



# 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)

## FAIR HOUSING PROJECT STAFF

Robert A. Bertisch  
Executive Director

Michael Spillane  
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Tequisha Myles, Esq.  
Supervising Attorney

Carlton Smith, J.D.  
Program Manager

Ricardo Collier  
Housing Advocate

Mark Tatoul  
Financial Manager

## HOUSING DISCRIMINATION IS WRONG!!!

### You have a right to Fair Housing!

If you think you have been treated unfairly, contact us by phone, fax, mail or e-mail:

Phone: 561.655.8944  
Toll Free: 800.403.9353  
Fax: 561.655.5269

423 Fern Street, Suite 200  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401

E-mail: [fhp@legalaidpbc.org](mailto:fhp@legalaidpbc.org)  
[www.legalaidpbc.org](http://www.legalaidpbc.org)

\*The Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation.

## (CONCEPT OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN -continued from page 1)

Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision; Provide adaptability to the user's pace.

**PRINCIPLE THREE:** Simple and Intuitive Use. Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. **GUIDELINES:** Eliminate unnecessary complexity; Be consistent with user expectations and intuition; Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills; Arrange information consistent with its importance; Provide effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion.

**PRINCIPLE FOUR:** Perceptible Information. The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities. **GUIDELINES:** Use different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for redundant presentation of essential information; Provide adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings; Maximize "legibility" of essential information; Differentiate elements in ways that can be described (i.e., make it easy to give instructions or directions); Provide compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory limitations.

**PRINCIPLE FIVE:** Tolerance for Error. The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. **GUIDELINES:** Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements, most accessible; hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded; Provide warnings of hazards and errors; Provide fail safe features; Discourage unconscious action in tasks that require vigilance.

**PRINCIPLE SIX:** Low Physical Effort. The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue. **GUIDELINES:** Allow user to maintain a neutral body position; Use reasonable operating forces; Minimize repetitive actions; Minimize sustained physical effort.

**PRINCIPLE SEVEN:** Size and Space for Approach and Use. Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility. **GUIDELINES:** Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user; Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user; Accommodate variations in hand and grip size; Provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

*The Center for Universal Design (1997). The Principles of Universal Design, Version 2.0. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.*

Upon review, the Principles of Universal Design only address universally usable design, whereas, a designer must consider other factors in addition to usability. Designers must also incorporate other considerations such as economic, engineering, cultural, gender, and environmental concerns in their design processes. In essence, a designer must carefully assess a project through its entirety in order to achieve maximum usage by all. These Principles merely offer guidance for designers to better integrate the necessary considerations to meet the needs of as many users as possible.

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## CASES

### YES OR NO-WHICH IS IT?

Client is a 58 year old white female who is disabled. She resides in her condominium in a sub-division of Century Village, which is a 55 and older community located in West Palm Beach, Florida. Due to her condition, client has not been able to work and has not been able to conduct her daily affairs without assistance. Client submitted a request to the condominium association asking that her adult daughter be allowed to live with her as client's live-in care giver. Client also submitted a note from her doctor who indicated the need for such a person in her living arrangement. The association board of directors approved client's request in writing.

Almost two years later, client's condition is unchanged. However, the condominium association's position has. Citing updates to the association by-laws, the board of directors have requested that client provide further medical documentation that client's daughter is not employed nor is a full time student. The board further claims that client's doctor's note is not acceptable. Client filed a complaint with the Fair Housing Project at the Legal Aid Society. The case is being closely monitored.

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### CONTROL THE FLOODING WATERS

Client contacted Legal Aid wishing to file a complaint against her place of residence. Client is a 67 year old white female who is disabled. She lives at Mangonia Residence in West Palm Beach, Florida, which is an independent living facility. Management at Mangonia received calls from residents complaining of (continued on page 3)

