

Founder Series — Elizabeth Clark

by Samantha Long

Elizabeth Clark has been a member of HOME since its very beginning, but her fair housing advocacy work began before she even moved to Buffalo.



As a member of the Unitarian Church in Syracuse, NY she helped low-income families with their housing search after the housing project they lived in was demolished to make way for an office building. The urban renewal project that displaced mostly African-American, low-income families made no effort to help them find replacement housing. Liz recalls that the families often had doors slammed in their faces and were called derogatory names.

Although today she is a champion for fair housing, Liz didn't grow up concerned about discrimination or racism. She was born in Chicago and lived in eleven different cities throughout the northeast before graduating from high school. Her father was an electrical engineer and they moved around quite a bit for his job. Liz describes most of the places she lived as a child as upper-middle class white communities and says that for the most part she was sheltered from the reality of discrimination and racism. She recalls that her only exposure to the

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Boston Given Ultimatum on Group Home

by Katherine Sponaugle

In April 2015, over 100 Town of Boston residents convened to air their concerns about a group home being proposed for their community. The home is a project of Community Services for the Developmentally Disabled and would house four adult males with developmental disabilities. The purpose of the housing is to help residents live independently, and staff would be available around the clock.

Town residents expressed myriad concerns. *The weather conditions will preclude staff from getting to the home to help the patients. The streets are too difficult to plow. The residents will utilize emergency services too frequently. A nearby snowmobile trail has a speed limit of 55 miles per hour*

and speeding snowmobiles generate "95 decibels" of sound. Many residents also sounded the alarm over "sexual predators" hypothetically moving in, citing a group home in West Seneca that houses convicted sex offenders as an example. News stories quoted individuals who are now fearing for the safety of "children and residents" and changes to the "nature of the neighborhood."

HOME is concerned these grievances serve only as a pretext for the real reasons people do not want CSDD to build.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination due to disability. Under the FHA, municipalities have

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Judge Fahey to Speak at HOME's 53rd Annual Dinner

This year, the Honorable Eugene M. Fahey, Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals, will be speaking at our annual dinner on April 14th. Judge Fahey served on the Buffalo Common Council for thirteen years, during which he sponsored municipal fair housing legislation and supported increased funding for fair housing services. In 1994, he was elected to Buffalo City Court, then the New York State Supreme Court in 1996 and 2010. In 2006, he was appointed by Governor George E. Pataki to the Appellate Division, Fourth Department. Most recently, he was nominated by Governor Andrew Cuomo to the Court of Appeals, which the New York State Senate unanimously confirmed. Judge Fahey's vast experience in our courts

system will bring a unique perspective to HOME's continued mission and the annual dinner's theme: *Breaking Barriers for Better Lives.*

We are thrilled to have Judge Fahey speak. The annual dinner is an opportunity to celebrate fair housing, support the much-needed work we do, and push for positive changes that are yet to be made. You can purchase your seat at www.homeny.org/53rd-annual-dinner-registration. Tickets include two hours of open bar and dinner. Cocktail hour begins at 5:00 pm.

Michael Williams & Company will be entertaining the crowd with its spirited jazz, rhythm and blues sounds. You can place bids on an

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From the Director:

ENSURING HOME'S FUTURE *By Scott W. Gehl*

The courageous people who established HOME in 1963 and helped it flourish as an all-volunteer organization for more than a decade thereafter believed that—with the passage of laws and time—housing discrimination would eventually disappear.

Although no less dedicated or idealistic than those who went before, we have come to understand that discrimination is unlikely to be eliminated once and for all. Our challenge today is to win justice for discrimination's victims, to combat institutional barriers to opportunity, and to carry on the battle for hearts and minds in Western New York—so that those who oppose fair housing become an ever smaller minority.

In 1983, HOME's Board of Directors set aside \$5,000 in litigation revenue to create a fund to support fair housing education. Within two years the financial statements began to call that fund an endowment and a portion of recoveries from litigation began to be earmarked for that purpose.

In 16 years the endowment grew to all of \$30,000.

The tragic death of HOME volunteer John Koekkoek led his father, Dr. Byron Koekkoek, to donate John's modest house to the organization. Proceeds from its sale allowed us to nearly double the balance of the endowment.



Dr. Byron Koekkoek with friend Joseph Bugman

As a gesture of appreciation, the Board accepted my recommendation to give the fund a new name: the John Howland Koekkoek Endowment for Fair Housing Education.

With the advice and consent of HOME's Finance Committee (then chaired by Dr. Arthur Butler), I managed the fund until 2011 when the \$182,000 balance was entrusted to the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. By December 31, 2015, the Endowment had a balance of \$261,712.

Generous Bequests

An economist by profession, a department chair and one-time Acting Provost of the University at Buffalo, Art Butler served continuously on HOME's Board from 1972 until the day he died in 2006. Art and his dear wife, Kathleen, could never walk away from their commitment to fair housing.

Kathy Butler's support for HOME continued after Art's death. Following Kathy's memorial service this past August, Pam Butler took me aside to say that her parents had made a provision for HOME in their wills.

In the second week of December, HOME learned of the magnitude of the Butlers' generosity. Because Art & Kathy had been so integral to HOME over a half century, the Board of Directors has approved investing a portion of their gift in the Endowment, which will support fair housing in perpetuity.

That same week in December brought news of a second generous bequest, this time from Dr. Byron Koekkoek—another retired scholar and department chair from the University at Buffalo. At its January meeting, HOME's Board of Directors voted to rename the endowment The John & Byron Koekkoek Endowment for Fair Housing Education.

An essential element of our stewardship is ensuring that HOME has the capacity to continue its determined campaign for civil rights. The Koekkoek Endowment provides one mechanism to do so.



Art and Kathy Butler

Founder Series – Elizabeth Clark

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issue as a young girl came from a Frank Sinatra movie in the early forties.

"I was totally oblivious to any issues in that regard," Liz says. That is, until college, when she had an experience that opened her eyes.

Liz attended Syracuse University. After switching her major from nursing to education, she realized she needed some real world experience working with children. She found a job as a summer camp counselor in New Hampshire in a program run by a community center in Harlem. Having to report to the community center to begin her training, she arrived with no idea she was going into an area of New York City that was almost entirely African-American. She had experienced little to no contact with black people up until that point in her life.

"It was the summer that really changed my life," she says. "It was probably why I was interested in doing the work in Syracuse in the beginning, because I had met black people that I got to know really well, who were just like me."

Campers and staff were racially integrated, about half black and half white. Liz describes that part of New Hampshire as "accepting of everybody

and it was like this little piece of an unreal world that didn't exist anywhere else." After that summer, Liz kept in touch with her camp counselor friends and would go into Harlem for events and meet them. It was never a problem when she would spend time with her new friends in Harlem, but they would walk as a group in other parts of NYC and they would "get looks to kill." She says it was "a strange experience."

After graduating from college, Liz taught in Mt. Kisco, NY for one year before moving back to Syracuse in 1959 when she married. It was then that she began her fair housing work with the Unitarian Church. Liz had her first two children in Syracuse, and in 1963 she and her family moved to Buffalo when her husband accepted a job here.

Liz joined the Unitarian Church in Buffalo and quickly heard of an all-volunteer group that was forming to fight housing discrimination in the region. She realized that she wanted to continue to be involved with this work. She can recall going to the home of author and activist Jim Hecht for meetings and, due to her work in Syracuse, was quickly named Chair of the Rental Committee. When she

would accompany individuals to look at apartments, they were often told that the apartment was already rented. "We didn't know if that was true," she explains. They began conducting tests and filing discrimination claims with the New York State Division of Human Rights.

In 1980, Liz began selling real estate to put herself through law school. She graduated in 1984 and went to work for Hodgson Russ LLP. She worked there for 22 years as an estate planner. Wanting to help low-income individuals, Liz did a lot of pro bono work.

After retiring, she spent nearly seven years in Colorado where her youngest son lives. Eventually her strong ties to Buffalo, her other two children, grandchildren, and the church choir she has sung in for over fifty years brought her back.

To this day, Liz still sits on HOME's Fund Development Committee and Oishei Opportunity Task Force. She has been an invaluable member of the organization and a champion for fair housing for more than fifty years, explaining, "HOME's services are too often still needed, and so I have stayed involved."

Boston Given Ultimatum of Group Home

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an affirmative duty to accommodate homes for persons with disabilities when they are being excluded because of zoning or other land use requirements. In other words, it is unlawful to deny a permit for a home based on the disability of individuals who may occupy it.

In a town of approximately 8,300 residents, the anxieties of adding four more individuals seem disproportionate to the reality. Allegedly, community residents were coached to not "appear discriminatory against groups [but to] speak about other burdens the home will place."

Another concern raised was that the area's zoning law requires a single family home to have three acres of land so as not to overburden the septic

system. The proposed home would be built on a parcel that is only 1.4 acres in size. However, the town's Code Enforcement Officer has verified that the lot is considered usable for a single-family dwelling. Since then, the Erie County Health Department has also confirmed that the lot is adequate for the septic system.

After the Town rejected the proposal, CSDD appealed. In September, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities ruled in favor of the group home, and the Town then filed a proceeding against New York State.

The Town Supervisor has now threatened not to issue building permits to CSDD. HOME has written to the town attorney and, with the

representation of Hurwitz & Fine, PC, is prepared to aid CSDD in legal action if Boston does not comply with the Fair Housing Act.

HOME's staff attorney Daniel Corbitt explains, "HOME continues to fight to promote the value of diversity and ensure people an equal opportunity to live in the communities of their choice. We all profit from living in diverse communities – places where people of sundry backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences enrich the fabric of our society. When given the opportunity, people with disabilities make tremendous contributions to our communities, benefiting us all."

Thank you to Dan Corbitt for his contributions and assistance with this article.

Addiction and Recovery: What are the FHA protections?

by Katherine Sponaugle

When a local health-related service provider was vetting an apartment for a client, the landlord fired off a barrage of unsavory remarks. It began with, "Why is your client using your program?" The service provider responded that she could not disclose that information without a release, but she could fill out a rental application and bring it back to the landlord. Then the floodgates opened.

Is your client a recovering addict? I don't accept recovered addicts because they fall off again and cause trouble.

Is your client a foreigner? He is, isn't he?

If your client lies on the application, I will find out.

When the service provider explained these assumptions were discriminatory, the landlord refuted, "No, they're not!"

That is why she called HOME.

Our complainant's agency provides medical and behavioral services for a range of clients, including but not limited to people who have HIV or alcoholism and substance use disorders. This might have ignited the landlord's prejudicial concerns. The above comments are a mix of outright discrimination and "leading" questions – meaning the landlord was prodding to identify protected class information with the intent of discriminating. It goes without saying that it is prejudicial to presume a person recovering from substance addiction will most certainly relapse, or inquire about someone's national origin in a housing application, or suggest the client would lie simply based on the fact that he or she receives services from a certain agency.

Among the many protected classes it covers, the Fair Housing Act (FHA) protects people with disabilities, which includes those who are suffering from a life-limiting illness such as HIV/AIDS, alcoholism, or who are in recovery from drug addiction. It is illegal to



exclude people from housing on these bases, as well as steer them into segregated housing, inquire about their health condition, give differential treatment, and refuse reasonable accommodations or modifications. The FHA's protection is *not* extended to people who are currently using controlled substances illegally.

The term *recovery* has several accepted definitions in the public health community, though there is not always consensus. In certain cases, it may refer to someone who is currently receiving treatment. A person with a substance use disorder need not receive professional help or participate in Narcotics Anonymous to be considered "recovering"; many people with addiction pursue informal methods of treatment. In other cases, the term recovery is considered multi-dimensional and does not simply refer to sobriety; rather, it refers to the

lifestyle a person has maintained. In 2007, the Betty Ford Institute hosted a professional "consensus panel" that collaborated on defining recovery as "a voluntary maintained lifestyle characterized by sobriety, personal health, and citizenship." *Sobriety* may be classified as early (one month to one year), sustained (one year but less than five), or stable (at least five years). By the panel's definition, *personal health* requires an adherence to the treatment of other symptoms that affect mental and physical wellbeing, and *citizenship* in this context refers to a person's commitment to raising quality of life for themselves and others in the community. Measuring where someone is in attaining these three milestones can be very subjective as well. One critique of this definition is that it excludes people engaged in medication-assisted treatment (such as methadone and buprenorphine) who also consider themselves in recovery from their addiction.

The significance of our client's experience is not necessarily what was said or how it was said, but the fact that this incident is not isolated. Many people hold such prejudices – verbalized or not – that bar people in recovery from finding the housing they deserve. As a community, we need to promote education about addiction and recovery to dissolve the stigma that inhibits people's ability to live where their hearts desire and means permit.

Note: Some identifying details have been altered or omitted to protect client confidentiality. Thank you to Nichelle Brown for assisting.

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enticing number of silent auction items such as autographed Buffalo Bills and Sabres memorabilia, a spa day wellness package, breathtaking local handmade jewelry, or discount memberships and tickets to Buffalo's great museums. We also have incredible raffle items and auction items where you can win a lunch with Assemblyman Sean Ryan, a collection of passes to WNY's adventure parks, an autographed copy of Jimmy Carter's book, access to some of Buffalo's best cultural attractions, and more!

Thank you to our annual dinner sponsors and campaign contributors to date: Town of Hamburg; First Niagara Foundation; Oxford Consulting; Belmont Management Company, Inc.; Rich Products Corporation; Belmont Housing Resources of WNY; Gibson, McAskill & Crosby; Jewish Federation Apartments; Buffalo Teachers Federation; Lipsitz & Ponterio, LLC; Norstar Development USA, L.P.; Rental Assistance Corporation; Wegmans; Buffalo Niagara Association of REALTORS, Inc.; Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; Maureen's Buffalo Wholesale Flowers; Religious Society of Friends; Liberatore Management Group; Royal Printing Company, Inc.; Macky's Essex Street Pub; Hurwitz & Fine, PC; and the Matt Urban Center.

SIGN THE PETITION

In our winter issue of *Insight*, Scott Gehl wrote about the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership's effort to pass a county-wide fair housing law. Now you can be a part of helping the legislation pass by signing our petition!

Go to . . .
www.homeny.org/ecfhpetition

and make your mark for fair housing!

Background: For the last five years, HOME has received increasing numbers of complaints of housing discrimination due to source of income. Families are denied housing they CAN afford simply because they receive stable, lawful income from sources such as Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability, and even their chosen profession.

Currently, this type of discrimination is only outlawed in three WNY communities. HOME's number of complaints is merely a shadow of the reality, as source of income discrimination is still legal throughout

CALL TO ACTION: Support Legislation in Fair Housing Month!

the rest of Erie County. In truth, this type of discrimination is often used as a pretext to deny people housing due to their race, color, age, disability status, or other protected classes.

The Erie County Fair Housing Law would place the following measures:

- Outlaw source of income discrimination, which is often used as a means for discrimination based on other reasons such as race, color, and disability;
- Require larger housing providers to use affirmative fair housing marketing to attract diverse applicants; and
- Encourage cities and towns to adopt inclusionary zoning so that a percentage of new multi-family housing would be affordable to families of limited means, which will allow Erie County residents' a fair chance for upward mobility.

April is Fair Housing Month! Shared Opportunity in Every Community

<p>April 5th</p> 	<p>Community Event at Amherst Dipson Theatre as part of UB's Buffalo Film Seminars. Showing and discussion of <i>Malcolm X</i> at 7 pm.</p>
<p>April 6th</p> 	<p>Free Hamburg fair housing training for landlords and tenants. Located at the Hamburg Community Development Department (6122 South Park Ave) from 4-5pm</p>
<p>April 7th</p> 	<p>Fair Housing Month Proclamation Ceremony at 10am, Amherst Town Council Chambers, reception to follow. 5583 Main Street in Williamsville</p>
<p>April 14th</p> 	<p>HOME's 53rd Annual Meeting and Dinner Celebration at the Convention Center</p>
<p>April 20th</p> 	<p>Landlord training and certification at HOME, 1542 Main Street at Ferry. \$35 per person and registration required in advance.</p>

Other HOME Events and Initiatives for FH Month

30 Presentations in 60 Days: Through a partnership with Buffalo Public School Adult Education, in addition to several other off-site trainings, HOME's education specialist is doing a "marathon" totaling thirty fair housing trainings throughout March and April!

Quizzes, Giveaways, and more: Keep your eye on HOME's Facebook page for giveaways, fair housing quizzes, and interesting facts!



A Glimpse of Hamburg's Great New Mobility Program

by Craig Douglass

The Town of Hamburg is an exceptional community—with good schools, access to superior employment opportunities and services—and among the safest in WNY. It is also exceptional in that Hamburg is THE leader in assuring people their right to fair housing in our region. In Hamburg, people cannot be legally denied housing due to their source of income.

Hamburg is so serious about fair housing that they have asked HOME to create special mobility incentives to encourage clients of our Community Housing Center (CHC) to consider moving there.

The CHC assists people who receive Section 8 in finding quality housing of

their choice, mobilizing to communities with lower poverty rates, and accessing better life opportunities.

Under Hamburg's new initiative, if clients choose to move to the Town of Hamburg, where poverty levels range from 2.5 to 14.4 percent, they can be eligible both for a larger security deposit grant AND moving assistance payment—with a total value of up to \$750.

If you think you might be eligible for HOME's Mobility Program and are interested in exploring opportunities in Hamburg, call our Mobility Counselor Craig W. Douglass @ (716) 854-1400 ext. 26.



Visit us online at: www.homeny.org

HOME's Mission:

Housing Opportunities Made Equal is a fair housing organization continuing the struggle for civil rights by working to promote the value of diversity and to ensure all people an equal opportunity to live in the housing and communities of their choice—through education, advocacy, the enforcement of fair housing laws and the creation of housing opportunities.

Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc. would like to give special thanks to ...

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