



NORTHWEST FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

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Executive Director of Northwest Fair Housing Alliance Stresses Importance of Free Fair Housing Workshops For Landlords



March 18, 2009-Spokane –

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance (NWFHA) is once again offering free fair housing workshops to landlords and property managers with 50 or fewer rental units within the City of Spokane. The next workshop is scheduled for May 11, 2009, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the West Central Community Center, Spokane. These workshops are made possible by a 2008 Community Development Block Grant from the City of Spokane.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the rental, sale, and financing of residential dwellings based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, or presence of children. The Washington State Law Against Discrimination also prohibits discrimination based on marital status and sexual orientation. Owners and managers of only a few rental properties are exempt from several fair housing act requirements. However, some federal Fair Housing Act provisions, most of the state law provisions, and other civil rights statutes still apply to landlords owning only a few properties.

“Assuming they even know about fair housing laws, owners of 2 or 3 rental dwelling units commonly believe they are exempt from fair housing laws,” said Marley Eichstaedt, Executive Director of NWFHA. “This is a risky assumption, since violation of a civil rights law can result in the award of compensatory and punitive damages to a victim of discrimination and imposition of a monetary penalty payable to the federal or state government.” Ignorance of the law is not a legal defense to a fair housing violation.

“NWFHA and the City Community Development Board do not want landlords to have to learn about fair housing the hard way,” said Ms. Eichstaedt. “The small ‘mom and pop’ landlords are particularly susceptible to violating fair housing laws, if only unintentionally, since they often do not belong to rental associations or subscribe to housing education publications that focus on fair housing issues. By providing fair housing education, we hope to prevent discrimination from occurring in the first place. This is preferable to having to address discrimination after the fact, when a housing

consumer has suffered an injury and a housing provider has to pay damages to try to repair harm done to the victim.”

Anyone (employers, employees, principles, and agents) involved with real estate rentals and sales can potentially be held liable for fair housing violations. All real property owners, managers, brokers, agents, lenders, and advertisers should know about fair housing laws. Training can increase awareness and compliance with fair housing requirements. Becoming informed is the best way to avoid committing discriminatory practices or the inadvertent appearance of discrimination.

The workshop curriculum will provide an overview of basic fair housing elements; the classes are designed into (2) two hour sections – Basic & Advanced. The Basic class includes: A review of the fair housing laws & who must comply, the application process - rental advertising, tenant screening & apartment rules & policies. The Advanced class includes: Reasonable Modifications – definitions, common requests, service animals & Tenant on Tenant Harassment..

Upcoming free workshops are scheduled as follows:

Basic - West Central Community Center - May 11, 2009, 1:30-3:30pm

Advanced - West Central Community Center - May 19, 2009, 1:30-3:30pm

Basic - East Central Community Center – July 16, 2009, 5:30-7:30pm

Advanced - East Central Community Center - July 23, 2009, 5:30-7:30pm

Additional classes will be posted at our website – www.nwfairhouse.org

Individuals interested in attending should **call 509-325-2665 Ext.4# to RSVP**, or to find out about additional dates and locations.

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance (NWFHA) is a private non-profit organization with a mission to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunity for the people of Washington State through education, counseling and advocacy. For twelve years NWFHA has provided comprehensive fair housing training for housing providers throughout Eastern and Central Washington.

For more information contact Marley Eichstaedt at (509) 325-2665 Ext.0# or marley@nwfairhouse.org, or visit www.nwfairhouse.org.