni Featchurs brought many attendees out to the dance floor! Guests were encouraged to don red shoes to reflect the evening's theme, inspired by the Wizard of Oz. This year's event also offered raffle drawings and featured several of our hosts dressed in costume.

"There truly is no place like home, because home is the gateway to accessing opportunities and achieving your dreams,"

commented Michael Marsh. "For those who are not familiar with our agency, this event was a chance to come out for a fun evening, meet our staff and board, and learn about our efforts to stabilize neighborhoods and expand housing opportunities."

[View more photos of our event here](#)

Photos Courtesy: Kathy Jaworski,  
Photography by K





# Holding Bank of America Accountable for Neglecting Communities of Color

On August 31, Toledo Fair Housing Center joined the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) and other local fair housing organizations to file an amended discrimination complaint against Bank of America (BoA), alleging illegal discrimination in African American and Latino neighborhoods. The complaint is now comprised of evidence from 1,267 BoA properties in 30 metropolitan areas and 201 cities throughout the United States.



Bank of America failed to reattach the gutter here, a quick, easy fix.

“Banks should be creating financial opportunities, not contributing to neighborhood blight,” stated Michael Marsh. “By failing to maintain and market foreclosed properties in communities of color, Bank of America has played a role in the continued struggle of our neighborhoods of color to recover from the recent housing crisis.

“The neglected properties in African American and Latino neighborhoods reveal significant racial disparities when compared to White neighborhoods, and this means our communities of color will experience the higher crime rates, increased health risks, and economic disadvantages associated with foreclosures. Bank of America has a responsibility to maintain all of their properties, so that all members of our community have a fair chance to live in a safe,

healthy, vibrant neighborhood. Our responsibility is to hold them accountable for that.”

Evidence obtained during this investigation reveals BoA routinely fails to lock or secure doors and windows, remove trash and debris left by former owners, mow and edge lawns, trim shrubs, and cut back invasive plants in African American and Latino neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, BoA keeps its foreclosures in white neighborhoods in good condition, mowing and edging lawns regularly, and properly disposing of the belongings left behind by former owners. BoA is paid to



Bank of America failed to reattach the porch railing.



perform these routine duties in *all* neighborhoods for *all* of its foreclosures.

[View photos of neglected properties here](#)

Bank of America just left trash and debris all around the yard.

# WHO WE ARE

Here at Toledo Fair Housing Center there are many people who put countless hours and enormous amounts of effort into growing the agency. We would like to offer you the chance to get to know some of the determined and energetic staff and board members who work hard to keep housing fair!

## GETTING TO KNOW President & CEO Michael P. Marsh

Currently serving as the President and CEO, Michael initially joined TFHC in 1996 as a volunteer. Michael's passion for civil rights began while studying at BGSU, where he developed an appreciation for cultural diversity. Today he enjoys immersing himself in different cultures through travel, and his journeys have taken him to 54 countries and 35 states. Gaining perspective from the people he meets while traveling, Michael shares, "Even though we may have cultural differences, at the core, we are all human beings who are looking to improve our quality of life, and we have more similarities than differences at the end of the day."

### Michael's Favorite Quote

"Find out who you are  
and do it on purpose."

-Dolly Parton

Michael draws inspiration from those who can persevere through difficult times and "strive to make the world a better and more beautiful place through their contributions," noting that his role models Dolly Parton, Oprah Winfrey, and Tina Turner exemplify these traits.

Encouraging more young people to become involved in civil rights and nonprofit work, Michael believes that they "Can help us move toward a more just and equitable society because they are not burdened by the past. In order to move us forward, we need thoughtful and deliberative leaders."

## GETTING TO KNOW Board Member Ernest Walker, Jr.

A member of the Board of Directors, Ernie's involvement with TFHC dates back to the 1980s. He is originally from Cocoa Beach, Florida and earned his bachelor's degree at Sienna Heights University in Adrian, Michigan. Ernie's passion for the arts and music is evident, as he is a longstanding member of the Clarence Community Chorus.

Hearing Rev. Jesse Jackson speak is what first sparked an interest in civil rights, and other sources of inspiration include the men and women serving in the military and the Bible.

Advising those who want to work in the nonprofit sector, Ernie states, "Have a purpose, do the homework, develop a support group, and have a means of funding. Also have patience because things do not just happen overnight."

### Ernie's Favorite Quote

"Wisdom is the principal  
thing; therefore get wisdom.  
And with all your getting, get  
understanding." -Proverbs 4:7

## Interested in helping us open the door to housing opportunities? Join our Board!

If you are a community-minded, civil rights advocate who can think strategically, you may be a great addition to our leadership. We are currently looking for individuals willing to serve as philanthropic ambassadors for our agency, who can increase community awareness and support for our important work. If you are interested in serving on the TFHC board, please submit a resume to Michael Marsh at [michaelmarsh@toledofhc.org](mailto:michaelmarsh@toledofhc.org).

Michael P. Marsh, CFRE  
President & CEO

#### Officers

Louis P. Escobar.....Chairperson  
Robert S. Salem ....Vice Chairperson  
Denise Alvarado..... Secretary

#### Directors

Keith Jordan  
Matthew Lewandowski  
Emily Ann Monago, PhD  
Carla Nowak  
Cherie Sears  
Cheryl Slack  
Ernest Walker Jr.  
John Widmer  
Patricia Wise

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#### VISION

The Fair Housing Center will be a leading visible force in preventing and correcting discriminatory practices.

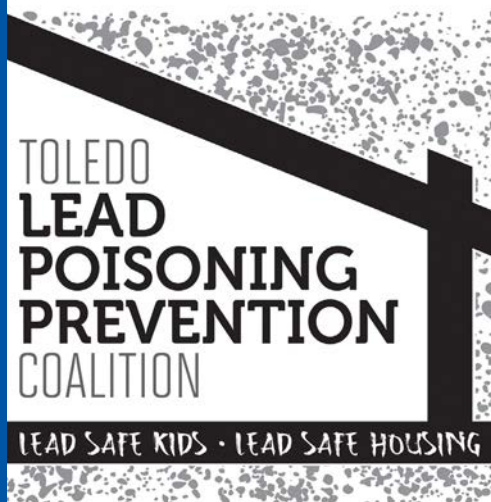
#### MISSION

The Fair Housing Center is a non-profit civil rights agency dedicated to the elimination of housing discrimination, the promotion of housing choice and the creation of inclusive communities of opportunity. To achieve our mission, the Center engages in education and outreach, housing counseling, advocacy for anti-discriminatory housing policies, research and investigation and enforcement actions.

# Safe and Healthy Housing for All

In an effort to protect children from facing a lifetime of challenges caused by lead poisoning, Toledo Fair Housing Center worked in collaboration with community partners as part of the Toledo Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition (TLPPC) to advocate for legislation that would reduce exposure to lead hazards. An ordinance developed by TLPPC and the Mayor's office was introduced to Toledo City Council on June 14, and after exhaustive efforts to build support from elected officials and community stakeholders, was unanimously passed on August 16.

Although it was banned for residential use in 1978, lead-based paint is the most common source of lead exposure for young children. Frequent hand to mouth contact means children are particularly susceptible to ingesting lead paint, and sources include peeling or chipped paint, dust from windows, or soil that is tracked into the home. In the city of Toledo, an estimated 3,500 children are afflicted by lead poisoning, and approximately 45,000 – 60,000 homes contain lead paint.



The lead ordinance applies to rental properties with one to four units and home daycares built before 1978, requiring owners to obtain and pass a lead inspection and register their property with the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department.

With a goal of being both effective in addressing lead hazards while also providing a feasible, affordable option for landlords, the lead ordinance calls for the use of interim controls. These low cost, simple measures include cleaning to remove lead dust, repainting areas with chipped or peeling paint, and covering bare soil. Such methods proactively address the primary sources of lead poisoning, but are significantly less costly and less invasive than abatement.

The long-term social, educational, and economic effects of lead poisoning can prevent children from reaching their full potential and result in significant societal costs associated with healthcare, special education, decreased earnings, and incarceration.

The patterns of lead poisoning reveal racial and economic disparities, as African American children in low income neighborhoods experience the highest rates of lead poisoning due to the age and quality of housing stock in the inner city. Requiring rental properties to be lead safe will help ensure all children have access to safe and healthy housing, regardless of who they are or where they live.

“We all have a responsibility to protect those who are most vulnerable in our community, and reducing the risk of lead poisoning gives children the possibility of growing up in a home that doesn’t threaten their livelihood,” stated Michael Marsh. “By passing this ordinance, the leaders of our city chose to put human rights before property rights, and ensure the opportunity for a bright future is within reach for all children.”