



## Celebrating Fair Housing Month

Fair Housing Month—nationally recognized in April—is a time to renew and strengthen the commitment made through the Fair Housing Act to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in housing. In April, we reflected on the progress made and the work ahead to ensure that everyone can access safe, decent, and affordable housing free from discrimination.

Here is a recap of just a few of The Fair Housing Center's events and activities in April.

### Northwest Ohio Realtors Fair Housing Month Kick-Off Breakfast!

We celebrated Fair Housing Month at the Housing For All Breakfast hosted by Northwest Ohio Realtors (NOR).



### Lead Safe Ordinance Overview

The City of Toledo Lead-Safe Ordinance, Section 2, Municipal Code Chapter 1760 requires residential rental properties with four units or less and Family Child Care Home built before 1978 to obtain a Lead-Safe Certificate.



## Toledo Lead Safe Laws

On April 15, The Fair Housing Center and members of the Toledo Lead Poisoning Prevention Coalition presented to City Council on the importance of Toledo's local lead poisoning prevention laws. City Council later unanimously adopted updates to the law as it moves forward. Landlords should review <https://toledoleadsafe.com/> for more information.

## Ode to the ZIP Code

This year's contest had over 680 submissions, and we were blown away by the creativity and passion demonstrated by all participants. At our in-person event, we had over 45 finalists come out and share their odes with a captivated audience, from heartfelt tributes to their neighborhoods to odes highlighting the struggles that so many of our communities still face. The event showcased what makes our neighborhoods unique, and the finalists' work truly captured what it means to be a part of a community.

We look forward to seeing all the wonderful submissions again next year.

Here are this year's top Odes from each age category:

Adult

# JENNIFER ZUNK

4 Confederate flags, Trump flags

8 Neighbors drinking lies, barbecuing  
democracy, and proclaiming  
superiority

1 \*SIGH\*

4 Don't ask, don't tell

4 I miss my Blue city



Young  
Adult

# JORDIN HARRIS

4 I was told to  
3 leave my mark  
6 wherever I went, so I etched  
0 (my salutations to home in the  
concrete)  
7 next to the seed I grew from



Youth

# THEO DECKER

4 dogs in the distance  
3 cars driving by  
6 snow falling down on the ground  
1 calmness  
6 so much in a simple neighborhood



## Homes and Dreams

What an incredible night at our 2nd Annual Homes and Dreams Fundraiser! We are so thankful to every person who came out to support our mission and our awardees, Julia Lee, Alicia Smith, Rashad Daoudi, and Ashleigh Smith, for their efforts and commitment to advancing the fair housing movement! We also want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our sponsors, volunteers, and staff who made this event possible.

Together, we're striving to ensure everyone has access to safe and fair housing. Let's continue to build brighter futures and make dreams of home a reality for all.



# Justice for the People



## Paws and Protections

A person with disabilities was referred to The Fair Housing Center by a friend when their landlord threatened to retaliate against them for exercising their fair housing rights. The complaint began when the tenant requested an emotional support animal (ESA) in her rental unit. The landlord initially rejected their request. The tenant stood up for themselves, and the landlord agreed to allow the ESA, but also informed the tenant they would not be renewing their lease and would be charged for new carpet and baseboards when they move out, an act of threatened retaliation.

The tenant then contacted The Fair Housing Center, where they spoke to a staff attorney. The staff attorney informed the tenant of their rights. They also allowed The Fair Housing Center to contact their landlord and inform them of fair housing laws. The intervention worked, and the landlord entered a binding settlement that included the tenant keeping the ESA; they agreed to no further retaliatory action, and renewed the tenant's lease for an additional year. With the help of The Fair Housing Center, the tenant was able to remain in their home and stand up for their rights without fear of retaliation.



## Quiet Please: A Fair Housing Victory

A tenant with a disability that affected mobility, cognition, emotional regulation, and sleep found it increasingly difficult to cope with persistent noise disturbances from a neighboring unit. The noise, which consisted of late-night music, stomping, and other disruptive sounds, was reported to the property manager, but the problem continued. The ongoing lack of sleep began to worsen the tenant's disability, impacting overall well-being and quality of life.

After reviewing the lease, which included a clause prohibiting tenants from making or allowing noise that would disturb others, the tenant submitted a reasonable accommodation request. The request asked that this lease provision be actively enforced to ensure the quiet enjoyment of the unit as a necessary support for the tenant's disability. This action was taken to assert fair housing rights and maintain stable, accessible housing.

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To access more information regarding rights for persons with disabilities, please click the button below to explore our brochure on rights for persons with disabilities.

[Disability Rights Information](#)

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## TFHC Stands with Pro Bono Attorneys

On April 29, The Fair Housing Center filed an Amicus Brief in Ohio's Sixth District Court of Appeals.

The brief supports a pro bono attorney who was disqualified from a housing case after including a request for attorneys' fees, even though he initially offered his services at no cost to the client.

Here's the context:

Attorneys cannot solicit clients if their main motive is financial gain. However, in this case, the attorney only discovered the possibility of attorneys' fees after offering free legal help to an indigent client.

Including attorneys' fees in a claim can be a powerful tool, especially for clients who can't afford representation. It can provide leverage and strengthen their position in negotiations.

Disqualifying a pro bono attorney under these circumstances sends the wrong message. Pro bono attorneys should not be penalized for using legal tools, especially when those tools are

introduced after agreeing to represent a client in need.

Our brief highlights the policy concerns raised by the lower court's ruling and emphasizes the importance of protecting access to pro bono legal assistance, especially in housing discrimination cases.

We remain committed to supporting pro bono attorneys and advocating for fair and equal access to justice.

[Read the Full Brief Here](#)

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## TFHC Scores a Big Win for Ohio Tenants

We were assisting a tenant living in terrible housing conditions, including no heat. She stayed current on her rent and followed the law. But when she asked the court to order repairs, the court dismissed her case, saying she had to escrow her rent.

The problem? That's not what the law requires. As a low-income mother, the tenant couldn't easily get to court each month to deposit the rent, but she still paid her rent in full. And under Ohio law, escrowing rent is not required to ask the court to step in and order repairs.

So we appealed, and we won. The Court of Appeals reversed the lower court's decision, confirming that tenants are NOT required to escrow rent to request repairs through the court. This is a major victory for tenants across Ohio because everyone deserves a safe place to live.

Your home impacts your health, safety, and well-being, and this decision will help more people get the repairs they need without facing unfair barriers.

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## Congratulations to Deborah Riley-Jackson!

We're so proud to celebrate the amazing Debbie Riley-Jackson, who received the Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Award from MHR SB at the Homes & Dreams event on May 2nd!

Debbie was honored for her powerful work and leadership on the board of the Thomas Wernert Center. She's not only a dedicated advocate, she's also a joy to work with and truly passionate about lifting up and empowering all people.

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**Are You Ready to Be An Ambassador for Justice?**

Are you ready to be an Ambassador for Justice? Testing is an investigative tool using trained individuals to gather credible information about housing practices. Like mystery shoppers, testers pose as renters or buyers of real estate to determine whether unlawful housing discrimination is occurring. This work is vital to ensure equal housing opportunities in our community. The valuable experience of being a tester allows you to give back to the community and serve in the fight for justice.

The Fair Housing Center is currently recruiting testers. We are looking for diverse individuals of all backgrounds. For more information or to sign up, contact The Fair Housing Center, at 419-243-6163 or visit the link below.

**Ambassador for Justice Program**

**For more information visit our website**



Fair Housing Center | 326 N Erie St | Toledo, OH 43604 US

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