

The equalizer

Eve Lee, president of Eve B. Lee & Associates Inc. in Grayslake, Ill., remembers the first stand she took against racial injustice.

As a student at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vt., in 1964, the popular Lee was president of her sorority. But when the sorority refused to admit black women, she stepped down. “My mother taught me everyone’s equal,” she says.

Lee became a real estate practitioner in 1965—and she’s been taking stands for equal opportunity ever since. In 1986, she became the first woman and the first REALTOR® to chair the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, a Chicago fair housing organization founded in 1966 as the result of a campaign for open housing led by Martin Luther King Jr. Lee’s now a member of LCMOC’s executive committee and counsels former residents of subsidized housing in Chicago on how to find affordable alternatives.

In 1978, she founded a not-for-profit corporation that provides housing for low- and moderate-income households. Her most recent project: turning an apartment building into a transitional home for women leaving jail with addictions.

For her lifetime involvement in affordable housing and equal opportunity issues, Lee’s been named a REALTOR® Hometown Hero by NAR President Cathy Whatley. “I cried when I found out, because this road has been difficult at times,” Lee says.

In 1985 for instance, LCMOC was filing lawsuits against real estate salespeople on behalf of people who said they’d been discriminated against. “It was controversial to have a real estate salesperson involved in a fair housing group at the time,” she says. “Many people in the real estate industry wouldn’t even talk to me.”

Through it all, Lee’s been a sales leader in her area, serving a wide range of income levels. “A coworker saw me work on transactions for a \$300,000 home and a \$30,000 home in the same day and said, ‘You really do treat everyone equally.’ That made me feel great about what I do.” **RM**

To nominate someone for Hometown Hero, click **Current Links** at REALTOR.org/realtormag.

“Without affordable housing for people of all income levels there’d be no fair housing.”

Dossier: Eve B. Lee, Eve B. Lee & Associates Inc., Grayslake, Ill. **E-mail:** EveBLee@aol.com **Claims to fame:** First woman and only REALTOR® to chair the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. Served as president of the Lake County Association of REALTORS® and on NAR’s Equal Opportunity Committee.

Also serves as: Board member, Lake County Fair Housing Advisory Committee **Latently:** Holding forums in the Chicago suburbs to educate communities about affordable housing and marketing Prairie Crossing, a racially and economically diverse “conservation community” she helped develop.