From the Director: 
**Marking a Half-Century of Fair Housing**

*By Scott W. Gehl*

Fifty years is a long time — for a friendship, or a marriage, or a career. And it certainly is very long time for the life of a civil rights organization whose mission involves being (in the words of Friend of HOME John Hurley) “dangerously unfselfish in defense of fair housing”. Despite five decades of dangerous unselfishness, of speaking truth to power and challenging the region’s power structure, remarkably HOME is still here.

As a prelude of the celebration of our 50th anniversary, *Insight’s* new editor has asked me to write about HOME’s early days. This is a bit of a challenge for one who was only ten on that day in August of 1963 when attorney William Gardner filed the incorporation of Housing Opportunities Made Equal Inc. (just in time for some of our founding members to board buses for the celebrated March on Washington). And I was younger still when in 1962 concerned clergy & laity from the Buffalo Area Council of Churches formed an organization called the Niagara Frontier Council for Freedom of Choice in Housing.

It was not until HOME had turned 18 that I became a five-dollar-a-year member and then, soon after its 19th Annual Meeting, HOME’s third executive director. Still, in 1982 I had the great privilege of working with members of HOME’s founding generation: people like Dan Acker, Sally Metzger, Art Butler, Jim Covial, Liz Clark and Jim Crawford (to name

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THE LEGACY OF KING’S DREAM: The Civil Rights Act of 1968

By M. Deanna Eason

The late 1960's exhibited a steady growth in the number of young African American and Hispanic infantryman who fought and died in Vietnam. Their families were unable to buy or rent homes in certain communities because of their race, color and national origin. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in schools, workplaces and public accommodations, there was no protection against discrimination in housing. A fair housing bill had been before Congress several times during 1966-1967 but there was never enough support for its passage; until the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

An often overlooked aspect of Dr. King’s dream was his desire for fair housing. In 1966, Dr. King participated in a series of marches in Chicago, Illinois that called for the city to embrace open (fair) housing. The assassination of Dr. King on April 4, 1968 was the catalyst needed by President Lyndon Johnson to pressure Congress to pass the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968) on April 11th, two days after Dr. King’s burial.

The Fair Housing Act prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, color, religion and national origin. In later years, amendments of the Act added sex, disability and familial status as protected classes. Additional protected classes are recognized by many states and municipalities, including source of income, sexual orientation, marital status and gender identity and expression.

Although fair housing may only be a dream for some, for others it is a goal worth fighting for. This was made very clear to me at a recent fair housing training I conducted for an adult education program. Before I could start the presentation, a woman stood up and began to tell the class how HOME had supported her in a race/color discrimination claim nearly 20 years ago. She stated that during the times she felt most alone in her fight, she was always reminded by staff that she wasn’t alone. The woman shared that when things were exceptionally difficult to endure she thought of her son, and although she was tired of the chaos the case brought to her life it was important for her to continue with the case for her family and for others who may have ended up being discriminated against by this landlord.

Mid-way through the presentation I was interrupted by another woman seated in the front row. I was answering a question posed by an attendee who wanted to know why someone who was denied an apartment by a landlord because of their race/color would ever want to rent from that individual. The young woman’s simple answer was, “Because they can.” She went on to say that in order for change to take place we sometimes have to go through difficult and painful events. She ended her words of wisdom by adding, “...someone has to start doing the right thing, even if it doesn’t always feel good.” From everything I know about Dr. King, I think he would have agreed with that wise assessment.

April is Fair Housing Month. Although many dreams have become reality in the last 45 years, we still have a ways to go. This month, let us take time to remember the sacrifices that have been made for our civil liberties. Let us commit to always feel good.” From everything I know about Dr. King, I think he would have agreed with that wise assessment.

April is Fair Housing Month. Although many dreams have become reality in the last 45 years, we still have a ways to go. This month, let us take time to remember the sacrifices that have been made for our civil liberties. Let us commit to doing the right thing, no matter how uncomfortable it may make us. For ways to build on the legacy of HOME please call 716-854-1400.

Lyndon Baines Johnson signing Civil Rights Bill, April 11, 1968
Seven Questions with . . .

By Collin Gehl

With 2013 being HOME’s 50th year, each issue of Insight will feature an interview with a team member. Meet (Former) Mobility Coordinator Ken Gholston, who recently exited the agency after 12 years at HOME. Here he reflects on his adventures, successes and challenges with the agency as well as sharing his dreams for the future of the Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center (CHC).

What is your earliest memory of HOME?

My earliest memory is the CHC Clubhouse, where the Mobility Counselors were housed. There were four cubicles, and I think I was housed in all four of them at some point in my first few years at HOME.

What would you consider your greatest achievement at HOME?

(Successfully) adding a Case Management component to the Mobility Program. The Mobility Program by itself changed the lives of hundreds of families in Erie County, but the question was what happened after we assisted clients with finding housing. When the CHC first started, HOME partnered with BFNC (Buffalo Federation of Neighborhood Centers) to provide some post-move counseling, but that relationship ended in 2005. When we decided to add a case management component, it added value for our clients, and it added value for HOME in raising our profile in the community by partnering with different community agencies.

Were you able to accomplish most (if not all of your goals) for the CHC?

I was happy that we were able to expand the program, and in doing so really made a difference in the lives of our clients, but it was a disappointment that I left the program without stable funding.

What would like to see the CHC accomplish in the next five (5) years?

I would like to see the CHC gain a measure of stability when it comes to funding.

From a programmatic standpoint, I would hope that the program could expand the case management program to partner with different agencies. Hopefully whoever the next CHC Coordinator is will have a passion for improving the lives of families and realizes the importance of creating stronger, more diverse communities in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

What were some of the challenges that faced HOME during your tenure?

Obviously the continual pursuit of program dollars became tiresome and frustrating, and any other issues stemmed from that—not being able to assist more clients, limiting the amount of security deposit assistance that we could provide, etc.

How has your life changed since you began at HOME?

When I began at HOME I still lived with my parents, and now I am a husband and father! I’ve grown a lot since I began at HOME both personally and professionally, and I attribute much of my growth to my time at HOME.

What is next for Kenneth Gholston?

I’ve moved on to Cazenovia Recovery Systems, Inc. where I hold the position of Grants Manager. That should keep me busy for quite a while!
Ask Nichelle

A guide for those with questions about fair housing, landlord/tenant rights, and everything in between.

Dear Nichelle,

I recently went to see an apartment and the landlord asked me how many children that I had. I told him three. He then said that the three bedroom apartment would be too small for me and my three children and recommended that I see another apartment. Is this legal?

Sincerely,
Amber, the Apartment Seeker

Dear Amber,

No, this is not legal. It is illegal for a landlord to ask how many children you may have. In addition, it sounds as if the landlord is guilty of “steering,” which means to recommend that you live in a different area or neighborhood.

All the best,
Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,

I am a landlord that is having a hard time with a tenant. They are constantly late paying their rent and I receive all types of complaints from the neighbors. They signed a one year lease and they have three months left. Can I evict them before their lease expires?

Sincerely,
Frankie, the Frustrated Landlord

Dear Frankie,

Yes, the tenant can be evicted as long as they violated the terms of their lease. It is important to understand that the lease violation must be detailed in the eviction notice and that they are given an opportunity to “cure” the violation before you file for eviction.

All the best,
Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,

I have a limited income and I have heard a great deal about Section 8. What is this? Does it help with rent? Who is eligible?

Sincerely,
Fixed Income Freida

Dear Freida,

Section 8 is a federal housing subsidy program that helps individuals with low to moderate income with a portion of their rent. The amount of assistance is decided my how much income someone on Section 8 earns. Anyone is eligible for Section 8 as long as they fall within the income guidelines.

All the best,
Nichelle

Dear Nichelle,

I recently went to rent a house in Buffalo and the landlord told me that they do not accept Section 8 recipients. Can a landlord do that?

Sincerely,
Section 8 Sam

Dear Sam,

No, this is source of income discrimination. Source of income discrimination is when a prospective landlord does not allow an individual access to a rental unit due to an assumption that they are unable to afford the rent or a stereotype about people with low-income. Source of income discrimination is protected under the local fair housing ordinances in Buffalo, West Seneca, and Hamburg.

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.

A Tasty Fundraiser: Choco Logo — A Delicious Success

By Shannon M. Koehn

On the eve of Valentine’s 2013, HOME members and friends gathered to treat themselves and their special valentines at Buffalo’s own gourmet chocolate shop—Choco Logo. Located in the historic building at 141 Broadway, Choco Logo is known beyond Western New York. On an in depth tour of the chocolate shop, guests learned that owner and Chocolatier Dan Johnson is friends with major celebrities. Legendary Jon Bon Jovi sends folks in his circle each a chocolate gift tower from none other than Choco Logo. Additionally, major retailers, such as Bloomingdales and Macy’s carry Choco Logo’s tasty treats.

The tour began with the comparison of chocolates; learning telltale signs of “good chocolate.” Guest saw firsthand, the detail and care that Choco Logo takes in hand wrapping, hand pouring and filling candy bars and the pinching of sea salt atop freshly made caramel and pecan clusters. There were lots of smiling faces as samples were consumed along the way. The tour culminated with a fantastic pairing of local wines and chocolates. The red wines were each paired with a smooth dark chocolate combination—including mimosa truffles, raspberry habanero and caramel paprika with burnt almonds. The white wines were paired with wonderfully creamy milk chocolate flavors—including rich vanilla centers, wasabi and rice and layered lavender. A small piece of white chocolate just to cleanse the palate—or so guest told themselves.

A special thanks to Choco Logo and everyone who turned their sweet tooth into a great reason to support HOME! Proceeds from ticket sales plus a portion of the evening’s chocolate sales were donated to HOME. This event was a lot of fun and HOME will continue to sell Choco Logo candy bars at the HOME offices and events for $3—your choice of milk, milk with almonds and dark! For pictures of this event and information on upcoming HOME events check out our website at www.homeny.org and follow us on both Twitter and Facebook.
Marking a Half-Century of Fair Housing

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but a few). And it was Sally who introduced me to Jim & Amy Hecht.

Dr. James L. Hecht had been a research associate with DuPont when, early in 1963, he joined this fledgling organization formed to support the rights of African-Americans to live outside of very narrowly circumscribed areas of Buffalo. At our first meeting, I sensed the dynamism of this man and how HOME—starting from scratch, at first without even a statute to work with—could have established the impressive foundation it did.

In 1970, Little Brown & Company published Dr. Hecht’s book Because It Is Right, about the early days of the fair housing movement in America. While including accounts of efforts in many cities and states, it was only natural that the author should return again and again to what he knew best, to what he had lived—Buffalo and HOME.

The book gives credit to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo (which supplied HOME with so many early essential volunteers) and the Buffalo Meeting of Friends (which provided an office and telephone for the all-volunteer organization). It also explains the intricate sequence of strategies which went into recruiting members of the Greater Buffalo power structure for the Friends of HOME: prominent decision-makers who lent public support to the very controversial concept of fair housing.

Building on the organization’s religious foundations, the leaders of HOME conceived of Project Good Neighbor, a campaign which gathered tens of thousands of signatures from members of congregations of various faiths affirming that residents would welcome African-American neighbors into their communities. Names and addresses of signers were then published in a series of full-page ads in the Buffalo Evening News, the Courier-Express, the Amherst Bee, and other weeklies.

In addition to the educational efforts aimed at growing public support for fair housing, there was assistance provided to individual victims of discrimination—who included the family of Joanne Champion (a graduate of Wellesley College and the University of Michigan), turned away by a series of realtors who ignored the Metcalf-Baker Act which had been only recently signed into law by Governor Nelson Rockefeller. (At our 50th Anniversary, HOME will once again present a Joanne Champion Granger Scholarship to an outstanding high school senior.)

Many years after the passing of her husband Jim (who had been President of HOME when I became executive director), Rosalie Covial joined HOME’s Board of Directors—serving until the day she died in 2011. On more than one occasion Rose told her younger board colleagues of how, in those long-ago days, the Covials would sit down to dinner and then the phone would ring with another report of discrimination.

Jim would always take those calls and then hurry off to yet another meeting at the Unitarian Church to discuss how HOME would help this latest family obtain justice. For HOME’s founding generation, that was part of the life of fair housing advocates. Fifty years later HOME is still building upon the foundation that those incredibly heroic selfless volunteers have left for us.

In December, at the suggestion of long-time HOME member James Dahlberg, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo collected $1,200 in supplemental offerings to benefit the work of HOME. Associate Director Shannon M. Koehn and Board Chair Mary Jo Giambelluca attended the January 13th Sunday service to express our appreciation. Special thanks are due to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo for their continued contributions to fair housing.

POVERTY IN AMERICA

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their lives. The discussion group, which included participants ranging from age 13 to 60s, all agreed that the individuals presented a sense of hopefulness that is not generally attributed to people living in poverty. That attitude is the first step in repairing the systems that have contributed to the increasing number of people that become impoverished each year.

For more information on The Line, we encourage all to go to the website http://www.thelinemovie.com/ and watch the complete film. Feel free to share the link with your networks. It is only through education and discussion that we can make a difference in the quest to fight poverty. In addition, the notes from the Dialogues on Diversity discussion will be available on our website at www.homeny.org.

Celebrate HOME’s 50th Anniversary with two special events:

**Annual Business Meeting**
Thursday, April 11th @ 5pm
The Arthur Butler Boardroom
HOME’s Office 1542 Main Street
Hear HOME reports & Elect HOME’s 2013-2014 Board Complimentary
Wine & Cheese Reception
★★★★★★

**50th ANNIVERSARY GALA**
Friday, April 26th
Semi-Formal • 6pm Cocktail Hour
Buffalo Niagara Convention Center
“Building on the Legacy”

Celebration Emcee: WIVB-TV’s Kendra Eaglin
Keynote Speaker: Congressman Brian Higgins
Live Music Performed by: The Old School B-Boys
Evening to include:
Dinner Stations • Networking Scholarships & Awards
Live & Silent Auctions Basket Raffles Everyone Wins Dancing & much more!
A Desperate Search for an Opportunity

By Monica Licea-Castro

Recently at HOME’s Greater Buffalo Community Housing Center (CHC) we received a call from Anna, who desperately needed our services. She and her husband, Robert, were expecting a baby and her due date had nearly arrived. They were facing homelessness and needed a place to live as soon as possible. It was imperative that they be in a new place before the baby's arrival.

Anna and Robert are a very low income family who currently receive Social Services. After reviewing their eligibility, Anna and Robert were immediately enrolled in the Greater Opportunities (GO) Program. They were assisted in finding a suitable apartment for a family that was going to be appropriate for a newborn.

HOME provided a letter to the landlord specifying we were would help our client through the GO program with a significant portion of her security deposit. After explaining the process, the landlord welcomed the opportunity to help Anna and Robert. The landlord even let them move before receiving full payment of the security deposit because she was sensitive to Anna’s impending delivery.

Anna and Robert are now settled in their new place. They also enrolled in our Case Management Program at our Community Housing Center, which allowed them the opportunity to be eligible for additional benefits. Anna, Robert and their young daughter Ashley are grateful to HOME for our assistance and have recommended us to any people that may be in a similar situation.

If you are like Anna and Robert, please don’t hesitate to contact HOME’s Greater Buffalo Community Center. Find out more information regarding the CHC by visiting . . . http://www.homeny.org/mobility.htm. We can be reached weekdays by phone at 716-854-1400 ext. 24 or by e-mailing mliceacastro@homeny.org.