



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"

Spring 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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IT WAS TRULY A FAMILY AFFAIR

In April, the Fair Housing Project in collaboration with the Children's Services Council, Glades Area Family & Community Partnership, the Beacon Center at Pioneer Park Elementary School, the Belle Glade Weed & Seed Program, and the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office sponsored what has become an annual occurrence, "*Family Day in the Park*", at Glades Pioneer Park, Belle Glade, Florida. The event is held in recognition of Fair Housing Month.

Throughout the day, Glades area organizations participated in a resource fair in which representatives distributed information and materials regarding the services in the community that were available to the residents. There were many activities for the children. Among them were arts and craft, face painting, distribution of books and other literature, bounce houses, and games. There was also an egg hunt. A roll over simulator demonstration by the State Troopers of the Florida Highway Patrol. Raffle drawings throughout the day of very nice prizes. Terrific entertainment by Al Fuentes and his dance team. Food and drinks were provided free of charge to all participants. Services were made available to 102 families approximately 400 people. The "Day" was a great opportunity for families to spend some quality time together.

THE GLADES COMMUNITY HONORS A FEW OF IT'S GREATEST RESOURCES

In April, the Glades Interagency Network (G.I.N.) held its second *Community Awards Recognition Luncheon* at the Dolly Hand Cultural Arts Center, which is located on the campus of Palm Beach Community College in Belle Glade, Florida. This year's event was sponsored by the Fair Housing Project of the Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. The event centers around those who have made a difference in the Glades community during the past year by giving of themselves to help others, going above and beyond

their duties, in an effort to better the community as a whole. Three cities that make up the Glades area, Belle Glade, Pahokee, and South Bay, were well presented. The theme of this year's event was the effect of Fair Housing in Palm Beach County. The keynote address was given by Pamela Guerrier, Esq., Manager of the Palm Beach County Office of Equal Opportunity.

Each honoree was presented with a crystal plaque in recognition of their outstanding service for others in the community. In all, it was a wonderful way to share a Spring afternoon.

IN THE NEWS

INSPECTORS BLOW WHISTLE ON BELLE GLADE HOUSING

Poor housing conditions have existed for quite some time in the poor farming town of Belle Glade. Immigrant farmhands have historically lived in wooden shacks or rooming houses with community bathrooms. Coincidentally, the village of Wellington has become the watch dog for the town.

Under a special agreement, Wellington officials began documenting the problems uncovered during their inspection of the housing in Belle Glade. Officials have concerns about Belle Glade leadership not addressing these deplorable conditions. Construction of new homes and businesses could not happen until these issues are addressed.

The initial survey identified more than 300 dilapidated units, including rooming houses, multifamily dwellings, single-family homes and mobile homes with severe structural defects or building code violations. Many of the homes were missing roofs, had downed pilings, or were starting to collapse. Besides the dilapidated condition of the housing units, the situation raises many fair housing issues such as affordability and accessibility of housing in Belle Glade. It speaks to those persons who are fortunate enough, or in many instances, desperate enough, to rent or actually purchase one of these housing units. (continued on page 3)

