HOME’s Annual Meeting is a HUGE Success

By Shannon M. Koehn

HOME kicked off its Golden Anniversary with a bang with two very special events: The 50th Annual Meeting and the 50th Anniversary Gala.

On Thursday, April 11th, nearly 50 HOME members gathered in the newly constructed Art Butler Boardroom for the agency’s 50th Annual Business Meeting. The meeting, typically held concurrent with the agency’s annual fundraising dinner, was held separately for multiple reasons. First, it gave guests an opportunity to enjoy HOME’s new space. Second, it allowed for a true celebration at the 50th Anniversary Gala.

Lastly, it provided an extra opportunity for folks to mingle and reunite with fellow members and longtime friends.

Before getting down to business, guests enjoyed homemade wine donated by Howie Hart, homemade desserts provided by HOME Senior Counselor Nichelle E. Brown and a host of other wonderful refreshments! The meeting began at 5:15pm with Mary Jo Giambelluca’s Chair’s report, the review of HOME’s 2012 audited financial statements, the report of the nominating committee, and the election of officers and directors. HOME welcomed four new board members this year: Michael P. Agoston, Joseph A. Butch, Joel P. Feroleto, Esq. and Mary Jane Zak. (See “Know Your HOME Board Members” on page 7.)

Rave reviews continue to be heard about separating the two events—it was truly a significant way to begin HOME’s 50th year. More celebratory events will take place throughout the year to commemorate the agency’s continued important work in the Buffalo-Niagara region. Stay tuned—we’d love to see you at upcoming events!

HOME CELEBRATES ITS 50th, CONTINUES “BUILDING ON THE LEGACY”

By Alyssa Bergsten

On Friday April 26th, 2013, over 200 fair housing supporters from across Western New York joined together at the Buffalo-Niagara Convention Center to celebrate the last half century’s worth of HOME’s accomplishments.

In keeping with the evening’s theme, there was a screening of HOME’s first ever documentary and a special champagne toast, which encouraged guests to reflect on HOME’s incredible past and look to continue “Building on the Legacy” as the organization moves forward in the fight for fair housing. Whether it was the new room, live music or excellent dining options, HOME’s guests were thrilled with the event and felt the 50th Anniversary Gala not only did justice in honoring HOME’s past, but inspired its supporters for the future.

Guests arrived during the cocktail hour to enjoy drinks, mingle and peruse the countless themed baskets displayed throughout the reception room. Moving into the dining area, the audience listened as keynote speaker Congressman Brian Higgins reflected on HOME’s great accomplishments and the continued need for its services throughout the community. Food stations throughout the dining area offered guests a variety of choices which they enjoyed seated around elegant candle-lit centerpieces. The emcee, WKBW-TV’s Kendra Eaglin, effortlessly kept the evening flowing through the numerous presentations and speeches.

HOME’s legacy was celebrated through the contributions of some of the new generation of supporters.

Chief among those is recent University at Buffalo graduate Sara-Jo Scime, whose work with HOME began as a volunteer. Ms. Scime went on to conceive of and execute the documentary project, contributing countless hours or research in HOME’s archives, interviews with members and staff, tape and editing. The final product was much appreciated by the guests, who heard from HOME legends such as Amy Hecht, Pauline Clay, William Gardner and John Hurley and saw the various archive materials highlighted the importance of HOME’s mission and the significance of its accomplishments over 50 years of service.

Another young person honored on this evening was Joanne Champion Granger Scholarship Award recipient and McKinley High School Senior Tiana Wilson. Through her dedication to academic excellence, spirit of volunteerism and fundamental understanding of the need to support fair housing, Ms. Wilson truly embodies the values of Joanne Champion Granger. In the words of her daughter Janis Champion, Ms. Champion Granger “was a true believer in the power of a strong education as well as an advocate for fair housing, [and] always willing to learn something new”. No doubt Ms. Champion Granger would be very pleased to see the award go to Tiana Wilson, who will be entering the prestigious bio-chemistry program at Syracuse University in the fall.

Longtime members of HOME were also honored for their significant contributions to the organization.

(Continued on Page 3)
From the Director:

**A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER**

By Scott W. Gehl

The year 2012 was like no other in HOME’s history.

Concluding a seven year effort, on February 24th HOME moved from 700 Main into a lovely but long vacant building at Main & Ferry Streets. While finally in a home of our own, our staff struggled through all manner of inconveniences as construction continued over our heads, on the other side of partition walls and on the sidewalks around us — for another eight months.

I tend to be very focused and to look past distractions, however a comment from a colleague at another agency opened my eyes. In early June he told me how he drove by Main & Ferry each day watching the progress of construction. “When does HOME expect to move in?” He asked. We had moved in four months before.

So is it any wonder that clients had trouble finding us—or, if they did, difficulty making their way through the obstacle course of construction?

Despite these challenges, in 2012 HOME served 4,807 clients. And — despite the loss of valued Education Specialist Rayna Grossman and a vacancy in that critical position—HOME still managed to conduct 157 educational presentations for 2,387 participants. We expanded HOME’s reach further with 38 documented media appearances, by distributing more than 14,400 fair housing brochures, and by mounting a billboard advertising campaign at 18 locations in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

**A homecoming**

The 50th Annual Meeting on April 11th attracted an overflow crowd of 47 members to the Art Butler Boardroom while the 50th Anniversary Celebration brought well over 200 incredibly generous supporters of fair housing to the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center on April 26th. These events were for many a homecoming.

HOME’s 50th year offered an opportunity to not only see old friends, but to renew acquaintances with members of HOME’s heroic first generation. While some (I think of Sally Metzger, Jim Myers and George Hezel) found themselves maddeningly out-of-town for one or both of these events, the Anniversary Gala was attended by two of the founders whose signatures appeared on our 1963 articles of incorporation: Pauline Clay and Bill Gardner. And founders Amy & Jim Hecht played a role in the Sara Scime’s documentary which premiered that night.

Some of our distinguished alums traveled a long way to come HOME again. Denis Woods — who had headed the Housing Division of Catholic Charities, collaborated with Jim Myers on the 1979 & 1980 Buffalo fair housing bills and with George Hezel on the first edition of A Guide to Landlords’ Rights — traveled with Eileen Dooley from West Virginia. Carole Tynes Lee, a former assistant director of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority and tireless crusader in exposing wrong-doing in public housing, traveled from Ohio.

Denis, Eileen and Carole’s histories with HOME go back to the days of our Spartan and inaccessible second-floor offices at 1490 Jefferson. Accordingly, they marveled during tours of Main-Ferry and what this building represents.

For so many people who have played a role during these five decades, HOME has been a life-altering experience—still carried in their hearts even after moving from Buffalo or moving on to other challenges. We are certainly richer for their contributions—as are they for what HOME has given them.

**A proud announcement**

June will mark DeAnna Eason’s thirteenth anniversary as a HOMEer. DeAnna was hired as one of four Mobility Counselors then working in our relatively new Community Housing Center Program. She went on to become our first Senior Counselor, then Investigations Coordinator and finally Fair Housing Coordinator.

The Personnel Committee has accepted my recommendation that DeAnna’s title be changed to Assistant Director for Programs — because she now supervises fair housing, mobility and homelessness prevention services.

Congratulations to DeAnna — an invaluable member of the HOME Team.

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**To report discrimination, call 716-854-1400.**

Support HOME by Attending Upcoming Events!

**HOME Happy Hour**

July Friday, July 12, 2013, 5:30 p.m. at City Tavern on Franklin and Chippewa. $20 gets you food and two free drinks.

**Home Summer Bowling**

being held on Saturday, August 3rd at 3:00 p.m. at the Bowl Inn Bowling Center located at 727 Bailey Avenue For just $10, you’ll receive two games, shoe rental, one slice of pizza and a soft drink. For information on these events, please contact Collin via e-mail or at 716-854-1400 ext. 26.
From the Director:
Know Your HOME Board Members

HOME operates with the valuable input of a large and diverse Board of Directors, bringing a wide range of community contacts, in-depth knowledge and experience. Whether new to, continuing on, or departing from the board, HOME is grateful to each of them for their service and dedication to fair housing.

OFFICERS 2013 - 2014:
Chair of the Board Mary Jo Giambelluca enters her second year in the position and has been a HOME member since the late 70's. Mary Jo has been an active HOME member, as well as board Secretary. Mary Jo worked at Catholic Charities for over 32 years and spent an additional four years at People, Inc. In addition, she was a founding member of the Erie County Commission on Homelessness, and has held leadership positions at the Network in Aging, and Benedict House.

President Diana C. Cooke teaches special education at Bennett High School. She has her Masters of Science in special education from D'Youville College. She chairs HOME's Membership Committee.

Senior Vice President Elizabeth M. Fox-Solomon, Esq., is the confidential law clerk to an appellate judge and chair of HOME's Program Operations and Planning Committee. She also serves on the boards of the WNY Chapter of the Women’s Bar Association and the UB Law GOLD group.

Vice President Janet E. Barnes is a former principal and administrator in the Buffalo Public High Schools. She is a Vice-President of The Links, Inc. of Erie County, and member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and is the local President and District Treasurer of the National Association of Negro Business & Professional Women’s Clubs.

Vice President Laura D. Krolczyk is the Director of Government & Community Relations for Roswell Park Cancer Institute and is a 2001 graduate of Buffalo State College. She has served as Western New York Regional Director for both New York's United States Senators Hillary Clinton and Kirsten Gillibrand.

Secretary Melissa A. Cavagnaro, Esq. is a Partner with Lipsitz Green Scime Cambria, LLP, focusing on matrimonial and family law where she encounters numerous fair housing issues. She holds a BS in Business Administration and a BA in Communication from Alfred University and is a graduate of the University at Buffalo Law School.

Treasurer Philippe P. Deterville is the Vice President of Community Development at HSBC Bank. He has served on the Boards of the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership and HomeFront, Inc. He received HOME’s Director’s Award for Distinguished Service in 2010 and serves as chair of HOME’s Development and Finance Committees.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS:
Michael P. Agoston is the Production Director at Eric Mower and Associates for both the Buffalo N.Y. and Charlotte N.C. offices. He holds a BFA in Design from Daemen College, and an MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology, in Graphic Design and print technology.

Joseph A. Butch has recently retired from 33 years at HUD. He previously worked at vocational education/job placement for persons with disabilities, geotechnical consulting, and science education. Joe is currently active with the Buffalo Museum of Science, tends to five grandchildren, and assists his wife Diane with her many projects.

Joel P. Feroleto is the Deputy Chief of Staff/Special Counsel to New York State Senator Mark Grisanti. He has a JD from University at Buffalo Law School and a BA in Communication Studies from Canisius College.

Mary Jane Zak is a principal in MJ ZAK VENTURES REAL ESTATE, a New York State Licensed Broker and an Internet Marketing Company Unfranchised Owner. Her professional roots are embedded in successful Multifamily Housing Management. She looks forward to being an asset to the HOME Board as she assists in growing their visibility through education and membership with Property Managers, NYS Realtors and fund raising opportunities.

CONTINUING BOARD MEMBERS:
Christina L. Akers works as a law clerk at the Law Office of Lindy Korn, Esq. She holds a Bachelor's in History and Politics from Brandeis University and recently graduated from SUNY Buffalo Law School.

Gracie A. Andriette, Esq. is the Supervising Attorney of the Housing Unit at Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. She is currently an Adjunct Professor at the University at Buffalo’s Law School and was a contributor to A Guide of Landlord Rights. Grace is a member of the Erie County Fair Housing Partnership and also a co-producer of This Doesn’t Happen Here, a film that explores the historical roots of housing segregation in Buffalo.

William W. Berry, Esq. served as co-chair of the Inclusion Task Force. He is the former chair of HOME’s Nominating Committee and Supervising Attorney at Legal Services for the Elderly in Buffalo, where he specializes in Medicare, Medicaid, health insurance and disability discrimination issues.

Nancy M. Blaschak has been Executive Director of the American Red Cross Greater Buffalo Chapter for 20 years. She currently serves on the board of Consumer Credit Counseling Service. Nancy is an adjunct professor at Canisius College, Department of Communications and Leadership.

Paul B. Curtin, Esq. is a Managing Attorney in the Civil Unit at the Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, dealing with landlord/tenant issues as well as mortgage foreclosures. He’s currently serves as a Public Defender in Buffalo City Housing Court. In addition, Paul provides Civil Legal Services in Judge Hugh B. Scott’s Federal Re-entry Court.

Tina M. Destro Goodman, a practicing Reiki Master (Reiki being an ancient Japanese form of healing energy), is a student at the New York State Institute of Massage pursuing a career in the healing arts. She will take her NYS certification exam upon her graduation in January 2014.

Kathleen M. Haggerty is a Senior Property Manager with the Related Companies, working locally at the Marina Vista Apartments. She is a licensed Real Estate Salesperson with Nothinage Property Center.

Bernadette F. Harlan is the Executive Director for Delta Development of WNY, Inc. (Delta) for the past 12 years has been involved in the management and development of local, state and federally funded affordable housing properties since 1979.

Gilbert R. Hernandez is retired from The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). He is a board member of Community Access Services, The Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York and Treasurer of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Lynn M. Kwon-Dzikiy, Esq. is an Associate Attorney with Schop, Powell & Allen. She focuses her practice on Social Security Disability, probate and elder law. She also serves as the chair for the Committee for the Disabled for the Bar Association of Erie County.

Samuel E. Loliger is a long-time Board member and is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Niagara County Community College. He recently completed four years as president of OperaBuffs of Western New York, and is now vice president and chair of the membership committee. He is also a recent inductee into the LGBT Religious Archives Network and his biography appears on the Archives’ website.

Ellary J. Mori holds a BA in Sociology from Ithaca College, and a Masters in Urban Planning from the University at Buffalo. She works for the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning as a Housing Specialist.

David A. Nestico is the Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Integrity Office, a local office supply and office furniture dealer who was instrumental in supplying HOME, mostly thr
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CAUSE

(Donations received 2/1/12-5/31/13)

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Community Housing Center: the Heart of HOME
By Alyssa Bergsten

As HOME’s staff and members celebrate the recent success of its Indiegogo campaign, A Welcome Mat at Every HOME, we are reminded of the importance of maintaining the work of HOME’s Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center (CHC). The CHC was established as a result of a discrimination suit which contended that the mismanagement of Buffalo’s public housing had a disparately negative impact on low-income minority groups. In an attempt to counter these discriminatory effects, the CHC exists to provide new Section 8 voucher participants with the opportunity to explore the benefits of residence in communities with lower poverty and crime levels, with better access to resources and good schools. Clients are able to work one-on-one with an experienced counselor who can help guide their search based on their needs and desires. HOME is also able to help CHC clients financially, providing funds for their initial security deposit.

Through its administration of the program starting in 1999, HOME has been able to assist nearly 4,000 families locate and secure affordable housing in the communities of their choice. Past program participants, like Carol Gostomski, were able to relocate from areas of concentrated poverty and crime into what Carol describes as “a nice quiet community” in Kenmore, NY. Working in conjunction with the person’s Section 8 voucher, which subsidizes rent so that a tenant pays an affordable portion, the CHC is able to provide opportunities for families that they might not have had access to previously. Reflecting on the positive attributes of her new neighborhood, Ms. Gostomski explains that “I found a good spot where my kids had good schooling and I wasn’t too far from stores”, yet “there is not a lot of commotion”. This account is just one example of the overall positive influence of the CHC.

Beyond the counseling and search assistance, many tenants looking for housing are in desperate need of funds for their security deposit. CHC clients are fortunate to be potentially eligible for a security deposit assistance payment. One of the larger barriers faced by low-income tenants in particular is the initial expense of moving, including putting down a security deposit and sometimes paying first and last month’s rent. For families on a fixed income or living paycheck-to-paycheck, getting help with the security deposit can make all the difference in their successful retention of good, affordable housing. This financial assistance can be crucial in helping tenants not only locate their ideal housing, but also successfully secure housing which may be in high demand.

Stories like Carol’s help us to appreciate the impact of the CHC on Western New York and remind us that housing significantly impacts a person’s other opportunities in life. Enabling tenants and families to relocate to areas of greater opportunity goes beyond just their enjoyment of decent housing, but affects their access to education, employment, transportation and other resources as well. In a metropolitan area that was rated the sixth most segregated in the United States, the CHC is vital in countering the longstanding effects of housing segregation and discrimination in WNY. In terms of “ensur[ing] the people of Western New York an equal opportunity to live in the housing and communities of their choice”, the Community Housing Center is truly at the heart of HOME’s mission.

HOME CELEBRATES ITS 50TH, CONTINUES “BUILDING ON THE LEGACY
(Continued from Page 1)

Elizabeth Fox-Solomon, Vice President of the Board of Directors, received the Director’s Award in part due to her innovative fundraising effort on behalf of the Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center. She spearheaded an online crowdfunding campaign which successfully exceeded the original goal by more than 80%, raising over $9,000 towards maintaining this vital program administered by HOME. The James Crawford Award, HOME’s highest honor, was awarded for a second time to Janet Meiselman, whose history with HOME goes back to her time as a volunteer tester. Now the principal of Oxford Consulting, her tireless volunteer efforts were essential to the development of HOME’s offices and affordable housing units at Main & Ferry Streets in Buffalo.

Aside from providing a meaningful and entertaining evening for its guests, HOME was successful in surpassing its fundraising goal through the support of its generous members and their participation in the live and silent auctions, everyone wins, themed baskets and fund-a-family. The night would not have been possible without the extraordinary support of our donors, including First Niagara Financial Group, M&T Bank, Oxford Consulting, Inc., Belmont Management Co. Inc., Bryant & Stratton, Lawley Insurance, Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, Gibson, McCaskill & Crosby, LLP, and the Minority Bar Association of WNY. Additionally, HOME appreciates the substantial donations of wine by Gates Circle Wine & Liquor, printed materials by Avalon Documents, awards by Tony Martin, flowers by Maureen’s Wholesale Florist, and auctioneering performed by Cash Cunningham.

We all deserve the housing of our choice
HOME Successfully Completes “Crowdfunding” Campaign to Support the Community Housing Center

By Elizabeth Fox-Solomon

As some of you may know, HOME recently concluded its first-ever “crowdfunding” campaign to raise awareness of and financial support for our Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center (CHC). The campaign on Indiegogo.com, entitled A Welcome Mat at Every HOME, raised over $9,000, far exceeding the goal of $5,000 and spurring greater funding interest from the community.

Since 1999, HOME’s CHC has helped thousands of Western New York families escape concentrated poverty and racial segregation by expanding housing choices for low-income residents. Mobility counselors help clients understand their housing rights and the advantages of moving to opportunity communities, i.e., areas with access to better schools, employment opportunities, safer and healthier environments, and a better quality of life. CHC staff provide apartment listings, emotional support, and even security deposit assistance to clients. As Shannon M. Koehn, HOME’s associate director, explains, the CHC “is designed to create stronger, more diverse communities and reduce the level of segregation and poverty concentrations by empowering one family at a time.”

Faced with the looming closure of the CHC due to reductions in government funding and the expiration of various grants, members of HOME’s Program Operations & Planning Committee (POPCOMM) sought new donors via the web and social media. With the support and assistance of the Board, HOME’s dedicated staff, and volunteers, POPCOMM launched the crowdfunding campaign on February 12, 2013, Lincoln’s birthday. Like other crowdfunding campaigns on Kickstarter and Indiegogo, the campaign offered perks to entice donors, including the very popular $33 “All About Buffalo” perk -- a stress Buffalo and a digital copy of A Dividing Highway: How the building of the Kensington Expressway destroyed a neighborhood, authored by longtime HOME staffer Kenneth Gholson. HOME memberships, car and laptop stickers, T-shirts, and 50th Anniversary Gala tickets rounded out the offerings.

HOME Board members, friends, and staff promoted the campaign on Twitter and Facebook, via email, and by word-of-mouth. A column by Rod Watson of the Buffalo News reinvigorated the campaign in its final days. By the close of the campaign on April 12, 2013, HOME had raised $5,162 from 94 online funders, many of whom were first-time supporters of HOME. Combined with pledges received the old fashioned way from familiar names and new donors alike, HOME raised more than $9,000 to support the CHC.

We are truly gratified and humbled by the overwhelming response to our campaign to save the CHC. There is, of course, much left to be done. It costs approximately $112,000 per year to operate the CHC, and HOME needs to find a stable, long-term source of funds to sustain this critical program. Given the success of our modest fundraising effort, however, we are hopeful for the future of the CHC.

Want to read past issues of Insight? Find them on our website: www.homenny.org
Know Your HOME Board Members
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donations, with the furniture that is being used in their new location. He is also the president of the WNY Business Alliance, an industry exclusive business networking group with 40 members in various businesses from across WNY. Lastly, Dave is the president of a youth softball league in Cheektowaga.

Executive Director Scott W. Gehl is an ex officio member of HOME’s board. A former community organizer and Buffalo Councilman, Gehl received the first Sarah G. Metzger Human Rights Award, HUD’s Pioneer of Fair Housing Award, and the Erie County Bar Association’s Liberty Bell Award.

DEPARTING BOARD MEMBERS

Thomas J. Dolan is a distinguished former reporter for The Buffalo News. His honors include the Nieman Fellowship (Harvard University), and Distinguished Urban Journalism Award (National Urban Coalition). While on the board, Tom chaired HOME’s Personnel Committee.

Dan D. Kohane, Esq., a senior partner at Hurwitz & Fine, P.C., has served on the board since 1986 and now is counsel to the board. He was awarded the Director’s Award for Distinguished Service in 1989, the James K. Crawford Award in 1993 and the Sarah G. Metzger Human Rights Award in 2000.

Duane M. Madyun is President of the Ansar Group, a financial services firm providing merchant services to small businesses. Duane studied business administration at Buffalo State College.

Robert M. Silverman, PhD., is an Associate Professor at the University at Buffalo Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning. He conducts research projects on fair and affordable housing and social justice issues. He co-authored the study Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice in Erie County, NY.
A BIG Welcome HOME To Our Newest Addition
By Collin Gehl

In February, HOME welcomed new Education Specialist Alyssa Bergsten to the team. A native of Amherst, New York, she spent her college summer breaks interning at Neighborhood Legal Services. While there, Alyssa’s interest in housing issues piqued and she grew concerned that so many people were struggling to fulfill this seemingly basic need.

Upon graduation from college, Alyssa found work at Belmont Housing Resources. It was there she became better acquainted with the team from HOME when they provided services to the Belmont clients. Her experiences working in the housing field demonstrated the importance of education and advocacy, and it was then that Alyssa decided she wanted to focus on that aspect of promoting fair housing.

As Education Specialist, Alyssa informs the public about landlord/tenant and fair housing laws and to make them aware of the services that HOME provides. In addition, she conducts briefings for new Section 8 housing voucher participants who are eligible for the Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center (CHC) program and provides trainings for groups of people interested in housing (like landlords, tenants and community groups and organizations) to let people know their rights and that HOME is here to support them.

She arrived during a very exciting time in HOME’s history as the agency was celebrating its 50th anniversary with several events, including the Anniversary Gala. In her spare time, Alyssa likes to spend time outdoors with friends at concerts, camping, skiing and biking. She also loves to cook, listen to music, read and watch movies, especially documentaries. Alyssa can be reached at 716-854-1400 ext. 22 or via e-mail, abergsen@homeny.org.

Ask Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,
I have resided in an apartment (month to month lease) since August 2011. The landlord sold the home and closing took place on 4/30/13. The new landlord gave me a 30 day notice on 5/1/13. Is this legal?

Sincerely,
Lisa

Dear Lisa,
The landlord does have the right to give you a notice but it should be a full calendar’s month notice. For example, if the landlord wanted you out of the apartment by 6/1/13, the notice should have been given to you by 4/30/13. Now that you’re in the month of May, the notice should of stated for you to be out by 6/30/13 or 7/1/13. You also have the right as a tenant to ask to see proof of purchase, like a receipt.

All the best,
Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,
I have extremely noisy tenants that are making things extremely difficult for me to live comfortably. They are doing things that are a violation of our lease. I’ve mentioned this to my landlord and nothing has happened. What can I do?

Sincerely,
Jocelyn

Dear Jocelyn,
Have you considered writing a letter to your landlord spelling out specifically what the neighbors are doing that are violating the lease? Your landlord would then be compelled to investigate the claims and then enforce the lease. I’d be more than happy to review the document if you’d like.

All the best,
Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,
My landlord just informed me that the water bill for the property has not been paid and that it is due to be shut off. What rights do I have in this situation?

Sincerely,
Justin

Dear Justin,
In a situation like this, you ask the landlord if the current month’s rent can go towards the water bill in order to keep it on. Or a tenant could find out the minimum amount that can be paid to the utility and deduct it from the rent. All actions should be approved from the landlord first before applying any payments. Be sure to keep receipts so your landlord will understand why he is receiving less rent than is due.

All the best,
Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,
Can a tenant be evicted for not paying the current month’s rent?

Sincerely,
Billie

Dear Billie,
Yes a tenant can be evicted for not paying the current month’s rent. As long as a tenant is living in the property, monthly rent should always be paid.

Nichelle Brown has been a Senior Counselor in Housing Opportunities Made Equal’s Fair Housing Unit since 2008. She has 4 1/2 years of counseling experience and is currently attending Daemen College to obtain a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work. If you have a question for Nichelle, please contact her at nbrown@homeny.org or weekdays at 716-854-1400 ext. 20.